

Ulysses

Dorothy Green

BOUND

Henry Handel Richardson and her fiction



Ulysses BOUND

Henry Handel Richardson (Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson) is one of the most important novelists Australia has produced, though her achievements cannot be measured in terms of quantity. *Maurice Guest*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, the three books of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, *The Young Cosima*, and some short stories make up her published fiction. She has been criticised as a mere chronicler of facts. On the contrary, as this book shows, she was an imaginative writer who, working within the European literary tradition, created an autonomous world.

This is the first full-length study of Henry Handel Richardson since 1950, and the first to include a serious study of her short stories. The work is not a biography. It is an interpretative study of the fiction and its genesis in the life and temperament of the author. It is also an attempt to show how artistic virtue arose from psychological necessity.

The book was undertaken to clear away some serious misconceptions which have been allowed in recent years to diminish Henry Handel Richardson's reputation as an artist. It sets out also to provide a firm factual base from which to reassess her achievement.

This is an important book for students of literature and for historians, but it will find a wider audience amongst admirers of the novels and observers of human nature.

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Ulysses Bound

*O conosch'io che mia fera ventura
vuol che vivendo e lagrimando impari
come nulla quaggiù diletta e dura.*

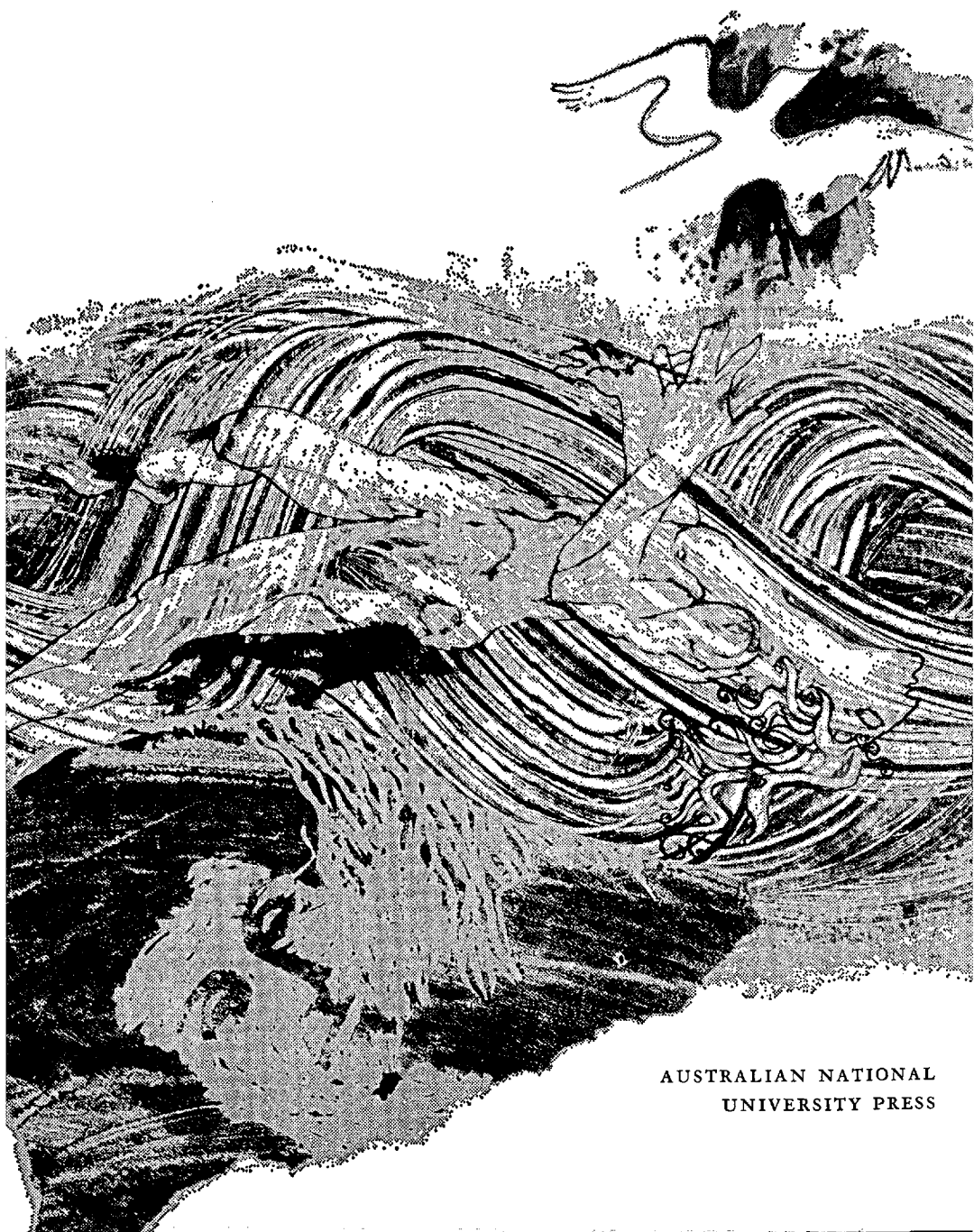
PETRARCH

*Do not sit and brood over the
peculiarities of your soul . . . or shut
yourself off from powerful influences
for fear they may carry you away and
drown your treasured individuality
in their mighty flood . . . you must
live by what is sound and healthy
within you, for only what is healthy
becomes great.*

JACOBSEN

*Hätte Gott mich anders gewollt, so
hätt er mich anders gemacht.*

GOETHE

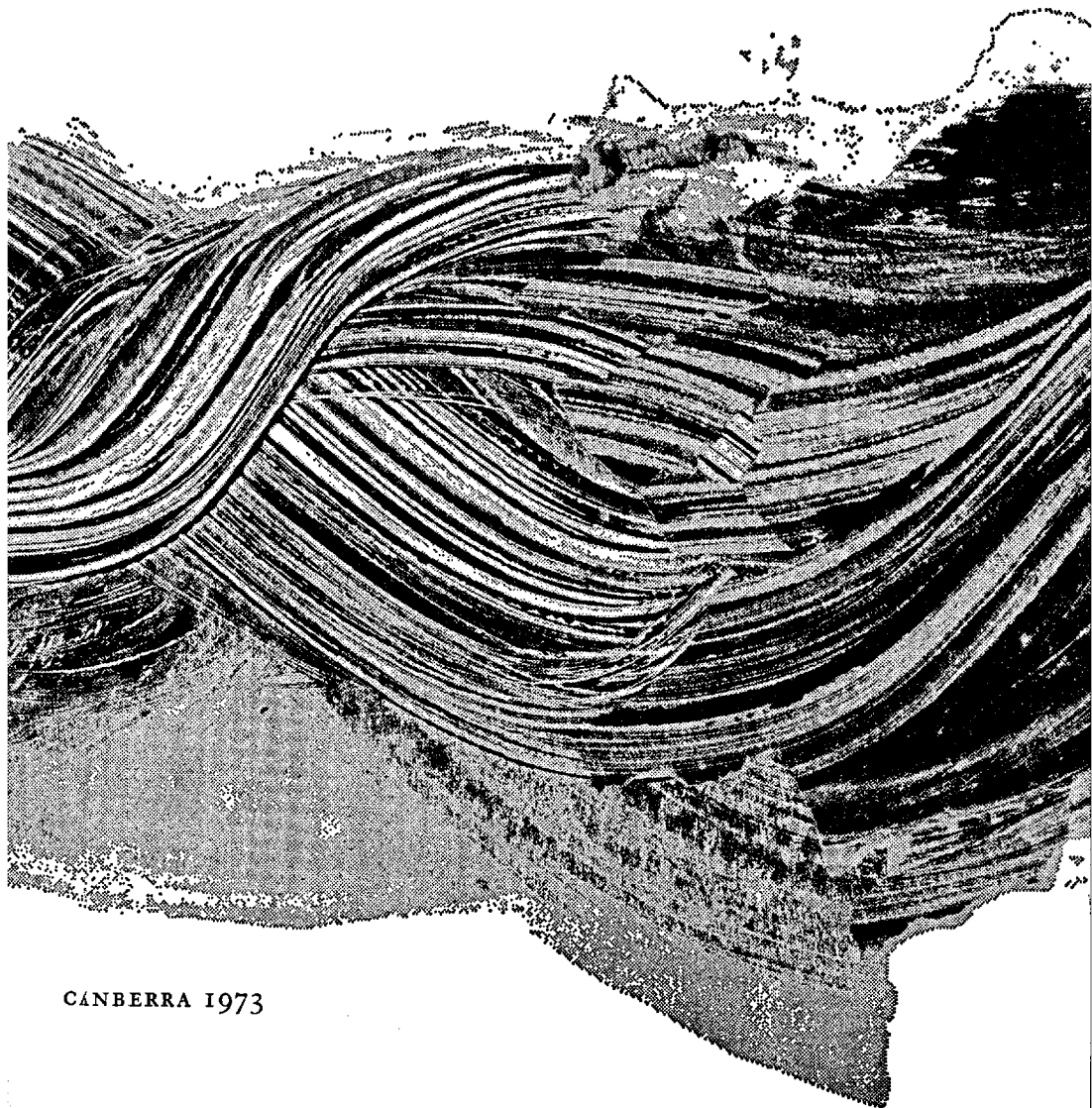


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I was compelled to re-assess and clarify my own ideas about Richardson, and their enthusiasm made the effort worthwhile. I should also like to thank Mrs Joyce Arey, of the Department of English, for her unfailing patience in typing difficult manuscripts and for help which exceeded the demands of duty; and Miss Ann Duffy for some last-minute checking of biographical details. I am particularly obliged to Mrs Jean Fielding for her help in checking quotations. Thanks are also due to the Heads of the Department, first Professor George Russell, then Professor Ian Donaldson, for placing its facilities at my disposal.

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Notwithstanding the kind of assistance acknowledged here, the interpretations of Richardson's novels and stories are my own and their limitations are my own responsibility entirely. The work as it stands has been carried out in time left over from more pressing duties; it is necessarily incomplete for reasons mentioned in the text, but since it is not intended to be a life of Walter Lindesay Richardson, and cannot be a life of Henry Handel Richardson without access to material still held by Miss Roncoroni,¹ or restricted by the Mitchell Library, Sydney, there is little to be gained by delaying publication any longer.

Dorothy Green, Canberra, 1972

¹ But see Appendix B.

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Abbreviations

- M.G.** *Maurice Guest*
- G.W.** *The Getting of Wisdom*
- R.M.** *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*
- E.C.** *The End of a Childhood*
- Y.C.** *The Young Cosima*
- M.W.Y.** *Myself When Young*
- P.R.** *Henry Handel Richardson: Some
Personal Impressions*, edited by Edna
Purdie and Olga Roncoroni
- N.P.** *Henry Handel Richardson* by Nettie
Palmer
- P.P.** *Plato and Platonism*, by Walter Pater
- M.E.** *Marius the Epicurean*, by Walter
Pater

A Note on the Title

The notion of Ulysses as the type of the Wanderer is retained because it is deeply ingrained in modern Western imagination. A lecture in 1971 by James McCaughey, of the Department of Classics, University of Melbourne, has made it impossible for me to regard it as correct. It is used therefore under poetic licence.

Introduction: Some Critical Problems

*There should always be
some foundation of fact
for the most airy fabric
and pure invention is but
the talent of a liar.* BYRON
TO MURRAY, 2 APRIL 1817

THE GENUINE ARTIST can always wait. Sometimes he has to wait to be recognised at all. Then he has his period in the sun of men's approval. After a time, the shadows fall again, and he waits while his successors bask in warmth. But in the end, because he has something in him which is imperishable, something which is true at all times, he will again find an audience.

Henry Handel Richardson is an author with a history of this kind. Not until the last volume of her trilogy, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, was published did she gain any sort of general recognition, especially in her own country, though she had been writing for thirty years. For a while, after the world had taken notice of her, she was honoured as Australia's finest novelist. Then, with the reaction against so-called naturalism in the novel and because of the mistaken assumption that her work belonged wholly in this category, she fell from favour and her books were cited as evidence of the failure of the naturalistic method. After World War II, a new generation of readers knew her, if at all, by the first volume of her trilogy, which was sometimes set for schools; and she came to be regarded as a painstaking chronicler

of the gold-rush period, who wrote a story about a discontented, rather futile emigrant doctor, a story which displayed a passionate devotion to historical facts but not much imagination. Of the total meaning of the trilogy, its place in a long European tradition, its contribution to the great debate which followed the Darwinian revolution, its originality, almost nothing was said.

The following study was prompted by a profound disagreement with the critics who have complained of Richardson's literal-mindedness,¹ her reliance on facts; by a feeling that if her work received even a fraction of the close attention which is lavished on many lesser writers, it might be seen more clearly that she was, as she claimed to be, an imaginative novelist, not a mere chronicler. Behind this book lies the conviction that her principal work can be read on many levels, as Dante said his *Paradise* should be read: the literal, the psychological, the moral, and the mythic; the conviction that, as all great writers have done, she

¹ The principal exponents of this kind of view are Leonie Kramer and Vincent Buckley. Professor Kramer (Leonie Gibson), in *Henry Handel Richardson and Some of her Sources*, concentrates mainly on what she concedes to be 'peripheral material'. The book contains serious errors of fact as well as the completely mistaken claim that Richardson in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* creates a properly classified 'botanist's paradise'. The example chosen to illustrate this claim is the single instance of the use of a botanical term outside a specifically scientific context; the ambience of the trilogy is domestic, not scientific. It can be shown that in its own context the phrase *salix babylonica* has a particularly poetic significance. Professor Kramer's later views of Richardson's work, expressed in *Literature in Australia*, in *Myself when Laura*, and in a monograph in the series Great Australians, though qualified by greater sympathy, remain adamant on the point of excessive literal-mindedness. Professor Buckley's booklet, *Henry Handel Richardson*, dismissing Richardson's principal novel as a 'magnificent failure', is a study which it is kindest to call misleading.

For opposing contemporary views, see principally F. H. Mares, *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 1, 1962: a particularly sensitive study.

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threw a handful of facts into the crucible of imagination and produced two great works of art and some important lesser ones. To support these convictions it will be necessary to try to define the emotional attitude which makes the work a coherent whole, and to show that this attitude determined which facts were selected out of those available, which were added to, and what part pure invention played. Much more of the scaffolding of the novels remains to be uncovered, and perhaps, for those who have the leisure to look, this book may serve as a point of departure for further investigation, if only because it refuses to agree that the question of Richardson's status has been settled.

Condemnation of Richardson for her supposed over-zealous devotion to facts might seem at first to have been supported by H. M. Green's remark in Volume I of his *History of Australian Literature*, published in 1961. What he has to say, however, about Richardson's use of facts is itself simply a statement of fact, not an adverse criticism:

. . . Richardson stands, as has been said, for the ascertained fact, and in the recording of this she is inexorable . . . Imaginatively or in the outside world, she sees; she tells what she sees; she aims at imposing no particular tone or colouring upon it. (p. 606)

The observation is exact and true and Richardson herself would have assented to it. Along with Ibsen and Yeats, she would have contended that that is precisely the poet's business: to see and to tell what he sees. 'To see with energy', as Ibsen put it. Green's personal preference for the poetry that resides in striking imagery and verbal music did not lead him to deny Richardson poetic vision, nor cloud his response to the tragic intensity of her work, nor blind him to its architectonic strength. Nor did it lead him to measure her achievement by reference to the achievement of other novelists,

whose aims, and therefore whose methods, were different from her own.

The complaint that Richardson was 'a victim of the dictatorship of facts' and that this capitulation was an artistic disaster is difficult to justify on philosophical grounds. It rests on an unwarranted assumption that there is a fundamental antipathy between the artist and scientist, between reason and imagination. Richardson did not make this elementary mistake: she was the daughter of a man who had a reverence for facts and a passion for poetry, and the wife of a man who graduated in science before devoting his life to literature. She was the literary disciple of a man who was a botanist before he became a novelist, the translator of *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, a writer of fiction who set out to fuse physiology, psychology and metaphysics in a romantic novel.² Richardson's attitude to the phenomenal world resembles very strongly that expressed by a near-contemporary fellow-expatriate, the Melbourne-born philosopher Samuel Alexander, who founded his philosophy on studies in biology and psychology. In an essay entitled 'Natural Piety', first printed in the *Hibbert Journal* in July 1922 (which Richardson may have seen), he wrote:

All science attempts to connect the variegated phenomena of the world by expressing them in terms of measurable motions. It seems to take the colour and richness from the world of secondary

² See Introduction to Richardson's translation of *Niels Lyhne*, by Edmund Gosse, in which he quotes Jacobsen's conversation with Georg Brandes about his plans for the novel. In answer to Brandes's objection that it might be a 'rather metaphysical story, a little too abstract, and bony, a little hard in outline', Jacobsen replied: 'No, not at all. The outline will be perfectly soft and undefined, veiled, and steeped in the colour of amorous dreams and amorous sorrows, the metaphysic of it psychological, and the psychological part of it physiological throughout' (p. xv). *Maurice Guest* makes it obvious that Richardson kept this formula well in mind.

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sensible qualities and expresses them in terms of primary qualities which in the end are terms of space and time. It does not, nor does it pretend to, remove the mystery of secondary qualities, and in all its explanations it does but bring us in face of other mysteries which we must needs accept.

We are thus forever in the presence of miracles; and as old Nathan said, the greatest of all miracles is that the genuine miracles should be so familiar . . . The mystery of facts, whether these facts are the individual facts of experience or the larger universal facts which are scientific laws, or such facts, more comprehensive still, as may be discovered by a prudent and scientific philosophy, is the last word of knowledge. The reverent temper which accepts them is the mood of natural piety.³

Alexander takes the title of his essay from Shelley, that wild Romantic poet with a passion for chemistry!

'The greatest of all miracles is that the genuine miracles should be so familiar'. . . Richardson's principal novel is compounded of ingredients so homely and familiar that its surface appearance has blinded some readers to its profundity. For such readers, a novel must not only *be* intellectually strenuous, but must be *seen* to be intellectually strenuous. Here again, Richardson's practice in the novel is strangely like Alexander's in philosophy: she considered it her business not to argue, but to show.⁴ The world she shows us, like his, is exceedingly complicated, for all its apparent simplicity.

³ Reprinted in *Philosophical and Literary Pieces*. Alexander's principal work, *Space, Time and Deity*, is also of interest, since it puts forward a Heraclitean view of the universe which would have commended itself to Richardson. The book was certainly known to Christopher Brennan, her Australian contemporary.

⁴ See John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, p. 265.

This is not surprising: she herself was a strange mixture of simplicity and complexity, which she strove through her art to account for. There are curious discrepancies in the descriptions given of her as a writer by official 'interviewers' and those of people who knew her intimately. In one press interview for example, she declared she had always wanted to write, and did write 'from the beginning'.⁵ Yet in the first drafts of her autobiography *Myself When Young*, she writes of being, after leaving school, 'hopelessly at a loose end, not knowing what to be at'. Those who knew her well emphasise her implacable honesty, her hatred of sham, and there is no doubt that they held the opinion sincerely, but an examination of *Myself When Young*, particularly the discarded portions, and of letters that have recently become available, raise the suspicion not that she practised equivocation, but that in certain areas of her life she 'swung between fact and dream', and that it is in her art that her uncompromising honesty most clearly revealed itself. Whether in her fiction she succeeded completely in explaining herself to herself it is impossible to be sure until all her letters and diaries become available. The most important collection of her letters is closed to research-workers until 21 March 1996, the day after the fiftieth anniversary of her death.⁶ All that can be done at present is to take more seriously two statements of Richardson's that have often been quoted and never properly examined: her remark to a fellow-novelist Brian Penton 'that an artist has all his material

⁵ See Letters from H.H.R. to Mrs Theis, 1930, especially the typescript article on H.H.R. by Mrs Theis, in the National Library, Canberra.

⁶ Those written to Mrs Mary Kernot (born Mary Robertson), an old schoolfriend, deposited in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, after Mrs Kernot's death in 1954. Mrs Kernot's replies are not restricted and at times throw light on H.H.R.'s own letters of which there are copies in the National Library, Canberra.

before he is ten years old⁷ and her admission that in drawing Richard Mahony's portrait she was in fact drawing her own.⁸ If the first had been attended to, less critical emphasis might have been laid on peripheral material in her principal novel, such as the scenery.⁹ If the second had been accepted, it would not have been so easy to assume that Richard Mahony was identical with her father and Mary Mahony with her mother.

Another mischievous assumption which has distorted interpretation of her work is that because the principal characters in her first and her last novel are musicians and the heroine of the second novel shows some incipient literary ability, the main theme of her writing must be 'the problem of the artist' in relation to society.¹⁰ What this study hopes to do is to show, among other things, that Richardson was interested in far more fundamental questions than this and that the characters were not designed to illustrate a theory; indeed that the characters were 'given', 'nearest to hand', rather than deliberately chosen, and that a concept of life arose from observing their behaviour, rather than that their behaviour illustrated a concept. Richardson's remarks about the relative importance of life and art are not always consistent—why should they be?—and it is to the novels and short stories themselves, supplemented by the general tenor of the biographical material available that we must look for the impulse behind the work. There is no doubt she was interested in the relationship of the artist to the outer world, but it will be argued that this interest was a corollary of her principal

⁷ Recorded by Penton in an obituary notice; see Bibliography.

⁸ Richardson's tacit admission of the true origin of Mahony in *Myself When Young* (p. 24) is expressed much more strongly and directly in the first pencil drafts. Mrs Kernot also has a note to the effect that she fitted a portrait of herself into the framework of her father's life: see Mitchell Library collection.

⁹ See Gibson (Kramer), *H.H.R. and Some of her Sources*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

7 Introduction

preoccupation and not the main theorem. For one thing, there is a certain affectation, an unpleasing self-consciousness inseparable from fiction that takes art or artists for its theme, which are uncharacteristic of the woman. Her nephew has written of her dedication to writing, but with the reminder that: she had none of the floweriness or affectations of those who have pretensions to being artists, without being so. There was no need for this, since she was absolutely and completely an artist at heart. (P.R., p. 32)

What, then, was her principal preoccupation? In brief, to marshal evidence to support a truth she had perceived before she was ten years old and in so doing to attempt to understand how she came to be the kind of person she was, at the same time acquiring some insight into the general human condition. She portrays Richard Mahony as searching above all for the key to the mystery of life; self-knowledge is a painful by-product of his search. She herself reverses the order, following the Socratic injunction with, at times, quite scarifying honesty. Yet, in spite of the purpose behind the work, it remains, as she claimed, fiction. If some of the incidents that really matter in the novels, because they are those that most move us, are scrutinised as carefully as those for which she has been censured, it will be found that most of them contain material of a kind that could only have been invented or imagined, or which from a basis of fact are transmuted into poetry by a unifying act of imagination—and so the case about slavery to facts falls to the ground. It requires imagination of a peculiarly powerful kind to organise the seemingly disparate details accumulated in *Richard Mahony* into a massive structure in which each of these details has its own relevance to the whole, 'resonating' throughout the work, a work which makes a statement that has all the simplicity and clarity of a great myth without ever abandoning reality. It is well to keep in mind when reading

the novels Richardson's great gift for music, especially for composition, and her thorough musical education. The time spent with her husband reading the scores of Wagner and Strauss was well spent; she could have learnt much from them about the deployment of vast resources. She belongs indeed in that company of nineteenth-century European writers who 'thought to music'.

The complaint about Richardson's lack of imagination and her dependence on facts is part and parcel of complaints about her style. Passages are torn out of context to prove that her language is stiff, awkward, and sometimes sentimental, even novelesque, a procedure which is like condemning a tree because it has a few dead twigs. It would be quite easy to choose isolated passages from George Eliot, Dickens and above all D. H. Lawrence containing all the defects mentioned above. There are pages in *Kangaroo*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, which make one blush for the writer. Yet this kind of criticism, which has been applied mercilessly to Richardson, is based on the unexamined assumption that the principles of analysis which function for lyric poetry will do equally well for the novel. It is forgotten that a long novel is simply not the same thing as a lyric poem, which is wrecked if every word does not pull its weight. A novel is big enough to afford passengers and the vessel is not to be judged by their lack of performance. Neither is it to be judged by the presence or absence of the freight of symbolism or allegory (distinctions between them are usually blurred!) considered indispensable to poetry. Symbolism, in spite of what many critics seem to think, is not in itself a virtue: *Maurice Guest* functions superbly without it, *Richard Mahony* makes full use of it, but so unobtrusively that many readers seem unaware of its presence. Novels like Richardson's demand critical approaches that are specifically proper to prose fiction, techniques which do not confuse the suggestive speech appropriate to poetry

with the more directly communicative language proper to prose; which do not demand excellence of style as the supreme novelistic virtue. Richardson's narrative method on the whole resembles the craft of a builder in random stone. She is less interested in the appearance and the feel of the individual stones than in the total structure she can make with them. She accumulates minute details and selects those which cohere into a general statement, focusing attention on that and not on the details, though if you do attend to them, you will find them appropriate. She proceeds on the assumption that if you have enough facts and stare at them long enough, their inner meaning will reveal itself; her perfection is the perfection of large masses compounded of tiny strokes; her aim is to shape insignificant ideas into mythic clarity rather than to achieve verbal felicity. For her, style is not, as it is for Christina Stead or Patrick White, a way of life; it is a means and not an end, as it was for Tolstoy, though Tolstoy was a born stylist and Richardson was not.

Two other reasons besides deliberate policy suggest themselves for Richardson's refusal, or failure, to attempt to achieve any obvious beauty of texture in her prose. One, simply, that she was not a writer by nature, but one who, having something compelling to say, disciplined herself to say it. She said more than once—to comparative strangers—that writing came easily to her, but that does not mean she was a born writer. Writing also came easily to Martin Tupper; Yeats, on the other hand, found it extremely difficult.

The second reason may be that she came late to the classics of her own language; most of the great works that she read at her most impressionable period were read in translation, often in German translations, or in some other foreign tongue. A third reason may perhaps be offered tentatively: the speech that she heard and the prose of the books read or discussed in her family circle after the

death of her father might not have possessed any distinction, finesse, or sophistication; the part played by such influences in the making of a writer cannot be disregarded. A number of early speech habits make themselves felt in her autobiography which throw some light on the reaction of her Cambridge relatives to 'colonial' conversation.¹¹ Whatever the reasons, she rarely gives an impression of being wholly at ease with English diction, and perhaps she was not. Yet the sense of rhythm which served her well in music stood by her when she came to write. Though on rare occasions her prose is bad, though on the whole it strives to be neutral, it has in fact a distinctive rhythm, which is its chief beauty. Brian Penton records that he was reminded of this rhythm in 'the peculiar cadence of resignation in her voice'.

But questions of style apart, what a novelist stands or falls by is his ability to create a self-consistent world, a world in which the inhabitants move as necessarily and inevitably as the inhabitants of the world in which we live. If the novelist can perform the miracle of making us accept this world, the occasional lapses, roughnesses, wrong notes, so to speak, will no more spoil it for us than specks of dust on a window-pane, however irritating, will spoil the view outside. Perfection of style will not perform this miracle unless there is intellectual pressure behind it, but if this pressure is powerful enough, it will accomplish its ends and in so doing create its own style. The twentieth century has seen novelist after novelist come and go whose work coruscates with arresting images with nothing underneath them. Style and a good publicity agent can work wonders for a time, but one does not return to such work as one returns to *Richard Mahony* or *Maurice Guest*. We return because we accept their world and the people in them, as we accept the world of reality and the

¹¹ See *M.W.Y.*, pp. 92-3.

people we know; and we do so largely because of the pressure of ideas felt beneath the surface of the novels, and because, in presenting them, the author is conveying a deeply-considered conception of life, a philosophic attitude which gives shape and body to her fictional world in such a way that entry into it enlarges our own experience.

There are few Australian novels which create an autonomous world and which at the same time convey a vision of metaphysical life, but Richardson's are among them, and for a reason I hope to make clear, still supreme among them. And though their central figures are far from heroic in the Aristotelian sense, their lives raise heroic issues and the feeling of having been in touch with these is powerfully present in the reader when he puts the books down. These issues were in possession of the writer's mind before she began to write and their presence is felt in the most mundane and trivial events. That this should be so is in accordance not only with the literary theory which contributed some influence to Richardson's writing, but with the religious convictions by which she regulated her own life. In both respects she is in the best of company.

Chapter I

*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach,
in meiner Brust*

GOETHE



Origins

ONE OF THE GREAT weaknesses of Australian criticism has always been its refusal to take religious ideas seriously. If they are forced on the critic's attention by an obvious symbolic system, as in the novels of Patrick White, or specifically labelled, as in the poems of James McAuley, they are given some patronising attention, but it soon becomes clear that the critic is concerned not with the truth or falsity of the ideas themselves, nor with the notion that anyone could possibly live by them, but with the techniques of presenting them, with their usefulness as literary material, or because they are 'psychologically engaging'. The religious ideas of Martin Boyd, which underlie all his novels, are rarely referred to, though he himself has drawn explicit attention to their significance for his life and work; yet he has been diagnosed chiefly as an upper-class novelist of manners, or of the Anglo-Australian dilemma, and that is that. Christopher Brennan's metaphysical concepts have received more careful consideration,¹ largely because it is impossible to read his verse at all without attending to them, but the kind of attention they are accorded is still that described above: they are literary content, 'psychologically engaging', not ways of seeing life and living it. Brennan's place in literature and his relationship to the European tradition, in particular to the German Romantic tradition, were bound in the end to be the subject of

¹ Brennan (1870-1932) was Australia's first consciously symbolist poet. Born in the same year as Richardson, but in Sydney, he was for a time Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Sydney. His most important collection of poems was first published in 1914.

scholarly investigation: he himself was a professional scholar. But the connection between his early religious beliefs, his scholarship, and his later beliefs, and the relationship of his beliefs to his poetry are not yet fully understood. The simple fact that Brennan was born, raised, and, some would claim, died a Catholic Christian is central to such an understanding, not incidental to it.

Henry Handel Richardson's intellectual history has certain striking resemblances to Brennan's. Though she was in no conventional sense religious, she was emphatically not a materialist. Her life-long adherence to Spiritualism is a fact which has largely been ignored,² though it is clear from her letters, notebooks and works of fiction that her belief was of the utmost importance to her, and that she had formulated it very early. Secondly, the fact that, like Brennan's, her work is part of the German tradition in literature has never been given its due weight, although, as is well known, she lived for over thirty years as the wife of a man who was an authority on the German Romantic writers and their English exponents and she herself read their work and the work of many other European writers in German.

There is reason to see both these writers as having as their unshakeable centre not so much a disposition to belief as an aversion from unbelief which their inquiring intellect strove to justify; and it appears that they found in the German tradition a congenial haven for the divided mind and took from it what they needed to establish some kind of stasis.

The intellectual necessity for the reconciliation of opposing impulses was reinforced by the need to make sense of painful personal experience. Richardson as a child witnessed tragedy of a peculiarly harrowing kind, which left ineradicable marks on her own nature, in spite of the seeming peacefulness of her adult life. Much of Brennan's middle life was unhappy and though, unlike Richardson, he cannot be absolved from some of the responsibility for his own misery, this fact does not lessen the misery. There are few available explanations of the problem of suffering; those most commonly resorted to are that it is a punishment for 'sin', that it is the inscrutable will of God, that it is the work of the devil, that it is God's way of refining souls, that it is a matter of sheer chance, that

² Her interest in psychical research was noted by *The Times* (London) in an obituary notice, 21 March 1946, but the writer went on to say there was no mention of it in her books!

it is pre-determined by the operation of hereditary and environmental causes, that it is the inevitable price paid for the increasing differentiation and complexity of organisms, or to put it in non-rational terms, for the approach to a total awareness which is divine.

Brennan and Richardson, at much the same time and at opposite ends of the earth, were each engaged in contemplating their own suffering and in trying to bring it into relationship with general human experience in the light of one or other of these explanations. The novelist used one method to embody her vision of life, the poet another. Richardson accumulated innumerable 'small sensuous facts' to create an autonomous, almost tangible world; Brennan worked by indirections, suggestions, mysteries, in images and symbols remote from the domestic world. But together these two writers demonstrate that a great poetic statement can be made as well by the method of simple realism as by one more obviously imaginative and, in spite of the surface differences between them, their attitudes and conclusions have much in common.

At the centre of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* and indeed of all Richardson's writing, and of Brennan's *Poems 1913*, is the Pythagorean notion of man as a seeker, a wanderer, 'a pilgrim soul who leaves his heavenly home to perfect himself through many revolutions of existence before he returns to his true home'.³ The lost Eden of Brennan's *Wanderer* and Richard Mahony's halting explanation of his restlessness as a struggle to recapture a half-forgotten dream have ultimately the same source. In the end, however, for Brennan's *Wanderer*, the journey itself must suffice; for Richardson's, the goal remains distinct from the seeker, and the failure to find it in this life is not final failure. Brennan's Catholic heritage denied him the consolations of Spiritualism.

The philosophical edifice represented by the work of each of these writers has a deeply personal origin: the recognition of a division in the self, the 'half-souls that struggle and mix', to use Brennan's words, of which Richardson became aware very early in life. The unusual circumstances of her childhood awakened her to the fundamental polarity of life—change and stability; they stimulated fear of and desire for each in turn, warned of the impossibility of achieving both at once.

Whether Richardson read Brennan's *Poems 1913* is not known, but the

³ See Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, for constant reference to 'the pilgrim soul'.

literary background of the book would have been familiar to her and she would have recognised only too easily the central figure in *The Wanderer*. The poem 'How old is my heart', for instance, expressing all the pain of the tension between the longing for stability and the desire for change, for the unknown, is an epitome of her own work, especially her principal novel—the work, an extension, an elaborate dramatisation of the thesis of the poem. The theme is a constantly recurring one in Australian literature: it crops up in different forms in Alexander Harris, in Mrs Campbell Praed, in Lawson, in Jack McClaren, in Kylie Tennant, in the work of visitors like D. H. Lawrence and Grant Watson, in Christina Stead, and in Patrick White, who defines it in *The Tree of Man* as 'the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion'. Richardson and Brennan, however, of all these writers have most thoroughly explored its archetypal origins, and created figures who embody it independently of their begetter.

There is some justification for seeing this polarity as an evolutionary necessity, and some reason for thinking that this is how Richardson came to see it. It is obviously necessary that a species, if it is to survive, must replicate itself, and if it is to survive in changing environments, must be capable of change, of variation. Whatever their origins, two strong and incompatible desires, the desire for permanence and the desire for change, seem to be present in some degree in all men, and philosophers and poets have always tried to explain them.⁴ The infant's lips cling to his mother's breast at the same time as his feet push against her body to free himself, while in the race at large two principal human types emerge, which might be called the settler and the nomad. Whether there are grounds for seeing these impulses as evidence of a deep-seated desire for death at war with a desire for life is simply to re-phrase the problem. Death is, as far as we know, the completest kind of permanence and stability, while life is obviously a continuous process of change. The desire for permanence or change is present in different proportions in each individual. One nature exhibits a need for stability, which it contradicts only very occasionally; another is dominated, like Lawrence's

⁴ According to A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 106: 'Every scheme for the analysis of nature has to face these two facts, *change* and *endurance*. There is yet a third fact to be placed by it, *eternity*, I will call it.' (See also p. 233.)

Boy in the Bush, by the need 'Always to be riding away', with only an occasional impulse to camp. Given favourable outward circumstances, either of these natures can come to terms with life without too much stress. It is where these warring desires have equal, or nearly equal weight that they produce a great split in the self, which needs to be firmly recognised and controlled if some kind of paralysis of will, or ultimate withdrawal, is to be avoided. In such natures the self is felt at times as an intolerable prison from which it longs to escape, a burden it longs to shed, yet at the same time as something whose annihilation it cannot bring itself to contemplate, something it must cling to and cherish at all costs. Long before Freud formulated his concept of the death-wish, the Danish novelist Jacobsen in *Niels Lyhne*,⁵ referred to: the purely human desire for self-destruction, which, when the blood burns, as only blood can, craves for degradation, dirt and mire with the same degree of intensity that is peculiar to another equally human desire—that of keeping oneself greater and purer than one actually is. (p. 184)

It may be that the self presents no such dilemma to less complicated forms of life than man; it is unlikely that animals either yearn to forget themselves, or live out their lives tormented by the fact of their possible end. It may be that the self is not much of a problem to men not over-endowed with imagination, or conceptualising intelligence, or sensitivity, though it is dangerous to deny these qualities to those who are unable to be articulate about them. But to those who are known to be thus endowed, the consciousness of a separate significant self is as much a torment as a pride; oblivion is desired and extinction feared with equal passion. Drink, sex, and physical excitement provide some with oblivion. Sometimes man's intellect calls a truce; the scientist, for instance, absorbed in objects outside himself, can find consolation in the notion of biological continuity: the creature passes, the species remains. The religious temperament has a variety of comforts at its disposal, to suit the Christian fundamentalist at one end of the scale and the Christian Scientist at the other. The artist relies on his art to resolve divisions: he is most himself when lost in creating what is not himself; the lover tries to lose and find himself in love. Those who do not arrive at one or other of these solutions

⁵ See note 2 to Introduction. All references to *Niels Lyhne* (*Siren Voices*) are to the photocopy in the National Library, Canberra.

we term insane, but insanity, too, is a solution. The observer of all these efforts, even though he may be involved in one of them, finds an ironic amusement in contemplating the paradox that merely to be born, a changing creature, is the first step on the road to death, an apparently permanent state, and that the more we try to ignore this truth or to resist it, the sooner we demonstrate it. Richardson's two great novels *Maurice Guest* and *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* certainly illustrate that point; every move made by Guest and Mahony takes them more swiftly towards the permanence of death.

Some such view of man's nature must have emerged from Richardson's contemplation of her father's and her own, for which she sought philosophical confirmation. All her books present some version of the dilemma of the divided self trying to find wholeness, and the dilemma is her own. Each of them, it is true, creates quite strongly its own fictional world, first at the level of mere milieu: Laura Rambotham's school, though that is a shadowy world compared to the richly-detailed, musical world of *Maurice Guest*; the world of the Ballarat gold-diggings, of prosperous Victorian Melbourne, of hot, dusty Australian country towns. But what really matters is Richardson's ability to create the inner world in which her characters move, the interior life which is revealed by the world of bread and butter. In *The Getting of Wisdom* what is really presented is the expanding life of Laura Rambotham's mind, not the outward life of a Melbourne boarding-school in the 1880s; what we are being shown is the dawning consciousness of an adolescent girl coming to grips with the problems of knowledge, culture, social life, crime, punishment, sex, art, love, and religion, as they present themselves, roughly in that order, to her youthful ignorance. Laura's gradual perception of the role that fact and imagination play in understanding human behaviour and in conveying what is taken to be truth is more interesting and more important than any account of school life. She is grappling, of course, in the terms available to a child, with the same questions that occupy the adult intelligence of Heinz Krafft in *Maurice Guest*.

The two novels were written more or less concurrently and the same preoccupations are present in both. The 'musical' life of *Maurice Guest* has its own intrinsic interest, but what really matters is what goes on in the minds of Maurice, of Louise Dufrayer, of Heinz Krafft, the un-

folding of their relationship to one another under the spell of the violinist-genius Schilsky.

Finally, the inner world of Richard Mahony and its gradual decay are what hold and move us so unforgettably in the trilogy, so much so that the outer world of Victoria in the 1860s and 1870s becomes as much an irrelevance to the reader as it is to Mahony, at the same time as its palpable presence is necessary as a measure of the process of disintegration of the inner world.

All the books, and these three in particular, have a close connection with Richardson's own life, but they are not autobiographical in any simple sense. To mention only one indication of this fact: Laura, in *The Getting of Wisdom*, is presented as a not very successful scholar, particularly bad at mathematics, showy, tasteless and careless in music, unskilled at tennis. According to Leonie Kramer's interpretation of the school records, examined for her monograph *Myself When Laura*, just the reverse of these facts was true of Richardson herself as a schoolgirl.⁶ School records, of course, can be misleading without being in the least deliberately mendacious, as anyone who has had much to do with compiling them is aware; and it is likely, moreover, that an author, writing about herself, would play her achievements down, rather than draw attention to them. If Richardson's books use her own experience, it is at a very different level from this, and though we cannot hope to uncover more than a few of the real sources, we can at least pay more attention to the clues to them that she herself has given.

The outward facts of her life have been made known to us in a book-length study by Nettie Palmer; by Olga Roncoroni, her companion and secretary for the last nineteen years of her life, by her husband, J. G. Robertson, and his colleague Edna Purdie, and a small group of relations, friends and acquaintances, as well as by the novelist herself in her unfinished autobiography *Myself When Young*. There are collections of letters in some of the main Australian libraries, but while one of the most important of these is still closed, and until the material still held by Miss Roncoroni becomes available, any summing up of either author or work cannot be regarded as final. The object of the present study is simply to correct some current misapprehensions.

Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson was born at Blanche Terrace (i.e.

⁶ See *English in Australia*, Monograph 1, pp. 7, 8, 9.

139 Victoria Parade) in East Melbourne on 3 January 1870; her father, Walter Lindesay Richardson, was a well-to-do doctor of Irish birth, her mother English, the daughter of a Leicester solicitor. There was restlessness on both sides of the family and indications of unconventionality, if not eccentricity, on the father's side. Walter Richardson himself was born when his father was well into his seventies: at seventy-two he had married his second wife, a girl of eighteen. Ethel herself was born after her parents had been married fifteen years, when her father was forty-four. The fact that it was a difficult birth is of some importance. Of her mother's family, eight out of eleven, including her mother, became wanderers, ending their days in various widely-scattered parts of the world. Richardson was by all accounts a highly-skilled doctor and his retirement from practice and his early death are regarded by one competent to judge as a loss to Australian medicine.⁷ When Ethel was three, her father was prosperous enough to make the Grand Tour of Europe, but on his return to Melbourne he found his investments in a shaky state and went back to practise at Hawthorn, then an outer suburb of Melbourne. His practice did not prosper and he moved to Chiltern on the fringes of the

⁷ For example, in the opinion of Dr Alan Stoller, who with R. H. Emmerson is the author of a valuable article, 'The Fortunes of Walter Lindesay Richardson', *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 1, 1970. In his own account of his early life, which survives in a notebook now in the National Library, Canberra, Walter Richardson says that he was 'Assistant Pathologist in the Edinburgh Infirmary for three months after graduating in 1849; home surgeon in the Edinburgh Maternity Hospital for three months; resident physician in the Cholera Hospital for three months'. He then went to London, left London for Wales in January 1850 and was assistant for six months with J. P. Widding and G. Towns in Montgomery, returning to London in June. In July 1850 he was engaged by T. H. Smith of St Mary's Cray, Kent, with whom he seems to have remained until leaving for Australia in 1852. He practised sporadically in the intervals of gold-digging and store-keeping, but did not resume medicine officially until March 1857, after registering in December 1856. A newspaper clipping—presumably from the *Ballarat Star*—reads: 'Dr. Richardson informs his friends and the public that he has resumed the duties of his profession. He would notify to the latter that he is a pupil of Professor Simpson and that he purposes, as far as practicable, confining himself to the Diseases of Women and Children. (Mount Pleasant, March, 1857)'. Dr Stoller has documented the highlights of his subsequent professional career.

Kelly country, then to Queenscliff on Port Phillip. Money and quarrels about money seem to have haunted the childhood of Ethel and her younger sister: the inexplicable change from riches to poverty must have deeply impressed their young minds. It is difficult to over-estimate the shadow cast upon their childhood by the father's physical and mental deterioration under strain, by his increasing alienation from their lives. He finally broke down, spent several months in a mental hospital, where his illness was diagnosed as general paralysis of the insane (incipient), and died while on leave in 1879.⁸ The initiating cause of general paralysis is now known to be syphilis; the connection between the two would not have been known to Walter Richardson or to his contemporaries, and consequently not to Mahony; and although at the time she wrote her novel Richardson was probably aware of it, the clinical picture was far from complete. How Walter Richardson became infected—if the diagnosis of his final illness is correct—is a matter of speculation: there were prostitutes on the Ballarat diggings, as the novelist makes plain, but the most likely explanation is not necessarily the true one and medical students of the day ran great risks. At all events he must have regarded himself as healthy by the time he married at the age of twenty-eight or so, and would have been as much bewildered by his later ill-health as were those around him. During his last illness and after his death his wife worked in the Postal Service and the family finances improved enough after some years to send Ethel to the Presbyterian Ladies' College in Melbourne. After she had passed her matriculation examination, her mother sold the Hawthorn house and took her and her sister Lilian to Europe, partly to give them some first-rate musical training in the hope that they would show some aptitude for the concert platform. Ethel discovered that her mother's musical ambitions for her were somewhat in excess of her own actual capacities, though these were not negligible; she made some progress as a pianist and further developed a taste for composition, but lost any inclination she might have had for a musical career (references to her musical ambitions remain ambiguous), ostensibly because it would have involved 'being stared at'.⁹ This strongly-marked

⁸ On 1 August, the anniversary of his graduation as a doctor.

⁹ One reason for this dislike may have been that Richardson had a disfiguring birthmark down her right arm; hence perhaps the long sleeves with drooping cuffs in official photographs.

aversion is made use of as one of the symptoms of Mahony's mental deterioration; it is an exaggeration of his pre-morbid dislike of being conspicuous.¹⁰

During her stay in Leipzig, where she had gone for musical tuition, Richardson met John George Robertson, a Glasgow graduate who had abandoned science for languages and literature and who was later to become Professor of German Language and Literature at London University. After their marriage in 1895, they spent six or seven years in Germany, first in Munich for a few months, later in Strasbourg, where Robertson became a professor. This was a period which they later looked back on as intensely happy and satisfying, though during it Ethel's health had given great anxiety. It is interesting to reflect that Rainer Maria Rilke visited Munich during the time they lived there. Like Richardson, he had an unbounded admiration for Jacobsen; like Richardson's Heinz Krafft, he carried *Niels Lyhne* round with him everywhere, though he also carried a Bible, which Krafft did not. Again, like Heinz Krafft, he studied death in it 'in all its forms'. It is tempting to surmise that Rilke and Richardson met at some literary gathering in Munich, but there is no record of it, and all we have is the interesting fact of a common enthusiasm.

It was during her engagement to Robertson that Richardson began to write, at first critical articles and translations, then, after her marriage, her first novel, *Maurice Guest*. When she and her husband settled in London in 1903, she devoted herself to writing and soon became a recluse. After Robertson's death in 1933, she moved to Hastings with her devoted companion and died there in 1946.

One or two comments need to be made on these bare facts, which are of general importance. First, that it was Robertson who, in a systematic way, introduced her to the great stream of European literature, and that he himself had been drawn to literature from science by Jebb's lectures on the Greek poets. It was Continental literature therefore rather than her own that filled her mind just as she began to write. Robertson was an expert on Ibsen, to whom Richardson had already been haphazardly introduced; and he was fired with enthusiasm for Goethe by Carlyle's

¹⁰ Walter Richardson seems to have had no such dislike. A news-clipping in his scrap-book describes him as leading a deputation of Freemasons to the Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, in 1858.

studies of German literature and became an authority on Goethe and on German Romanticism. As far as the philosophic content of Richardson's novels is concerned, it is this Germanic strain in her work which is of primary importance, together with the influence of Jacobsen. Robertson also introduced her to Bjørnsen, whom she translated, and to the Russians, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, whom she read in German. She learned, too, from Flaubert. During the Strasbourg years she also began to learn Italian and presumably read Dante during the composition of *Maurice Guest*.

Richardson tells us of another effect Robertson had on her thinking: he had a hatred of amateurishness, and what she has to say about her own earlier slitheriness of approach to music and her own sporadic attempts to acquire a taste for and a knowledge of literature, indicate the nature of his influence on her. He must have contributed not only to the content of her work, to her methods of work, but also in some measure to its expression. It may indeed be a matter of some regret that her prose style developed under the influence of a man who was by profession a German scholar and who encouraged her to read so much German at a time when she was beginning to write. Robertson's own style, in his *History of German Literature*, is businesslike and impersonal, though in his shorter works it is brisk, confident, and pointed. But if his literary judgments in a generalised way are sound, his feeling for the poetic subtleties of English diction is sometimes questionable, to judge by his comments on his wife's style.

Richardson's first professional task was to translate Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*, for which she used a German version. The effect of this sort of intimacy was long-lasting: she never quite threw off the influence of the German sentence on her own and it was not a happy one.

One more literary influence besides the German and the Scandinavian should be mentioned briefly here, if only because it has received no attention: the work of Walter Pater, some of which she knew by the time she came to write her study of Jacobsen in 1897. There is an epigraph from Pater at the head of the article and a comparison in it of Jacobsen and Pater, both of which have an important bearing on her work. All three influences will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

But it is not this catalogue of events and books which is primarily

important. What matters is Richardson's inner response to the events and the books, what it was within her that drew her to certain books and endowed certain events with a peculiar significance. She seems to have grasped at a very early age the truth about human existence already referred to, which forms the groundwork of her books, revealing itself in patterns of incident, characterisation and imagery, binding them together into a single vision of life. The fleetingness of life, its basic insecurity were clear to her by the time she was eight: she had had by then seven different homes and there were many more to come. The frequent travels and removals, it is true, were felt by her and to a lesser extent by her sister as a pleasurable excitement, but for its full enjoyment they needed the mother's continuing presence as a guarantee of stability. It is not hard to understand her sister's morbid fear, after the father's death, of letting the mother out of her sight, nor Richardson's own devices for getting the mother's attention; nor is it hard to understand why she allowed her later life to be arranged in a certain way: absolute privacy, cast-iron domestic routine, relief from responsibility in order to give herself to a single task.

For the child, the absence of a stable background must have been as nothing compared with the growing uncertainty of the emotional atmosphere: the inexplicable quarrels of two seemingly devoted parents, the gradual mental and physical decline of the father, with its humiliating consequences, the absorption of the mother in the task of earning a living. The children must have felt they had a tenuous hold on both parents, a feeling which was not a good basis for their own emotional life. Richardson's niece has described how the father died 'slowly and sadly, leaving them with some terrible memories'.¹¹ She has also described the close emotional bond between Richardson and her sister, a bond that must have developed inevitably from their being thrown so much on their own resources, and which lasted with unusual intensity for long after they were both married.¹² Richardson herself tells of the physical effect her father's death had on her—it caused a nervous *tic*—and of the

¹¹ See M. A. Clutton-Brock, 'Mrs Lins: Sister to Henry Handel Richardson', *Southerly*, No. 1, 1967.

¹² Her daughter-in-law remarked of Lilian Richardson Neustatter: 'She was a person divided, with a foot in each country; she would really have liked to be Otto's wife and Ettie's sister all in one piece and one place'.

part it played in developing morbid fears in her sister.¹³ The latter, for instance, had a horror of being buried alive that was only partly due to a misunderstanding of an adult conversation, and Richardson speaks of her own hatred of being shut in, with its attendant fear of having things fall on her head. It is not surprising that burial alive, the extinction-phobia, should be the bedrock image of *Richard Mahony*, developed at great length in the opening pages and manifested in the sense of claustrophobia that increases as the novel goes on, as well as in Mahony's obsession with building spacious, solidly constructed houses. The buried miner, one remembers, loses his life because he had failed to strengthen the walls of his drive. Though it is given extended treatment in the trilogy, the image appears in other guises in each of the different novels. In *Maurice Guest*, the fear of being 'buried alive' in the provinces, suffocating under its petty demands, is the controlling idea from which the events of Maurice's life take their rise. Throughout the book, solid structures of routines are constantly proposed, or presented as defences against impermanence, only to be shattered one after another. One recalls here a sentence from one of Richardson's notebooks later in life: 'My mind is easily dissipated . . .'. In *The Getting of Wisdom*, Laura escapes from the constriction of home, only to feel as though she is submerged by the restrictions of school; finally her only prospect of liberty is represented as the world of her imagination. *The Young Cosima* presents a special case perhaps, but in Liszt and Cosima we sense strongly the fear of the burial alive, the extinction, of the essential self under demands imposed from outside.

The burial-alive phobia may have still another explanation as far as Richardson herself is concerned. The circumstances of her birth were extremely difficult and painful, and nearly cost both her and her mother

¹³ A letter exists from the child Lilian, apparently to her mother, describing—very vividly—a visit (1879) to Blanchard's pantomime *Goody Two-shoes*, at the end of which she remarks: 'Ettie makes faces less now'. A letter from Walter Richardson in 1862 describes the affliction, from which he himself suffered, as 'the tortures of the damned'.

Marcus Clarke's pantomime *Goody Two-Shoes*, incidentally, gives a satirical picture of the Melbourne financial, social, and political scene in 1869-70, in which Walter Richardson was involved. The text was brought to my notice by Miss Pamela Foulkes, A.N.U. post-graduate student.

their lives. She describes the event very dramatically, making reference to a possible terrifying storm as its accompaniment and mentioning the fact that her mother was too ill for a fortnight afterwards even to inquire after her: the account of her birth was obviously important to her. Presumably during this difficult birth the child would have had to fight for breath and one is reminded of a similar struggle she engaged in during the illness referred to as bronchitis early in her marriage, and about a year after her mother's death. There is evidence to suggest that difficult births frequently have some connection with disturbed relationships with the mother; whatever the cause, there is no doubt about Richardson's love-hate relationship with hers and what effect this may have had on other emotional relationships is an open question. At the same time, she tells us herself, she closely identified herself with her father, especially after his death, and felt at an early age a proprietary interest in him which was still present thirty-four years later.¹⁴ The evidence we have suggests an emotional situation of some complexity, an impression which is reinforced by other considerations.

A further characteristic which the novelist shares with her creatures is obsessiveness, frequently a trait developed as a defence against insecurity. As a child, she would bounce a ball against a wall for hours on end, while lost in 'making up' stories; as a woman she was unable to write except at her own desk, and she expected to find on that desk punctually at 9.30 every morning a tray of pencils, freshly sharpened by her husband. Her obsessiveness may have been learned from her father and mother: both displayed it in their different ways, but circumstances certainly intensified it. All the novels give accounts of the obsessionist temperament and three of them deal with two varieties of this temperament: what might be called the obsessionist-realist and the obsessionist-romantic. Maurice and Louise, Mary and Richard, Bülow and Cosima, are figures which represent these two types, but they occur also, usually in pairs, among the minor figures. The origins of some of these studies are clearly indicated in *Myself When Young*. There is a long account of Richardson's obsessive passion for a young clergyman at Maldon, which ends with the words 'Cared? I would have lain down for him to walk on!' More explicit still is the account of her infatuation with an older

¹⁴ She did not, in fact, dismiss him from her mind, as Leonie Kramer suggests in her *Great Australians* monograph, p. 4.

schoolgirl friend, a relationship apparently reciprocated, of which she writes (late in life, it must be remembered): 'The attraction this girl had for me was so strong that few others have surpassed it'. And further on: 'Besides, it was small joy to me to share her. I wanted to have her to myself, by myself, and if I couldn't then I didn't want her at all.' Her own evaluation of this experience has an important bearing on much that has already been said:

It stirred me to my depths, rousing feelings I hadn't known I possessed, and leaving behind it a heartache as cruel as my first. Along with the new and bitter realisation that to live meant to change. No matter how fast one clung, how jealously one tried to stem the flow, in time all things changed and passed. (*M.W.Y.*, pp. 70-1)

Not only the obsession itself, but the nature of its object is of interest here. The biographical material shows that Richardson was at times strongly attractive to women: one of her Leipzig friends was unreasonably jealous of her interest in Robertson. In the novels and short stories, apart from her general preoccupation with misfits, she shows a marked interest in emotional deviants, which culminates in the account of the relationship between Wagner and Bülow. The narrative point of view in the novels may best be described as bi-sexual. She is one of the few women writers whose men are as convincing as her women. The part that her pen-name plays in the effect produced by particular short stories is an interesting study on its own. Her passionate insistence on the use of her own name even in ordinary domestic intercourse, her husband's adoption of the name 'Henry' for her, early in their marriage, the choice of the name 'Richard' for her principal hero and its reappearance in the father-figure in her last novel suggest a basic insecurity about her own identity, and, superficially at least, a desire to identify herself with the father. The situation may, however, be more complex than that. Or it may of course be very simple: merely a pride of race insisting on perpetuation of the father's name in the only manner possible to a daughter.¹⁵

With such a psychological and intellectual history, it is not surprising that Richardson's mind was much preoccupied with the subject of death.

¹⁵ See letter to Ida Leeson, 28 July 1927, in Mitchell Library collection: 'It is only with the name that I consider my true name that I wish my work to be considered'.

Her predilection for death scenes in her novels has often been remarked on and may be traced back, one supposes, to the initial shock of the father's death, to the fears it aroused, fears which generated, it would seem, attempts to understand and overcome them. Richardson may also have had some dim recollection of her father's views about the subject; he was a declared Spiritualist, and as a child his daughter dipped into some of his books on Spiritualism. If Richard Mahony's views represent his own, he held that life was a 'semi-sleep and death the great awakening' and this was the view that his daughter herself expressed late in her own life. Olga Roncoroni describes her as 'the least materialistic person she had ever known'. Like her father, she was interested in the possibility of spirit manifestations and was a devoted member of the Society for Psychical Research. There are many references in her letters to experiences with 'poltergeists'; in her last novel, *The Young Cosima*, she stresses the occult power manifested in Cosima's dreams, while in *Richard Mahony* one of the chief bones of contention between Richard and his wife is his meddling in metaphysics, which leads to later commitment to Spiritualism.

In her sixties, her attitude to death had become settled in the form in which she described it to a young novelist friend:

I agree that the war isn't going too well, but oh, how interesting it is! That may sound heartless to you, but the death of the body doesn't mean as much to me as it does to others, for I look upon death, not as an ending, but as a new beginning: and one offering more and better chances than this earthly life.¹⁶

Before dismissing the passage as a piece of callous bravado, one should remember that Richardson spent the war years near Hastings, in what came to be known as 'Bomb Alley'; death was a daily probability.

It is tempting and easy to dismiss views such as Richardson's and her father's as wish-fulfilment fantasies, and certainly there is an element of such an attitude in Mahony's words to Mrs Marriner in *The Way Home*:

Have you ever reflected what a difference it would make, did we mortals *seriously* believe in a life to come? . . . a continuation of the best of this earthly existence—mental striving, spiritual aspiration,

¹⁶ In a letter to Oliver Stonor (Morchard Bishop), 29 April 1941. Original in the National Library, Canberra.

love for our neighbour. If we did so believe, our every perspective would alter. And the result be a marked increase in spirituality. For the orthodox Christian's point of view is too often grossly materialistic—and superstitious . . . (p. 611)

There is, even so, nothing in itself morally reprehensible in wishing that a certain belief could be true, as long as the wish is not the grounds for the belief.¹⁷

When Richardson writes about death, however, it is the process of dying that is dwelt on with a wealth of circumstantial detail, a process that is usually a painful one, like the death of Mahony's daughter, or of his wife's brother, or of the woman in the short story called 'Death', published under that title in 1911, but later re-named 'Mary Christina'. Sometimes, as with the drowned girl, Avery Hill, in *Maurice Guest*, it is the appearance of the dead that interests her. 'Death', in particular, reminds us fleetingly of Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, though it is much foreshortened; it is difficult to repress the thought that here and elsewhere, Richardson, like Tolstoy, deliberately contemplated the subject in all its physical horror in order to rid herself of morbid fears of it. Such an approach would be in accordance with the general cathartic nature of her practice of art. The view of life expressed in her short story is predominantly nihilistic and she dissociated herself from it later in life. The story is interesting, however, for another reason, since it raises one of her dominant themes, the relationship between shadow and substance.

One final characteristic, which has a bearing on her books, needs to be mentioned: her need for solitude, her reluctance to confront socially more than one person at a time, her refusal to visit other people's houses. Her unwillingness to talk about her books is well known; she herself men-

¹⁷ Mahony's (i.e. H.H.R.'s) belief that it is impossible wholly 'to account for life and its phenomena in terms of physiology, chemistry and physics' has its modern parallel in a statement by Erwin Chargaff, Professor of Biochemistry at Columbia University. Chargaff, one of the pioneers of research into nucleic acids, speaking of the picture of life made possible by the discovery of D.N.A., warns that 'the concatenations of fate and accident to which human beings are subject during and even before their lives are too complex to yield to so simple-minded a grammar'. See *Columbia Forum*, Summer 1969, p. 17.

tions it from time to time. 'Wariness' rather than 'reticence' would be a better word to describe this attitude, judging by Nettie Palmer's account of the 'curtain of privacy she drew round her work'. Mrs Palmer's own expression is 'watchful defensiveness':

The heavy-lidded eyes, too, were inclined to lower a shutter when any attempt was made to lure her into intimate talk about the past or discussions of how far her books were based on personal experience . . . She seemed intent on keeping prying eyes from probing into her personal life or the drive behind her creative impulse. (N.P., pp. 4, 5)

What is interesting about this passage is that Mrs Palmer felt that there *was* a 'drive behind the creative impulse', that is to say, that the creative impulse was not primary, a point we shall return to presently. It is clear that Mrs Palmer felt at any rate that there was more in this defensiveness than the disinclination many artists feel for talking about past work, or work in progress: the fear of dissipating inspiration in mere chat is well grounded. But when one glances back over the recollections which those who knew Richardson have published, one is struck by the fact that most of them amount to little more than a recital of externalities, and that where more is attempted, there is a decided emphasis on acceptable virtues and little reference to more than picturesque or venial faults. One is left wondering what they did not say, rather than feeling satisfied with what they have said. The immense egoism, the decided streak of vanity, for instance, which come out strongly in some of the letters and recollections, are never alluded to, and the questions raised by some of the given facts are ignored or passed over. What, for instance, is the real explanation behind the change from the apparently happy social life of the Robertsons in Germany to the rigorous isolation of the life in London? There may be a perfectly simple one, but the one offered so far is unsatisfactory. Why was it not possible, as Robertson said it was not, to find in London of all places the same kind of stimulating companionship that Strasbourg had offered? It is difficult to believe that there were not among Robertson's colleagues and students congenial spirits who shared his wife's interests. He himself certainly found pleasure in the company of his students and gave them his time generously, but it was at his own funeral that these students first caught a glimpse of his wife, according to Olga Roncoroni.

Neither Robertson's explanation of their secluded life, nor Olga Ron-

coroni's picture of the dedicated artist and the ritual solemnity of her working day is completely satisfying. For a writer relieved of the duties of supporting herself, of house-keeping and child-bearing, so favoured as to be able to devote her whole time to her work for close on fifty years, the results are meagre in quantity, whatever they may be in quality. As she said herself, she was a 'miserably unproductive writer'. One cannot explain the meagreness by the passion for exact expression which led Tolstoy to write five, six, or even seven versions of his giant novels. In spite of her expressed pleasure in words, Richardson's corrections show very little feeling for words merely as words. This is surprising in view of her passionate devotion to poetry, and in view of her admiration for Nietzsche's poetic prose. But though her response to music and to the verbal music which is poetry is unquestioned, there is little or no musical quality in her own diction, even if her sentence construction is rhythmically sensitive. Most of the time it is immaterial, except metrically, which particular word is the finally adopted one and it is too frequently less than perfect. She wrote extremely slowly, we are told at one point and, at another, that writing came easily to her. It is clear that much of what she wrote, especially in *Richard Mahony*, must have been extremely painful to her to write and it seems that there were long periods of the day when nothing would come. She speaks with irritation of being 'badgered to write', yet she also admits to the feeling of depression that overcame her between books and of the unhappiness she experienced until another was begun. We are reminded here of Mahony's compulsion to reading to escape his inner conflicts:¹⁸ 'To lose himself in another's thoughts was the one anodyne left him' (*R.M.*, p. 635).

Another curious fact relevant to the present point is that, though she lived for forty years in the great metropolis of the English-speaking world, none of her works of fiction deals with the place, or with the time in which she lived there. The fact in itself has no importance: there is no obligation upon a writer to deal with any particular period, but it has some interest if considered along with the view that her three best novels are about her own experience in young womanhood, adolescence and childhood, in that order, and that even when she comes to write of historical figures in *The Young Cosima*, her own familiar themes are embedded in it. One would like to know more about the novel of

¹⁸ Cf. *M.W.Y.*, p. 75: 'I drowned my sorrows in books'.

contemporary life, which she began at last, probably some time in 1940 after the publication of *The Young Cosima*. According to Olga Roncoroni, it was to be a psychological study of a person, with London and its life as a background. She had begun collecting material for such a book as far back as 1920, while she was still engaged on the trilogy; during this year, she asked Olga Roncoroni (who was undergoing psychoanalysis, apparently at Richardson's suggestion) for a written record of her dreams, and for details of what went on 'during the hours I spent on the sofa'. This was the novel which, according to Miss Roncoroni, was abandoned in 1942: 'by now called *Nick and Sanny*, of which she had completed the first eight chapters'. She turned aside from it, before abandoning it altogether, to write a long short story call *Miss Hailey and Miss Sannis*. By September 1942 she was at work on her reminiscences for *Myself When Young*. The manuscript of *Nick and Sanny* was wrapped in a parcel, with a note that it was to be destroyed if she did not live to complete it. This instruction was presumably carried out.

Speculation on the subject matter of the novel and of the short story based on it is useless, though one might hazard a guess that a theme more than hinted at in the short stories and explored under a rich cloak of Victorian sentiment in *The Young Cosima*, in the study of Bülow and Wagner, could have been in her mind.

While so much biographical material remains still inaccessible, reconciling the facts of Richardson's writing career is not an easy task. What seems increasingly clear as one tries to come to grips with the work as a whole is that there was, as Nettie Palmer surmised, some strong driving force behind it, quite distinct from an artistic purpose, and that it was this force which dictated the themes of the books and, to some extent, their treatment. Vance Palmer's remark in a review in 1958¹⁹ that she 'was haunted by a fear, especially in her early womanhood, that a similar break-down [i.e. to her father's] awaited her', points in the right direction, and would explain the 'watchful defensiveness' noticed earlier by Mrs Palmer. The uncertainty of her early relationships with her parents, the warring impulses toward flight and rest, the constant sense of being a misfit, are the kinds of circumstances which predispose certain natures to fear an invasion of the self as a threat to its survival. Her fear of

¹⁹ *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 2, 1958, pp. 201-2.

insanity, Palmer goes on to say, 'increased her tendency to withdraw from life, to withhold herself from people, to devote herself with monastic intensity to her ordained work'.

In 1939, after the strain of writing *The Young Cosima*, which was completed, it should be remembered, without her husband's support, she suffered what she described as a nervous breakdown. There is little to be inferred from this fact alone: many mentally robust people have done the same in certain circumstances. But all her married life, though she seems to have had great physical stamina, to judge by the accounts of her feats at tennis, walking, and swimming, she certainly avoided and was protected against situations which would tax her nervous energy. Yet although Vance Palmer's remarks are plausible enough as far as they go, there is a suggestion of a negative attitude about them which does not square with the total impression made by the work. Richardson was not only her father's daughter, but also her mother's, and, as she suggests herself, she inherited all her mother's own indomitable will and certainly her capacity for self-control.

The thesis underlying this study of her work is that she set out not to *escape* from her fears and conflicts into art, but to conquer and resolve them. If she had been escaping, she would not have written the kind of books she did. To confront and analyse and re-live the kinds of painful experience described in different degrees in each of her books does not constitute 'a withdrawal from life', but quite the contrary. And the systematic order in which she dealt with her experiences suggests strongly that she was deliberately conducting a piece of self-analysis with a definite aim in view. She was not, I think, a born writer, but had writing 'thrust upon her', and she rose magnificently to the task set by her fate—or perhaps by her husband?²⁰ To say that the compelling force behind her work was psychotherapy takes nothing from her achievement: if anything, it makes it all the more remarkable. For an impulse that is distinct from an artistic purpose is usually the ruin of a writer: the weaknesses in Lawrence's work are due to the fact that he was trapped in his own obsessions. But with Richardson the reverse is the case. That

²⁰ Consider the implications of L. A. Triebel's remark in an essay in *Fisher's Ghost*, p. 74: with 'Australian common-sense, Henry Handel Richardson realized . . . that with a husband unswervingly devoted to exact learning, she too needed a compelling interest'.

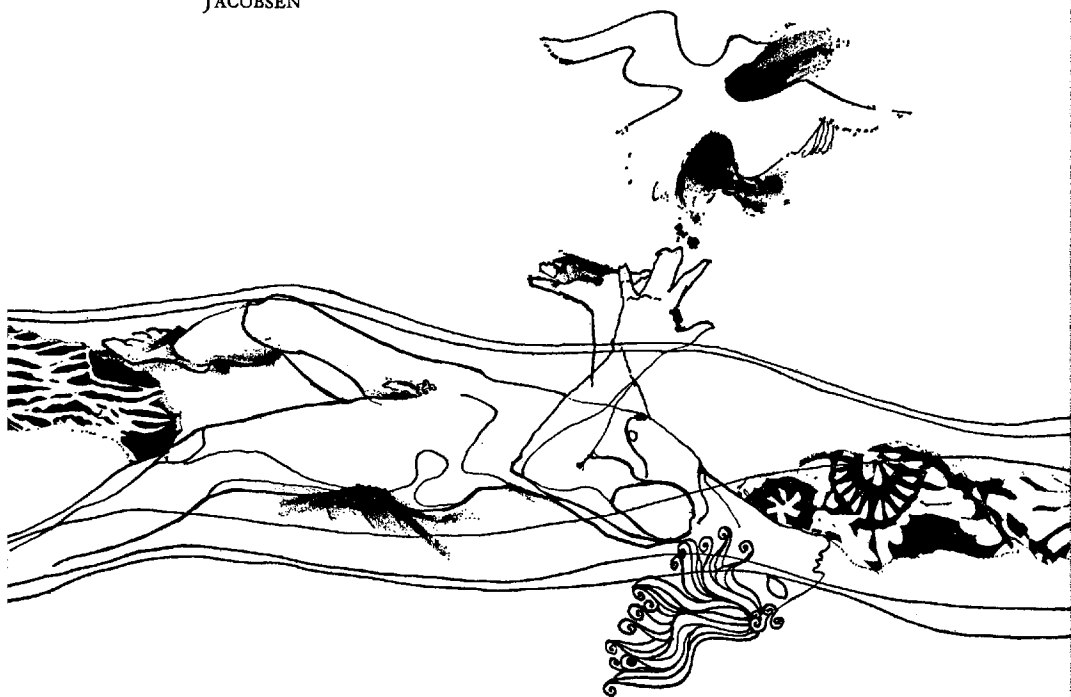
she has been able to give such vitality and independence to her creations without concealment or romantic distortion is a tribute to her intellectual toughness and triumphant proof that it is possible to make artistic virtue out of what seems to have been a psychological necessity. Moreover, the method of 'scientific' realism, of 'naturalism' which she chose was the very one best suited to achieve such an end.²¹ It is in fact her rigorous artistic exactitude that lifts her main novel beyond the realm of the personal and makes it, as Palmer said, 'the greatest piece of imaginative writing we have had, or are likely to have, for many years'. It also helped to bind her to the common earth.

²¹ It is the literary analogue of the total recall aimed at by psychoanalysis.

Chapter 2

... thus our nature grows with our knowledge and is moulded and purified by it. It is as beautiful to learn as to live. Do not be afraid of losing yourself in minds greater than your own.

JACOBSEN



Intellectual Reassurance

I

A SENSE OF the fleetingness of things, a desire to hold and possess them; the fear of death, the fascinated interest in it; the need to love, the strange forms love takes; the craving for wholeness, art as a means of achieving it: all the basic material of her books was, as Richardson said, available to her before she was ten. What she needed to enable her to make use of it was first an intellectual climate in which an interest in such ideas would not seem perverse and outlandish; secondly, independent and authoritative confirmation of what must have been so far crude perceptions and intuitions. The psychological and artistic aims are fused in the problem of achieving a harmonious co-habitation of opposites, of reconciling the 'father' and the 'mother' in her own nature.

Richardson found in Germany, it seems, as she did not in England, a milieu congenial to her spirit and in Germanic literature what her intellect needed in order to operate. Whether she was aware of it at first or not, she came to live, at a crucial moment in her development, among a people for whom the polarities of existence and the attempt to reconcile or transcend them were part of a cultural tradition stretching back through Hegel, Kant, mystics like Suso and Jacob Boehme to Plotinus and Plato and the pre-Socratics, and with ramifications linking it to Eastern philosophies such as Taoism.

It is a tradition in which the striving soul of Faust and the accepting soul of Gretchen are familiar symbols. Richard and Mary Mahony, Madeleine and Louise, and on a small scale, Laura and Pin, fit into it with ease in their humbler fashion.

This intellectual affinity with the Germanic view of the world may have been what Richardson missed when she returned to live in England, where she found it so hard to settle down that she withdrew into herself once more, 'spiritually isolated', as Robertson says. There seems no doubt that even in a prosaic sense she felt at home in Germany, and in 1915 the shock of having to readjust her ideas about a country that had meant so much to her caused 'an intense emotional revulsion', which, she said, was one of the obstacles to her writing during the war.

Her three years in Leipzig, as a student fresh from Australia, she describes as the happiest she had yet known.¹ And seven years after her marriage, she remarked in her diary at one point:

'No diary kept: because from July 22nd on I was too happy and too *unbewusst* [i.e. unselfconscious] to think about it.' (*M.W.Y.*, p. 147)

The general tone of the little that has been published from the diaries of the German period is one of a busy contentment, in spite of vague references to illness and to one serious illness.

Some mention of Richardson's health should perhaps be made at this point, since the allusions to it seem inconsistent. In 1940, looking back on the period when she was writing *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, she referred to a state of 'almost chronic ill-health' which cost her at least three months out of every twelve. On her first trip abroad without her mother, however, the excursion to Norway before her marriage, she describes herself and her companion as young and strong and well able to bear discomfort. The accounts of the Munich and Strasbourg days are full of descriptions of strenuous walking-tours and bicycle-rides and of tennis-playing that reached championship standards. Walking, swimming and tennis seem to have been constant activities during her life in England, the swimming in temperatures that often deterred her companions from joining her. Apart from the weakness to the throat recorded during the Strasbourg period, there is little precise indication of what her ill-health consisted of and it is difficult to reconcile the feats of

¹ Nevertheless, a passage in an early draft of *M.W.Y.* speaks of going through 'one of the stormiest times of my life' in Leipzig; of knowing, after leaving Leipzig, 'once again . . . what it was to be a misfit', and of the period between leaving Leipzig and her marriage as 'quite the unhappiest time of my life'. The drafts of *M.W.Y.* make it more clear than the finished version that it was not easy to persuade Robertson to take a risk and get married.

physical endurance, which are from time to time implied in the biographical material, with the behaviour of a chronic invalid. After her marriage in December 1895, two events are recorded as having left a mark on her: her mother's agonising illness and death in November 1896 and her own illness in December 1898. Her life-long friend, Matilda Washburn Freund, describes the mother's death as the most terrible blow that had befallen the two sisters during their short lives:

Since they could remember anything at all, she had been beside them to help and guide them and do everything for them. Ettie had George to take care of her now, but poor Lil was utterly cast adrift, for she had always been so dependent on her mother . . . (P.R., p. 21)

Richardson's secretary, Olga Roncoroni, writes of the mother's death: This event had a profound effect on H.H., and ultimately led to the rather bitter short story, first published in the *English Review* (1911) under the title *Death*. (M.W.Y., p. 142)

Miss Roncoroni found among Richardson's papers after her death an unfinished diary account of her mother's illness which foreshadowed the later accounts of death scenes in the novels.

In December 1898 Richardson was severely ill with what was allegedly diagnosed as acute bronchitis. She had woken suddenly in the night to find that she could not breathe and had to struggle to get air into her lungs. It was this illness (according to Miss Roncoroni) which affected not her lungs but her throat. Apart from this episode, the evidence available at the moment, though more may be forthcoming to contradict it, suggests a picture of nervous rather than physical weakness. Whatever the cause, there is little doubt that those who were her intimates had a protective attitude towards her and felt obliged to shelter her from demands upon her from outsiders, particularly after the Robertsons settled in England.

During the early Leipzig days, it is clear, she seems to have felt mainly a sense of liberation as 'a person in my own right'. Discovery of her limitations as a pianist was balanced by the recognition of her talent for harmony and composition; her life was full of classes and concert-going and exciting new music. But her literary education progressed equally fast. Certainly she had encountered a writer of the German Romantic school before leaving Australia: when she was a music teacher at Toorak, she copied out in bed at night chapter after chapter of Hoff-

mann's *Kreisleriana*, a book 'purporting to relate the musical sufferings of a certain Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler'.² She used, it seems, Longfellow's version of the tales in his travel-novel *Hyperion*, mentioned by Laura in *The Getting of Wisdom*. *Hyperion*, moreover, would have been just the kind of book to stir her at this stage of her emotional life; she would have identified herself all too easily with its hero, Paul, as well as with the music-master.³ She would also have found in it, before leaving Australia, many of the ideas which were already important to her. A few examples will suffice to show how the book might have appealed to the restless young music teacher.

On page 95 we find Paul Flemming saying:
All these indefinite longings, these yearnings after an unknown somewhat, I have felt and still feel within me; but not yet their fulfilment. There is also from pages 135 to 138 much discussion of permanence and change, and the mention of a 'Faust-like . . . deception':

. . . you think the change permanent . . . (p. 135)

Flemming's remark to one of his hosts:

All things must change . . . For ever and ever in the eddies of time and accident, we whirl away (p. 138)

must have struck home. So would the description of Hoffman's death; he, like Richard Mahony, had to face death in 'an appalling shape':

. . . Five months after this he ceased to suffer, because he had ceased to live. He died piecemeal. His feet and hands, his legs and arms, gradually, and in succession, became motionless, dead . . . (p. 236)

The passage on page 98 would certainly have appealed to the mature

² The notebook in which she copied out the passages about Hoffmann-Kreisler was still in existence in her seventies when she was writing *M.W.Y.*

³ See *M.W.Y.*, p. 77. E. T. A. Hoffmann was the author, among many other works, of *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier* (1814), which contains most of the tales alluded to. Regarded as the high priest of German Romanticism, Hoffmann was a gifted composer, as well as a painter and writer. He died from the same form of syphilis as that which most likely carried off Walter Richardson. Longfellow's *Hyperion* (1839) gives only a brief glimpse of Hoffmann's tales about Kreisler, but Richardson no doubt read them again in their original form, and found many more parallels to her own thinking. The quotations from *Hyperion* here are taken from the first illustrated edition published in London in 1853.

woman, but no doubt the seventeen-year-old girl was also receptive to the views of a poet claimed by the Spiritualists as one of themselves: . . . death is neither an end nor a beginning. It is a transition, not from one existence to another, but from one state of existence to another.

(p. 98)

Flemming's remark that 'A life that is worth writing at all is worth writing minutely' must have come back to her when she embarked on *Richard Mahony*, and she is likely to have stored up the wisdom of the epigraph to the book:

Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly heart.

Richardson of course did look into the past, but to understand it, not to mourn it; she certainly 'wisely improved the present', and met the future courageously.

Longfellow's book would have introduced her to Novalis as well as to Hoffmann, and in general would have oriented her mind towards German Romanticism, so that the ground would have been prepared before she left Melbourne for the seeds to fall into it. Indeed Richardson provides an interesting exception to the rule stated so beautifully by Keats in a letter to Reynolds (3 May 1818):

For axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses: We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the Author.

What Richardson was later to read was *first* proved upon her pulses. But when she arrived in Germany her new environment shocked her into awareness of her own ignorance. Her account of Elizabeth Morsbach, in whose aunt's house the Richardsons were boarders, is interesting:

But it was her braininess that impressed me, her learning I envied her. She spoke excellent English, and was well-read in three languages besides her own. It made her a very entertaining companion, for she didn't in the least mind sharing her knowledge. I can remember her, for instance, describing *Ghosts* and *The Wild Duck* to us as she read them—at a time when Ibsen's name was little known outside Norway.

And, to conclude, she was a rarely gifted pianist. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 104)

Elizabeth Morsbach had trained with Liszt in Weimar and it was from her that Richardson learnt something of Liszt's personality, information she was to put to good use in *The Young Cosima*:

For her woman's eye had seized and held just those intimate personal details that the male eye is apt to miss, or to think of no account.

(*M.W.Y.*, p. 104)

With Robertson's influence added to Elizabeth's, it is not surprising that Richardson's taste developed rapidly and systematically: we find her reading *Faust* in German in the early days of their acquaintance.

Robertson, it must be remembered, was a man who already had a scientific training behind him; he also possessed the perfectionist temperament of the Scot. Whether, with his dual cultural background, he introduced Richardson to Freud or not, she was familiar with Freud's work long before he became known in England and her books reveal how much she took his ideas for granted, though she did not accept them without reserve. Later she came to have personal associations with the psychiatric profession: a great friend married a relative of Henry Maudsley and it would be strange if his books were not known to her; her nephew followed the same profession and became a distinguished forensic psychiatrist, who is still in practice in London. Maudsley's essay 'The Limits of Philosophical Enquiry' in *Body and Mind* (indeed, the whole book) is particularly relevant to *Richard Mahony*.

Robertson, in a study of his wife's work, was at pains to emphasise that *Maurice Guest* was a 'mosaic of influences' and drew attention to the effect on her writing of the great Russians and Flaubert. He goes so far as to claim that:

Without books such as *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is safe to say that *Maurice Guest* would never have been written, or at least never have taken the form it took. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 164)

There is an air of wild exaggeration in what Robertson has to say about the Russian and French influences. There is little in either the atmosphere or the preoccupations of *Maurice Guest* to remind us of *The Brothers Karamazov* or of *Crime and Punishment*. The spiritual life of Maurice Guest cannot be compared in richness or complexity with that of characters such as Ivan, Alyosha or Raskolnikov. The intellectual and spiritual plane upon which *Maurice Guest* moves is much more akin to

that of *The Story of an African Farm*;⁴ there are real resemblances in characterisation and temper between the two books, though the milieu of the latter is unsophisticated by comparison, Richardson had certainly come to read it before writing *Maurice Guest*, or during the writing of it, for she mentions it early in the book, and the reference to it is one of the devices used to insinuate an allusion to Australia into the novel, so that the birth-place of Louise, mentioned later, will not seem too outlandish.

What Dostoyevsky may have taught her was a pitiless frankness in the analysis of distraught states of mind, and the use of dreams to reinforce and deepen such analysis, but there is no proof of this, and certainly no proof that without *Crime and Punishment*, *Maurice Guest* could not have been written. There were more convincing precedents elsewhere, in Goethe and Jacobsen. As for Tolstoy, though she shares with him the habit of proceeding from the external to the internal, what she learned from him may also have been merely 'tricks of the trade'; the habit, for instance, of establishing the continuity of a character by constant reference to some physical characteristic: Karenin's cracking of his finger joints, or the luminous, thoughtful eyes of Princess Mary and her habit of flushing. In like manner, Richardson refers again and again in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* to the clearly-defined white parting in Mary Mahony's black hair, to Purdy's lame leg. The habit of objectivity, of leaving the reader in ignorance about the writer's own opinion could equally well have been learned from Tolstoy, who practised it, as he tells us himself, deliberately. Richardson, however, does acknowledge a debt to Flaubert on this account. But the debt ends there and the resemblances that critics have seen between *Madame Bovary* and *Louise Dufrayer* are superficial only. Louise, as we shall see, owes her existence to a totally different being. The influence of French and Russian novelists, deeply as Richardson admired them, has been much exaggerated and one wonders whether an unnecessary solicitude for her reputation has not been responsible for this over-emphasis. In much the same way Patrick White's

⁴ A novel by Olive Schreiner. The latter's use of a masculine pen-name, 'Ralph Iron', for the first edition of her novel, may have contributed to Richardson's decision to use one. Richardson would also have been impressed by the quotation from Tocqueville used as an epigraph by Schreiner, in which he speaks of the entire man being found in the cradle of the child.

name has been coupled with Tolstoy's and the Holy Spirit's by his too zealous promoters.⁵ Neither novelist stands in need of such support.

What is interesting about Robertson's discussion of 'influences' is the manner in which he handles the debt to Scandinavian writers, which he regards as more important than others. But he does not analyse it as one might expect and speaks only of the softening effect of Danish realism on the harshness of Russian introspection and of a certain similarity in theme between *The Getting of Wisdom* and Bjørnsen's *The Fisher Girl*, one of the books Richardson translated. It is strange that there is no mention at all in his essay of *Niels Lyhne*, the novel which influenced Richardson profoundly in so many ways and which is directly referred to in *Maurice Guest*. It is all the more strange in that Robertson himself gave her this novel and encouraged her to translate it—her first professional task as a writer.

Besides this curious omission, there is also an odd ambiguity in Robertson's reference to German influences on his wife's writing. He says at one point that *Maurice Guest* stands in its essentials nearer to the peculiarly Slavonic and Germanic (including Scandinavian) development of realism than the French and at another that he was doubtful whether *Maurice Guest* was, as had been thought, materially influenced by the German realistic school. Yet again he says:

My work for *Cosmopolis* and *The Times* brought into the house the newest German literature which she followed—the realistic movement—with intense interest. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 150)

This statement is followed by an impressive list of the French authors, including Zola, whom she read, and by another reference to Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. It almost seems as though Professor Robertson's scholarly integrity compelled him to mention the correct direction in which to look, in spite of a wish to obscure it. His brief mention of D'Annunzio's *Il Fuoco*, a most important influence, reinforces this impression.

Professor Robertson's insistence on the literary provenance of the novel and his playing down of the real Scandinavian and German influences are difficult to understand, particularly as most of his comments on the novel itself are sound and penetrating, as far as he allows them to go. It is hard to resist the notion that he was doing what an impeccably honest man could do to distract attention from what might be construed as

⁵ See 'blurb' on the back cover of *The Tree of Man* (Penguin Books, 1961).

personal material in the novel. To claim it was 'original' would be to stress its personal quality. To indicate certain sources rather than others would provide evidence of where the writer's personal interests lay. To emphasise others less personal is the only recourse possible. Robertson attempts to do all three and the result is confusion, as far as the discussion of sources is concerned.

It would, of course, have been most surprising if Richardson had not learned much from the Scandinavians and the Germans. Robertson was an authority on both literatures and during his years in Munich and Strasbourg was at work on his *History of German Literature*, the proofs of which his wife helped him to correct. Richardson could indeed have found all the stimulation she needed in German literature alone, especially in what German literature made of Zola's theories. As Bithell puts it, in his discussion of the German naturalist movement:

Zola's procedure, deliberately photographic, seemed the denial of poetry and inspiration; in actual result, however, he achieves the effect of poetry by his gigantic symbolism.⁶

C. F. Meyer, for instance, whose *Collected Verse* appeared in 1882, used scientific methods to conceal his real intentions. With him history veils: the intimate problem of his own personality, and so cunningly that symbolism and psychoanalysis had to make their impress on criticism before the hidden import of his verse as of his tales could be unravelled.⁷

The same kind of impressionistic naturalism can be found in Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf, who, in their *Papa Hamlet* were perhaps the originators of it in Germany. Their aim was to write as a camera takes photographs, so that the artist's temperament would be eliminated, and they initiated the technique known as *Sekundenstil*—the minute notation of trains of thought. The similarities with Richardson's practice are obvious enough.

Her later preoccupation with the reciprocal relations between the psychic and the physical worlds is paralleled in numerous writers: in Theodor Fechner, for example, who deeply influenced Breuer, Freud's intimate friend and colleague. Freud and Breuer in 1895 published

⁶ Jethro Bithell, *Modern German Literature, 1880-1938*, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

their *Studies on Hysteria*, a work from which, according to Ernest Jones, it is customary to date the beginnings of psychoanalysis. One of the most perceptive reviews of this book was written for the leading Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* by the Professor in the History of Literature, Alfred von Bergner, in December of the same year. Bergner was a poet and dramatic critic as well as a literary historian and it would be strange if Robertson had not known his work. His review was entitled 'Surgery of the Soul' and he predicted:

We dimly conceive the idea that it may one day become possible to approach the innermost secret of human personality . . . The theory itself is in fact nothing but the kind of psychology used by poets.⁸ Bergner illustrated his statement by reference to Shakespeare. Soon after the book and the review appeared, the Robertsons settled in Munich. One cannot help wondering if Richardson's interest in Freud and his views dates from this time, and whether somewhere she came across an essay of the writer who had first sown the germ of the concept of free association in Freud's mind, Ludwig Börne. Börne, who was much admired as an author by Freud, had in 1823 written an essay entitled 'The Art of Becoming an Original Writer in Three Days'. His advice was: Take a few sheets of paper and for three days in succession write down without any falsification or hypocrisy, everything that comes into your head . . . and when the three days are over you will be amazed at what novel and startling thoughts have welled up in you.⁹ It is advice which Richardson would have found congenial.

Writers with whom she would also have felt at home were Hebbel¹⁰ and his Belgian descendant Maeterlinck; Hebbel's plays with their passionate natures compelled by forces outside themselves, the mingling of the contemporary with the mythical; Maeterlinck with his irrational mysticism and matter-of-factness, interpreting external phenomena as symbols. Maeterlinck's essays, *The Treasure of the Humble*, published in

⁸ See Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, p. 224.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁰ The name of the dramatist Hebbel, author among other works of a play called *Moloch*, occurs more than once in the marginalia of the source-books of *The Young Cosima*. These include a copy of *The Reminiscences of Friedrich Hebbel* (1876) by Eduard Kulke, evidently belonging to Professor Robertson.

English in 1897, with Walkley's Introduction, contain much that would have interested her.

Above all, there was the example of Goethe, who made the sense of 'polarities' part of the consciousness of German artists. The marks of *Faust*, are, as we shall see, most plainly discernible in *Richard Mahony*, but Richardson had read the play before embarking on *Maurice Guest*, and no doubt it was a familiar topic in the household of a man who was an authority on Goethe. It will be argued in the final chapter of this book that Professor Robertson and the poet who was the ruling passion of his life were indeed the centre of the web of influences on Richardson discussed in this section; since, however, they have a personal and emotional significance, as well as an intellectual importance, it seems better to treat them separately. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the polarities of rest and motion provide the dramatic tensions of *Faust*, and that they appear in Richardson's first novel in the characters of both Maurice and Louise. Just as Faust was most susceptible to Mephistopheles' influence when he was tempted by the longing for rest and permanence, so does Louise, whose need is for change, succumb, against her better judgment, to the promise of peace with Maurice. In the same way, Maurice denies the more basic need of his nature for stability and succumbs to the challenge of Louise's questing spirit. 'Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust . . .' might well be the motto for this, as for all the novels, though there is reason to believe that, like Goethe himself, Richardson felt the need to temper Northern violence with Roman discipline and serenity. Her husband's knowledge of Italian literature would have been equally useful to her.

Among purely German influences, that of Novalis, the poet whom Heinz Krafft in *Maurice Guest* spent days reading, is also pervasive. In Chapter VI of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, for instance, we have the familiar opposition which occurs in *Maurice Guest* and *Richard Mahony* between the active, aggressive figure 'born to action and industry', and the passive, introspective types who seek understanding. In the same book we have the concept of life and art as hostile forces, which is present in Richardson's novels, and the association of genius with disease. Both of these notions also occur in Thomas Mann. That she knew Spielhagen's work is clear from the mention of it in *Maurice Guest*, but what she learnt from it of 'problematical natures'¹¹ she could as easily have got

¹¹ She uses the phrase as a quotation from Goethe in her article on Jacobsen.

from self-examination or from Goethe himself, and from Jacobsen.

The concepts of German idealistic philosophy filtered through the works of nineteenth-century Romantic writers can be discerned behind Richardson's thinking; she seems to have been especially attracted by Schopenhauer's notion of death as the goal of life, for instance (an idea expressed by Goethe in conversation), a notion which Wagner translated into music, and which was to be incorporated into Freud's system of ideas later. A number of references to Schopenhauer have been expunged from the final typescript of *Maurice Guest*.

Hegel's theory of knowledge is traceable in *The Getting of Wisdom* and *Maurice Guest*, and there are touches of his particular version of idealism which dissolved the boundaries of matter and spirit.

Kant's insistence on the necessity for understanding the nature of the human mind, for a concrete basis for thought, must also have appealed to her.

The influence of Nietzsche, whose prose artistry she greatly admired, has probably been exaggerated. Nietzsche is too arbitrary and contradictory a thinker to pin down and, contrary to the opinion of certain Australian critics, *Maurice Guest* is not a novel that affirms Nietzschean ethics. Schilsky, Krafft, and Fürst are not given the stature necessary to sustain the role of the superior 'free spirit'—at times they might have stepped out of Murger. And it is not necessary to endow Schilsky with the characteristics of the *Übermensch*. It is his relation as a *man* to Louise that Richardson is interested in and he is characterised enough to fill the role of the kind of man she could love, and no more. Moreover, Krafft is far too epicene a character for the role of Overman. Much as Richardson admired Nietzsche's lyrical poems and his poetic prose, it is difficult to imagine her subscribing to some of his psychological and philosophical views. For one thing she would have had a strong antipathy to his conception of the role of women; and his particular brand of optimism, concentrated on the things of this world alone, adopted in revulsion from Schopenhauer's pessimism, would hardly have fitted in with her Spiritualistic convictions.

How widely she read in German literature, how deeply, is a matter for speculation, but she could scarcely have lived beside John George Robertson for over thirty years without absorbing some of his ideas about it, and he had a clear and logical mind, with a gift for synthesising significances. A writer of fiction does not have to be a scholar in order to

make use of his intellectual food. A mere suggestion is often enough to set off a train of creative activity. Richardson was a 'noticing child', read quickly and had a parrot-like memory, and no hint would have been lost on her. The object of the present chapter is not to lend support to Robertson's view of *Maurice Guest* as a mosaic of influences, but to draw attention to the material locked in her before she read anything at all and to point to the key most likely to have unlocked it. Her situation when she went to Germany was probably very like that of the young Waldo in *The Story of an African Farm*, when he (accidentally) came upon an old copy of Mill's *Political Economy*:

All he read he did not fully understand; the thoughts were new to him; but this was the fellow's startled joy in the book—the thoughts were his, they belonged to him. He had never thought them before, but they were his . . . The boy's heavy body quivered with excitement. So he was not alone, not alone.¹²

The book which had the effect of a similar revelation on Richardson was Jens Peter Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*, published in 1880, and sent to her by Robertson during her engagement to him. 'This book', she writes, 'stirred me as few books have ever done, either before or since . . .'. She was not alone in her enthusiasm for it: Rilke's passion for it has already been mentioned; Freud knew the book, better, one suspects, than Jones admits, and so did E. L. Grant Watson, whose 'mystic' novels have more importance in Australian literature than is generally conceded.

Translating the book from German as Richardson did, with the help of a Danish version and a Danish dictionary, must have made her familiar with every word in it in an especially intimate way. It is strange therefore that though its influence has been acknowledged often enough, less attention has been paid to its subject matter than might have been expected with a book copied as faithfully as an artist copies a picture.¹³

¹² See Hutchinson's Colonial Library edition, p. 98. Richardson long remained an ardent admirer of Olive Schreiner's ideas.

¹³ An unpublished essay by H. A. Pappé, lent to me by C. B. Christesen, editor of *Meanjin Quarterly*, Melbourne, after this chapter was written, comes very near to the heart of the matter. It is a pity his essay was not published when it was first written, but pleasant to find one's speculations shared by an independent witness.

II

Behind the work of most great writers one sometimes finds the symbol by which he lives. The name that Richardson gave to her translation of *Niels Lyhne*, her first professional task, is such a symbol. The title *Siren Voices* might have served for her work as a whole and as a warning by which she regulated her existence. The name is taken from a remark made by Jacobsen in describing the novel; for him the 'siren voices' were the voices of tradition and of childhood memories and the condemning thunder of society all raised in unison to deter the free-thinker from remaining faithful to atheism. Jacobsen had set out to write a book about defective free-thinkers.¹⁴

. . . those who can't manage to get through life without, every now and then, appealing to heaven for help. Don't you see, the very basis of the matter is—you fold your hands and you gaze up to the sky—that is the whole thing, and in that there lives or from that there follows everything else, our entire theology, and that is what, when once they are in difficulties, people cannot avoid doing.

This subject, in spite of the novel's ramifications, provides the unifying thread of the the book. Niels Lyhne abandons his faith, and when he finally marries, converts his wife to atheism. She relapses into faith on her death-bed, and Niels, shocked by her defection, by her death, and then by the death of his little son, calls on God in a moment of despair. But it is a momentary lapse only and Niels moves beyond all dogmas, either Christian or atheistic:

For the new ideal, Atheism, the holy cause of truth—what was the aim of it all, what *was* it all, in fact, but a tinsel-name for the simple endeavours to bear life as it was . . . and let it take shape according to the laws that govern it. (p. 264)

He enlists as a soldier, is wounded, refuses the consolations of religion and 'raving about his armour, and about how he wished to die standing', dies the hard death of the sceptic. His friend Hjerrild who has attended him in his illness comments: 'If I were God I would rather save the one who did not turn round at the last moment'.

In this situation and in Hjerrild's comment on it resides the moral imperative that underlies *Maurice Guest* and *Richard Mahony*. At the centre of the book is the conversation between Hjerrild and Niels in

¹⁴ Quoted by Gosse, Introduction, p. xiii.

which the strengths and weaknesses of the atheistic position are debated, a debate during which Hjerrild observes:

You must have wonderful faith in humanity. Why, atheism will end by making greater demands on it than Christianity does. (p. 151)

Niels assents and the debate is unresolved, the honours evenly divided. Niels's argument in favour of atheism is very like that used by Richard Mahony in support of Spiritualism, quoted earlier. There is also a trace of Jacobsen's central contention about defective free-thinkers in *Maurice Guest*, in the scene where Maurice discovers Louise's relationship with Heinz Krafft:

His head fell forward, and lay on his hands, and on the rustling sheet of paper.

'God in Heaven!'

He heard himself say it, and was even conscious of the fact that, like every mortal in the throes of a strong emotion, he, too, called on God. (*M.G.*, p. 521)

But the 'siren voices' which Niels Lyhne ultimately found the strength to resist have a significance which lies outside the area of Jacobsen's original intention, a significance which Richardson recognised as relevant to her own experience. For her—as for Jacobsen's characters—these are the voices which sing some such song as 'Da wo du nicht bist, dort is das Glück', the song we shall meet in *Richard Mahony*. Ulysses resisted the sirens' song by having himself lashed to the mast of his ship. Some reference to the concept of 'Ulysses Bound' can be discerned in all Richardson's novels, at times with the force of a moral directive, or as an excuse, or as a defence against shipwreck; sometimes as the protest of a soul held in bondage by the demands of the world. It is an image applicable to Richardson's own situation. She bound herself, in self-defence, to the mast of her own work, and those of her creations who fail to do the same are lost to this world. Looking back on her life in 1941 she wrote in her notebook:

Had I been 'taken up' at the time of *Maurice Guest*, everything might have turned out differently for me. I was quite ready *then* to be sociable. But the long, hard years of neglect did their work, and by 1929 I had lost all desire to come out of my shell.

Perhaps it was better so. My mind is easily dissipated, and any gain

in experience might have been counterbalanced by a loss of the one-sidedness needed for a really long look. (P.R., p. 136)

It is not hard to see why she, as a person, was so drawn to *Niels Lyhne*; why, as she said, it changed her life. It must have produced a shock of recognition, as though she had suddenly seen her own life in a mirror. In it she would have found an account of the genesis of a divided self which would have been immediately intelligible to her and which provides the basic material for all her novels. But it would be utterly wrong to see her as having appropriated themes. What the novel did for her, one would imagine, was to make her aware that she had artistic material already in her possession: it acted indeed as a catalyst. In this book she found stated in a fictional form a conflict she had always been used to, the conflict between the settler and the nomad in the soul of a man born of a father who was content with life as he found it—the Gretchen temptation—and of a mother who was always running after what might be; the soul which could not decide between shadow and substance, the divided mind seeking wholeness. Jacobsen said of his novel that it was a 'personal reckoning'; so, without a doubt, is *Maurice Guest*.

Niels Lyhne therefore presents Richardson's parental situation, or rather that of *Richard Mahony*, in reverse. Niels is the son of a romantic girl who loves poetry and hates housework; she is represented as intellectually lonely and aspiring. Her husband comes of an intellectual family, but he himself serves the intellect for form's sake. To Bartholine, before her marriage, he seems to be all she aspires to, and after marriage, for a time, love nerves him to the effort to be poetic. But before long, Lyhne, like young Polly Mahony later on, cannot keep himself keyed up to his wife's high pitch; he longs 'to sit on his twig in peace and quiet'. The son is brought up in the atmosphere of disenchantment that ensues between them and is drawn now to one, now to the other, like Cuffy in the trilogy. The father and mother 'contended for the possession of his young soul'; the mother appeals to his imagination and ends by disturbing him, as Mahony disturbed Cuffy. The boy feels small and pitiful and inadequate to his dreams and heroes and then seeks the father and avoids the mother, lending 'a willing ear and open mind for all the latter's earth-bound thoughts and matter-of-fact explanations'. It is, nevertheless, the mother's aspiring nature which makes the profounder impression on Niels, as he acknowledges later.

But the book offers not only a mirror-image of Richardson's parents, but one of herself. In the portrait of the youthful Bartholine there are hints of the young Laura and of the seventeen-year-old Ethel Richardson as she describes herself on the ship bound for England:¹⁵

. . . there was not a single superior nature in her whole circle by which she might have measured her own gifts . . . she began to consider herself extraordinary and exceptional, a sort of tropical plant that had shot up under an unfriendly sky . . . (*Niels Lyhne*, p. 4)

Bartholine attributed her own discontent to deficiencies in her external situation; Niels, like Richardson, has an inner sense of inadequacy to match his outward assurance. That the novel was a reproach to her as well as a revelation is suggested by a later passage:

[Niels] had been too busy adorning himself with what he lacked to have time to observe what he already possessed, but now, with the enthusiasm of a discoverer, he began to piece himself together from the memories and impressions of his childhood and the most vivid moments of his life. He saw with glad surprise how it all fitted together, piece by piece, to form a personality that was familiar to him, although different from the one he had pursued in his dreams—a personality that was genuine after a different fashion, and strong and capable withal. It was no longer the dead stump of an ideal; the wondrous elusive shades of life played upon it in ever-changing and unending succession blending to form an infinitely varied whole. Great Heavens! Why, he *had* powers which could be used just as they were; he was Aladdin—there was nothing he had reached to the clouds for that had not dropped upon his turban. (p. 101)

The effect of such a paragraph on a discontented young woman, unsure of her real direction and suffering from a sense of failure about her abandoned musical career, can be imagined readily enough, and its effect could hardly have been dissipated by the passages that follow, since the full force of their irony would not yet have been a part of felt experience. In these passages, Jacobsen speaks of the happy time that Niels experienced, like all young people, when: 'the mighty centrifugal force of development sends us forward rejoicing over the dead points in our nature'. He speaks of youthful ambitions ready 'to build a Tower of Babel to the sky'. Then:

¹⁵ See *M.W.Y.*, pp. 83-4.

In the end, however, it only becomes the unsightly stump of a Colossus and we spend the rest of our life making additions to it and extraordinary projections. (p. 102)

The last sentence must have lingered long in her mind and risen to the surface when she came to create Richard Mahony.

Directly related to her own emotional life would have been the accounts of Niels's various loves: his love for one of his own sex, for a superior spirit cut off by death, for a gifted woman who rejects him for the attractions of a conventional marriage. His love for Refstrup goes back to their childhood:

For at their first meeting he had fallen in love with Erik, who, shy, cool and half disdainful, only submitted to be loved with reluctance.

(p. 60)

The passion for Erik survives many vicissitudes, including Niels's own betrayal of him. His idealising of his young cousin Edele and the account of Herr Bigum's infatuation with her must also have set chords resounding in Richardson, especially in relation to the concept of suffering. Herr Bigum, Niels's tutor, has much in common with Maurice Guest; his love for Edele is as abject as Maurice's for Louise, and both Louise and Edele resent the fact that they are, without being consulted, made responsible for the peace of mind of a comparative stranger. Herr Bigum and Maurice both in a sense *foist* their love upon its object. In this episode Richardson must have divined the arbitrary nature of suffering, its total disjunction from justice. Niels is a silent observer of Edele's rejection of Herr Bigum and learns that:

When life has doomed a mortal to suffer, this sentence is neither fiction nor threat . . . there is no awakening as from a bad dream.

(p. 46)¹⁶

Edele's words are a comment on the retribution an obsessive love invites: Someone has to do the suffering. If we make a human being the god and master of our fate, we must bow to the will of our divinity.

(p. 45)

Edele had kept silence about her own love for a great artist to whom she meant nothing at all, a situation to which both Goethe and Rilke gave their approval, and which *Maurice Guest* goes some distance towards approving implicitly. The discussion of grief that follows the account of

¹⁶ Cf. *R.M.*, p. 875.

Edele's death anticipates strikingly Freud's concept of 'morbid grief'. The descriptions of Niels's reaction to the loss of Edele and of Louise's reaction to desertion by Schilsky follow very closely Jacobsen's authorial analysis of the different responses to a mortal blow.

Niels's next great love, his tremendous attraction to Fru Boye, would have been comprehensible indeed to Richardson, with her two intense adolescent infatuations not far behind her. Niels excuses Fru Boye's rejection of him by acknowledging the 'magnetic attraction of honest Philistinism'. The remark reminds us of the young Laura, passionately resenting the claims of 'normal' affections and social intercourse on her idol Evelyn. Maurice Guest, it may be noted, once he has fallen in love with Louise, pays no attention to such claims, except in the area of his relations with her, but Louise feels a passing impulse to listen to them and indeed they form an element in inducing her to experiment with Maurice. Jacobsen's handling of the Fru Boye episode is one of the most masterly examples of his art: it anticipates by many years the kind of subtlety characteristic of D. H. Lawrence, especially in finding correlatives for sexual situations, as in the rocking-chair incident. Jacobsen, unlike Lawrence, was writing long before Freud. Something of the passion between Erik and his wife Fennimore and of the feeling between Fennimore and Niels in their brief, adulterous association, passes into *Maurice Guest*. Fennimore kills the love between her and Erik from excess of passion, just as Louise makes too many demands on Schilsky and later attempts to devour Maurice. Jacobsen's comment:

She was not too good for the world, nor the world for her; they were both worthy of one another (p. 156)

are echoed in a similar context in *Maurice Guest*.

The loss of Fennimore, who turns from Niels in hatred when she hears her husband has been killed, and a brief abortive episode with a singer at Lake Garda, overwhelm Niels with a sense of his total isolation:

He could not endure the apathy of existence any longer—always let go on every side, always thrown back upon himself. No home on earth, no God in heaven, no goal in the future! (p. 242)

He returns to his home and sinks himself in the physical work of running the farm, finding in his own home territory, ironically enough, the love he had wandered about the world to seek. There is a brief period of complete happiness before wife and child are snatched from him. This

episode, too, would have confirmed Richardson's own experience, her conviction of the fleetingness of human joy. She too would have recognised the truth that Niels learns, the 'great melancholy truth that a soul is always alone'.

But in addition to aspiring after fulfilment, permanence and certainty in love, Niels aspires also after artistic perfection. He is himself 'a poet who is not a poet', his tutor, Herr Bigum, is a would-be philosopher, his friend Erik, a would-be painter. Niels's aspirations are always just beyond his reach, and Erik's achievement, fine as it is, is fitful and limited in scope.

Niels, defining his aspirations to his mother, tells her there will be no compromise in his art, he will be content with nothing less than perfection. Later in his loneliness he has to revise his notions of his capabilities. The opening pages of Chapter XII have a distinct bearing on Richardson's own situation after leaving Leipzig,¹⁷ and on that of Maurice Guest and Richard Mahony:

He did not know what to do with himself. It was all very well for him to have talent, but the point was he could make no use of it and went about feeling like a painter without hands. How he envied others, both great and small, who, no matter where they chanced to seize upon existence always got hold of some handle or other! . . . this talent of his had no real hold upon him . . . had its roots in something past and gone from which alone it derived what life it had. Talent and nature flowed apart like oil and water; they might be shaken together, but they would never blend and become one . . . There must be some defect in him, he said to himself, some ineradicable defect in the core of his being, for he believed that life *could* reconcile the several sides of one's nature. (pp. 236-7)

The notes of Maurice's self-communings are heard here, and the theme that is to be Richardson's constant preoccupation, the search for wholeness. They are heard earlier in Chapter VIII, when Niels believes he knows the nature of the ineradicable defect:

a certain paralyzing discretion, the child of an instinctive aversion to daring, and grandchild of a dim consciousness that he was lacking in individuality. (p. 96)

¹⁷ See *M.W.Y.*, pp. 122-32.

He waged continual war on what he regarded as a secret infirmity and envied those capable of a self-confident indiscretion:

People of this sort seemed to him like centaurs, man and horse in one, thought and leap simultaneous, whereas he was divided into rider and horse, the thought being one thing, the leap something quite different. (p. 96)

These passages remind us of the young Laura, vainly trying to talk to a boy at a cricket match, or of Maurice Guest attempting to communicate with Schwarz about his prospects as a musician, or screwing up his courage to approach Louise. How much of Richardson herself there is in such an analysis, it is difficult to know, but the impression Brian Penton gives of her suggests there was far less self-confidence, far more tentativeness, than the accounts by Nettie Palmer or other admirers would admit.¹⁸

Niels's paralysing discretion ruins his relationship with Fru Boye, just as in a different way Maurice's undermines his association with Louise; yet when Niels throws discretion to the winds in his affair with Fennimore, the consequences are no less disastrous. Like Maurice, Niels is the Eternal Inopportune.

Erik, the painter, is a prototype of Richardson's portrait of the typical artist in 'Succedaneum', though his talent is not expansive:

no matter where he dived under the ocean of beauty, he always brought the same pearl to light. (p. 154)

From what Jacobsen had to say about Erik, Richardson could have learned early the lesson of cultivating what is native to oneself and avoiding imitation. Erik's nature, like Niels's, is at war with itself, revolting at times 'against this devotion to the higher powers of art'. He gives way then against his nature to coarse enjoyments:

stricken by the purely human desire for self-destruction, which, when

¹⁸ See Penton's obituary notice, alluded to in note 7, Introduction. His impressions are borne out by a reconsideration of Richardson's methods of work. The tiny scraps of paper containing rough drafts, with numerous alternatives crossed out and re-crossed, suggest not so much facility of writing or extreme care to find the right phrase, as difficulty and unsureness in expressing ideas. The remarkable slowness and deliberation with which she worked are capable of more than one interpretation, and for one who insisted to Nettie Palmer that she loved every moment at her desk, she shows astonishingly little *élan* in the act of composition.

the blood burns, as only blood can, craves for degradation, dirt and mire, with the same degree of intensity that is peculiar to another purely human desire—that of keeping oneself greater and purer than one actually is. (p. 156)

Again we have the polarity of earth and heaven, of death and life, seen in the artist's terms, anticipating Freud's concept of the death-wish and its opposite, as noted in Chapter 1.

But more important than his relationships to creations like Moçs in 'Succedaneum', or Schilsky, or Wagner, who seek relief from artistic sterility in women or alcohol, is Erik's affinity with Richard Mahony. Like Mahony he is obsessed with the thought of time passing and death approaching before he has anything to show for his life:

Hours, weeks, months rush past with nothing in them and I am unable to nail them to the spot with a piece of work . . . I grow quite sick when I think how the days are going by—incessantly. And I *have* nothing, or else I cannot get at what I have . . . It's always the same, nothing ever comes of it! Only the consciousness that time is standing out there in Eternity, immersed to the waist and hauling in the hours as they glide past—twelve white and twelve black—unceasingly, unceasingly. (pp. 191-2)

In reply to Niels's suggestion that he should travel in search of new impressions, he confesses that he longed to travel 'to a degree of which you can form no idea', but that he is afraid to; afraid that he might then have to face the truth that it was really 'all over with me, that not the smallest fragment was left me, that I was incapable of doing anything'. This is a fact that, for different reasons, largely physical, Mahony has to face about himself.

In the world of love, then, and the world of art, the novel resolves itself into a debate between the aspiring imagination and the world of facts, between the dream and the substance, between striving and acceptance. Jacobsen holds an even balance between two rival claims. He is clear-sighted, even harsh in his analysis of the limitations of the imagination: in him Richardson must have found a model for her own implacable honesty:

For Niels Lyhne was to be a poet . . . Until now however, he had had little more than his dreams as a basis for his poetry and nothing is more uniform and monotonous than imagination, for, in the ever-

changing land of dreams that seems to us so infinite there are, in reality, certain short beaten tracks along which all journey and beyond which they never stray. People may be very different from one another, but their dreams are always similar, for in them, without fail, they possess the three or four things they desire . . . no-one really goes empty-handed in his imagination. For this reason no one discovers himself in his dreams or becomes conscious of his individuality, for the dream knows nothing of *how* we are content to win our treasures, how we give them up when lost, how we grow satiated after enjoyment, which path we take when we mourn our loss. (pp. 99-100)

There is the germ here, surely, of Freud's wish-fulfilment theory.

Edele is even more uncompromising:

We close our eyes to our real life, we will not hear the 'No' it pronounces in the face of our wishes, we would forget the deep gulf . . . between our longing and its object. We must have our dreams. But life has nothing to do with dreams; not a single obstacle can be dreamed away from reality and in the end we lie wailing beside the gulf, which has not changed, but is just as it always was. (p. 44)

Yet ironical though he is about the dreamer, especially about the vague dreams of a Bartholine, Jacobsen, like Ibsen after him, attaches a positive value to aspiration for its own sake. The portrait of Consul Claudi, Fennimore's father, brings this out clearly enough: the 'merchant' is not the 'whole man':

On the whole, at favourable moments, there was something surprisingly refined about Consul Claudi—a dissatisfied expression in his clear brown eyes, a melancholy smile about his firm mouth, and an inquiring, far-away tone in his voice; it seemed as if he longed for some better world than the one in the power of which his friends and acquaintances believed him to be held fast. (p. 162)

Bartholine herself dies amid a glory of spring flowers, particularly the blue flowers associated with Romanticism, justified of her dreaming, and Niels Lyhne, stripped of everything life has to offer, remains faithful to something beyond himself.

This steady gaze of Jacobsen's, contemplating both worlds without wavering, is the gaze of the disciple who wrote *Richard Mahony*, putting Richard's case and Mary's, and making no judgment between them.

One last point about the novel should be mentioned here, as it throws some light on a passage in *Maurice Guest*, where Heinz Krafft, coming to visit the sensible Madeleine, drops a tattered book on the floor: 'What have we here?—ah, your Bible!' she said sarcastically: it was a novel by a modern Danish poet, who died young.

'You carry it about with you, I see.'

'Today I needed *Stimmung*. But don't say Bible; that's an error of taste. Say "death-book". One can study death in it, in all its forms.'

'To give you *Stimmung*! I can't understand your love for the book, Heinz. It's morbid.'

'Everything's morbid that the ordinary mortal doesn't wish to be reminded of. Some day—if I don't turn stoker or acrobat beforehand, and give up peddling in the emotions—some day I shall write music to it. That would be a melodrama worth making.' (p. 495)

Like Rilke, Richardson acquired from Jacobsen the notion that each soul should die its own particular predestined death, the death that was a real completion of its life-pattern; in a sense, willed. Edele, Bartholine, Niels's father, Erik, Niels himself, all die this kind of death. And so do Maurice, Avery Hill and John Turnham, Richard Mahony and his wife, and even Purdy Smith.

For Richardson, as for Krafft, the novel was a permanent source of inspiration and the paradox alluded to by Krafft that the study of death in all its forms is creative applies as much to her as to him. Perhaps Krafft's last words here embody one of Richardson's suppressed musical ambitions.

Stylistically, she seems to have learnt little from it, except perhaps for its elegaic tone which was congenial to her. Dymphna Clark, who has made a careful pioneer examination of Richardson as a translator, has pointed out that she is at her best in translating strong emotional or narrative passages. In her opinion, sensuous or abstract passages gave Richardson great difficulty. Mrs Clark's findings fit in with the general psychological picture of Richardson and her work.

Richardson's own study of Jacobsen, published in *Cosmopolis* in 1897—the magazine to which Robertson had been asked to contribute in 1896—rounds off the impression given by a reading of the novel, of the qualities that interested her:

He selected with the patience and devotion of a Flaubert—not a

superfluous word in a phrase, each word laden with significance.

He wore Naturalism only as an outer garment . . .

He wrote almost wholly in prose, but it is as a poet that one thinks of him and knows him; with poets alone is it possible to compare him.

Jacobsen is a mental aristocrat; his books are for the few, not the many—in this respect of apartness he resembles Walter Pater. Like Pater, too, he worked slowly, and with the severest self-criticism; he had no more sympathy for those who, in these self-conscious days, played the naively irresponsible with regard to their art, than for those who did not believe, as earnestly as he, that 'every new book must be produced by a struggle with oneself to get the utmost out of oneself'. (pp. 40-51)

She singles out, beyond the style, the themes that were congenial to her: He has all Tieck's contempt for the utilitarian—never, in his books, is there question of the practical or material—and his heroes are the dreamers, the poets, whose conflicts are not those of this world. (p. 50)

Both these books are sad books, but . . . there is no pessimism here but the pessimism which weak minds draw from outward defeat. (p. 49)

And both Niels and Marie are, in the best sense, victors; both live and die for an idea, both have strength to fight to the end. (p. 49)

The unity of Jacobsen's books is to be sought exclusively in the mental growth of the chief character. (p. 48)¹⁹

Much of what she writes of Jacobsen could in fact, *mutatis mutandis*, be written of her own work. Maurice Guest, for instance, is as much of a victor as Niels: he dies for an idea.

What is also interesting about this article, however, is the critical assurance it displays, an assurance reflected in the ease, the confidence, and the smoothness of the style, a style which is totally unlike that of *The Young Cosima* or *Myself When Young*. The essay reads like the work of a writer long familiar with the masterpieces of European literature, not like that of a young woman in process of discovering them, and there is none of the over-familiarity of style which too often jars on the reader in the autobiography, such as in the following sentence:

¹⁹ The article on Jacobsen was reprinted in *Southerly* (Sydney), No. 1, 1963. It is there wrongly attributed to 'Henry Handel Richardson'—it was signed Ethel F. L. Robertson, as was her translation of *Niels Lyhne*.

There, feeling rather gay at having got so far without mishap, we did the grand, and regaled ourselves in one of the town's finest restaurants. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 112)

The stylishness of the essay on Jacobsen is a point we shall return to later, but its air of authority may have a very simple origin in the fact already mentioned that Richardson read quickly, had a parrot-like memory, and like all artists was quick to take hints and suggestions. It is true, for instance, that in the Strasbourg days she read Flaubert for herself, but what she says about him in the essay on Jacobsen might have been learned as easily from what Pater has to say about him in his essay on 'Style' in *Appreciations*. In the absence of certain biographical information it is impossible to say how much of Pater's work was known to her, and what follows on this subject is offered only as hypothesis. Certainly the epigraph at the head of the article on Jacobsen is significant. It is taken from the essay on 'Sandro Botticelli' in *The Renaissance* and urges the claim to consideration of artists who have not 'the stress and authority of a great name'.²⁰

Richardson saw Jacobsen in the light of Pater's remark, and it is clear from her notebooks, her letters, and her autobiographical writings that she saw her own work in the same light. Whether from motives of vanity, or out of a deep need for reassurance, she too consoled herself for the lack of sufficient recognition by clinging to the thought that her work was before its time. Her great heroes are unsung heroes: Maurice Guest and Richard Mahony and her heroine Mary Mahony; not for nothing is the epigraph to *Ultima Thule*: 'And some there be that have no memorial'.

III

Whether or not she knew Pater's *Appreciations*, his *Plato and Platonism*, and *Marius the Epicurean*, there is much in them that would have defined and confirmed her own thinking. Certainly Pater's essay on Sir Thomas Browne in *Appreciations* would have been congenial to her; the epigraph to *Richard Mahony* suggests that she had read Browne; it would be strange indeed if a doctor's daughter interested in themes of

²⁰ There is no knowing which edition Richardson read. The 1971 Fontana Library edition, relying on the first edition of 1873, gives these words a different order.

death had not read him. And the trilogy has some claim to consideration as a *Religio Medici* in novel form.

Pater's remarks on the function of 'fictitious literature' in the opening paragraph on Feuillet's *La Morte* might have served her for a theory of fiction. More important still is the whole of the essay on 'Style'; an essay on the terms classical and romantic, entitled 'Postscript', and the final pages of *Plato and Platonism*, which taken together remind one strongly of Chapter IX and Chapter XXI of *The Getting of Wisdom*.²¹

The essay on 'Style' deals at length with the function of fact in literature, its relation to truth and the connection of both with beauty. It begins by 'dismissing the harsher opposition of poetry to prose' and then goes on to consider certain qualities of literature as a fine art, which, if they apply to the literature of fact, apply still more to the literature of the imaginative sense of fact. Pater points out the difficulty of distinguishing between fact and something quite different from external fact, and argues that even in 'factual' subjects, like science and history, the writer's 'sense of fact' will sometimes 'take the place of fact in various degrees'. He is moving towards a view of the artist as a kind of scientist patiently accumulating evidence to substantiate his 'sense of fact':

And as, in all science, the functions of literature reduce themselves eventually to the transcribing of fact, so all the excellences of literary form in regard to science are reducible to various kinds of painstaking; this good quality being involved in all 'skilled work' whatever, in the drafting of an act of parliament, as in sewing . . . (p. 5)

For just in proportion as the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist, his work *fine art*; and good art (as I hope ultimately to show) in proportion to the truth of his presentment of that sense; as in those humbler or plainer functions of literature also, truth—truth to bare fact, there—is the essence of such artistic quality as they may have. Truth! there can be no merit, no craft at all, without that. And further, all beauty is in the long run only *fineness* of truth, or what we call expression, the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within. (p. 6)

²¹ See *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style; Plato and Platonism; Marius the Epicurean, his Sensations and Ideas*. All quotations are taken from the editions cited in the Selected Bibliography.

He goes on to say that literary art will be good:

not because it is brilliant or sober, or rich, or impulsive, or severe, but just in proportion as its representation of that sense, that soul-fact, is true, verse being only one department of such literature, and imaginative prose, it may be thought, being the special art of the modern world. (p. 7)

The fact that prose is the proper vehicle of modern thought is due, Pater argues, to the chaotic variety and complexity of its interests, and secondly to an

all-pervading naturalism, a curiosity about everything whatever as it really is, involving a certain humility of attitude, cognate to what must, after all, be the less ambitious form of literature. (p. 7)

He develops then the notion that the literary artist must be a scholar, who will have in mind:

the scholar and the scholarly conscience—the male conscience in this matter, as we must think it, under a system of education which still to so large an extent limits real scholarship to men. (p. 8)

If critics are right about Richardson's devotion to fact, it is only in Pater's sense that the criticism has any real meaning. In each of her first three novels, the distinction between facts and the sense of the fact is alluded to or implied; contempt for a 'passion for facts' in its limited sense is expressed by Mahony in rejecting scientific materialism:

Arrogantly sure of themselves, carried way by a passion for facts, they covered with ridicule those—the seers, the poets, the childlike in heart—who, over and above the rational and knowable, caught glimpses of what was assumed to be unknowable; declaring, with a fierce and intolerant unimaginativeness, that the assertion which outstripped the evidence was not only a blunder but a crime.

(*R.M.*, pp. 556-7)

It is true that this is Mahony thinking and that without biographical knowledge it would be impossible to know how much the writer's own point of view coincides with his, but if the passage is read in the light of Mahony's subsequent history and as part of the works as a whole, one does not need biography to know that Richardson would have subscribed to a doctrine which favoured *widening* areas of inquiry in pursuit of fineness of truth, not to one which set limits to them. Her known passion for poetry is also relevant to the discussion: Pater's

opening remarks on the structure and function of prose and verse, and the danger of setting too narrow limits to these, she would have found particularly suggestive.

So also would have been his general discussion of what he calls literary architecture, whose unity depends, he suggests, on the simultaneous exercise of insight, foresight and retrospect made possible by the 'vital wholeness and identity of the initiatory apprehension or view'. His contention that such an apprehension is often contained within 'a single, almost visual image' certainly applies to the architecture of *Richard Mahony*.

Pater's prediction that in pursuing 'fineness of truth' the enterprise of language:

may well lie in the naturalisation of the vocabulary of science . . . in a liberal naturalisation of the ideas of science too, for after all *the chief stimulus of a good style is to possess a full, rich complex matter to grapple with* . . . [Italics mine]

would also have struck Richardson with peculiar force.

Having defined his conception of literary style, Pater selects Flaubert as his example of its great martyr, quoting Flaubert's letter about art as a refuge from unhappiness and his reference to its discipline as being like the labour of the true working man. Both these references strike a chord in Richardson's work: the notion of art as a refuge is grasped by the young Laura, and Maurice Guest regrets that he cannot shelter there. Early in *Maurice Guest* Richardson alludes to Bach's devotion to routine: . . . the burly Cantor passed, as he had once done day after day, with the disciplined regularity of high genius, of the honest citizen, to his appointed work in the shadows of the organ-loft . . . (p. 6)

The concept of art as a refuge from unhappiness, a constantly recurring theme in Richardson's work, is of course commonplace enough; it was Wagner's, as well as Flaubert's; it was Fauré's and Picasso's.

The end of the essay on 'Style' is especially relevant to her own views. Citing music as the ideal of all art, since in music form is inseparable from substance, Pater supports the classic doctrine that good art consists in the correspondence of form to its import. Good art, he says, 'but not necessarily great art'. He continues by re-stating an idea expressed earlier: . . . the distinction between great art and good art depending immedi-

ately, as regards literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter. (pp. 35-6)

It is by this final canon that Richardson would have preferred to be judged. She had no use for style practised for its own sake; for her, words were the vehicle of an idea, as the body was the vehicle of soul, and she was repelled by what is commonly regarded as 'brilliant' writing.

The final essay in *Appreciations*, entitled 'Postscript', takes up a number of the ideas already put forward. But it is of particular interest as presenting a literary version of the 'nomad-settler' opposition. Pater defines the romantic in literature as a fusion of the desire for beauty with the desire for the strange, or as a love of order (the classical and conservative), tempered by a love of novelty, by intellectual curiosity.

The concept of the male element in art, raised in the essay on 'Style', is referred to again in the last pages of *Plato and Platonism*, which has many interesting parallels with Richardson's work. If she was aware of Pater's concept of maleness in art, it is not surprising that she regarded writing a novel as a challenge and chose a masculine pen-name partly as a gesture of defiance. Nor is it surprising that, like her sister, she took part in the suffragette movement! The passage in Pater could serve as the literary scholar's version of the tirade of the geography mistress in *The Getting of Wisdom*. The young Laura hears her class-mate reprovved for having

a real woman's brain: vague, slippery, and inexact, interested only in the personal aspect of a thing. You can't concentrate your thoughts, and, worst of all, you've no curiosity—about anything that really matters. You take all the great facts of existence on trust. (*G.W.*, p. 89)

Pater is more explicit still:

Manliness in art, what can it be, as distinct from that which in opposition to it must be called the feminine quality there,—what but a full consciousness of what one does, of art itself in the work of art, tenacity of intuition and of consequent purpose, the spirit of construction as opposed to what is literally incoherent or ready to fall to pieces, and, in opposition to what is hysteric or works at random, the maintenance of a standard . . . there will be here no 'negligences', no feminine forgetfulness of one's self, nothing in the work of art unconformed to the leading intention of the artist, who will but increase his power by reserve. (*P.P.*, pp. 253-4)

'Tenacity of intuition and of consequent purpose', 'the spirit of construction', opposition 'to what is hysteric or works at random', 'nothing in the work of art unconformed to the leading intention of the artist', 'reserve': these are the architectural principles by which Richardson worked, particularly in the trilogy, and which, whatever the shortcomings of her diction, she successfully observed. There is no need to labour the natural affinity of the two writers in respect of the theory of art, even if no direct influence can be demonstrated.

But there is also a striking affinity of themes and general attitudes, which brings Richardson closer to Pater than to any other nineteenth-century English writer, and which derives from their common interest in the same problems as occupied the writers of the German tradition.

It may have been in Pater's *Plato and Platonism* that Richardson found clearly and concisely formulated the philosophic parallel to her notion of the psychic war between the nomad and the settler. This supposition by no means rules out the possibility that she read the pre-Socratic philosophers for herself: Robertson knew the Greek classics and could have guided her reading; the suggestion is merely that without going to primary sources she could have found all she needed for her own use in Pater's book, which was popular in literary circles in the nineties and attractive to non-professionals interested in the idealist philosophies of the century. *Plato and Platonism* sets out to explain the doctrines of four Greek philosophers from the stance of a literary man rather than that of a philosopher; the notion of Plato as poet-dramatist pervades the book. The titles of the first three chapters sum up the leading ideas to be found in Richardson's work, particularly those in *Richard Mahony*: 'Plato and the Doctrine of Motion'; 'Plato and the Doctrine of Rest'; 'Plato and the Doctrine of Number', which implies music or harmony. On the first page of the first chapter we find that harsh phrase of Heraclitus's which Richard Mahony quotes to Mary during a serious quarrel: *Panta rei*. (The phrase is also the title of an article by Friedrich Spielhagen on changing fashions in literature in the first volume of *Cosmopolis*, 1896.) But it is Pater's comment on Heraclitus's saying which would particularly strike a novelist:

All things fleet away—may startle a particular age by its novelty, but takes possession only because all along its root was somewhere among

the natural, though but half-developed instincts of the human mind itself.

Pater, that is to say, regards the psychological datum as antecedent to the philosophical explanation. Here of course are the makings of a circular argument of the type to which Mahony was prone, seeking the causes of his conflict now in himself, now outside in the scheme of things, or as the will of Providence. A remark made by Richardson on her father, not on Mahony, in her 1912 notebook,²² reminds us of a passage from Dr Henry Maudsley's *Body and Mind*, which reveals a view akin to Pater's, but at first sight much more rigid. Richardson, pondering her father's death, wrote: 'Man kann sein Schicksal nicht entgehen'. Maudsley declared:

No-one can escape the tyranny of his organisation; no-one can elude the destiny that is innate in him and which unconsciously and irresistibly shapes his ends.²³

Maudsley's view taken out of its context seems to imply a certain pessimistic determinism, which is not wholly compatible with Richardson's thought and practice. Like Freud, she would have laid more stress on personal responsibility, on conscious and rational control, once recognition was achieved. To recognise one's 'physico-mental' fate, one's organisation, or, in biological terms, one's genotype, is not necessarily to conform one's behaviour to its dictation; the will has a part to play. *Body and Mind* as a whole in fact takes the same view.

The second chapter of *Plato and Platonism* outlines the challenge to the Doctrine of Motion: All things are at Rest, motion and separateness are illusions and everything is One. In *Richard Mahony*, Mary, the simple Victorian housewife, has her share of the Parmenidean temperament: 'Once a friend, always a friend'; 'People are the same everywhere'; 'What, break up their home again . . . and leave it to strangers?' The commonplace words express the resistance of the 'normal' mind to the notion of flux, a resistance which more exalted intellects in nineteenth-century Germany attempted to justify in terms acceptable to contemporary science.

²² A notebook kept during her visit to Australia to verify her memories while working on *Australia Felix*. Now in the National Library, Canberra.

²³ Richardson's father probably read *Body and Mind* soon after its publication in 1870. When his daughter read it is less clear. 'Schicksal' suggests more than Maudsley's physical 'organisation'.

Pater's third chapter deals with the Greek efforts to reconcile the doctrine of Motion and of Rest, chiefly with the contribution of Pythagoras to the debate, his finding of the principle of unity and variety in: the dominion of number everywhere, the proportion, the harmony, the music, into which number as such expands. (*P.P.*, p. 45)

Richardson, like Richard Mahony, felt at ease in music; we are told in *The Way Home* that it was the only world in which Mahony felt at home. Like the sea, it was for both author and creature a reconciling symbol: music is movement confined by the laws of harmony; the sea is perpetual motion governed by the tides.

What Pater has to say in this chapter about Pythagoras's doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul is also important:

For if, . . . the soul had come from heaven . . . so the arguments of Pythagoras were always more or less explicitly involving one in consideration of the means by which one might get back thither.

(*P.P.*, p. 49)

This passage may be compared with another passage in the novelist's 1912 notebook. It is headed 'From the Karamazoffs', in the German version:

Es glaubte wie sehr viele der Veränderung des Wohnorts alles zu ändern. Nur nicht diese Menschen, nur nicht diese Verhältnisse, nur fort von diesem verflüchtern Ort und alles wird wiedergeboren werden, alles von neuem beginnen.²⁴

The substance of the passage is woven into Mahony's very being. The Pythagorean notion of the 'pilgrim soul' setting out to perfect itself through many revolutions of existence before it returns, richer for experience, to its true home; the Platonic concept of the soul as an exile upon the earth; these ideas in some form or other are expressed by Mahony or implied in his role of the Wanderer. We find in Richardson

²⁴ 'He believed how very much changes of dwelling-place would alter everything. Only let there be no more of these people, these circumstances, only let him get far away from this cursed spot, and everything would be born anew, begin again afresh.' The attitude may be characteristic of Mahony and his creator; it needs more evidence to prove it was characteristic of Walter Richardson. Though for instance he went back to England in 1867, intending to settle, he left open the possibility of return to Australia, and does not appear to have been so hostile to it as Mahony is depicted as being.

also not any close adherence to Pythagoras's doctrine of metempsychosis, but rather a reflection of what Pater has to say about it in his discussion of its influence on Plato, though Pater is in fact reserving judgment: For in truth we come into the world, each one of us, 'not in nakedness', but by the natural course of organic development clothed far more completely than even Pythagoras supposed in a vesture of the past, nay, fatally shrouded, it might seem, in those laws or tricks of heredity which we mistake for our volitions; in the language which is more than one half of our thoughts; in the moral and mental habits, the customs, the literature, the very houses, which we did not make for ourselves; in the vesture of a past, which is (so science would assure us) not ours, but of the race, the species: that *Zeit-geist*, or abstract secular process, in which, as we could have had no direct consciousness of it, so we can pretend no future personal interest. It is humanity itself now—abstract humanity—that figures as the transmigrating soul, accumulating into its 'colossal manhood' the experience of ages; making use of, and casting aside in its march, the souls of countless individuals, as Pythagoras supposed the individual soul to cast aside again and again its outworn body. (*P.P.*, pp. 63-4)

Here we have the Hegelian version of the Pythagorean doctrine. It is the view that Richardson puts into Richard Mahony's mind when he visits his old medical school, though it is given a pessimistic colouring at the time by his feeling of depression:

Never before had it been made so clear to him of what small worth was the individual: of what little account the human moulds in which this life-energy was cast. Momentous alone was the presence of the great Breath: the eternal motor impulse. Each young soul had its hour, followed a starry trail, dreamed a kingship; then passed—vanishing in the ranks of the mediocre, the disillusioned, the conquered—to make room for the new company of aspirants thronging on from behind. (*R.M.*, p. 457)

In general, Mahony's view, and certainly his creator's, was more akin to Sir Thomas Browne's comment on Pythagoras, which Richardson took for the epigraph to the trilogy:

Every man is not only himself . . . men are lived over again; the world is now as it was in ages past; there was none then, but there

hath been someone since, that parallels him, and is, as it were, his revived self.

Pater's account of Plato's synthesis of the doctrines of his predecessors contains analogies with Richardson's work that are even more striking than these, particularly in the chapter entitled 'The Genius of Plato'. The following passage needs to be compared with Richardson's statement that Jacobsen wore naturalism as an outer garment, and with Pater's remarks in the essay on 'Style' about the fact and the sense of the fact: Platonism is in one sense an emphatic witness to the unseen, the transcendental, the non-experienced, the beauty, for instance, which is not for the bodily eye. Yet the author of this philosophy of the unseen was . . . one, for whom, as was said of a very different French writer, 'the *visible* world really existed'. (*P.P.*, p. 113)

Pater goes on to emphasise Plato's 'capacities of bodily sense':

You cannot help seeing that his mind is a storehouse of all the liveliest imageries of men and things. Nothing, if it really arrests eye or ear at all, is too trivial to note . . . A conventional philosopher might speak of 'dumb matter', for instance; but Plato has lingered too long in braziers' workshops to lapse into so stupid an epithet. (pp. 113-14)

If Richardson read these passages she would have found in them a revelation of the importance of 'small sensuous facts'; if she did not, they still remain an interesting parallel to her own theory and practice. For her 'nothing was too trivial to note' if it served her purpose.²⁵

Pater attributes 'the impress of visible reality' which he finds in Plato to the fact that he is a lover:

a great lover, somewhat after the manner of Dante. For him, as for Dante, . . . the material and the spiritual are blent and fused together.

(*P.P.*, p. 121)

It is towards some such fusion that Mahony strives in his inquiries into Spiritualism, though he strives not through love, but through the intellect. The same impulse lies behind Richardson's own participation in psychic research, which was extensive. Pater's view of Plato gives

²⁵ Leonie Gibson complained that Richardson's note-taking was unselective. Unfortunately, a novel is not a cake, whose ingredients are known in advance. For a really illuminating discussion of the creative process, of art as 'action', a process of discovery, see Samuel Alexander's essay on 'Artistic Creation and Cosmic Creation' in *Philosophical and Literary Pieces*, pp. 256-78.

respectable sanction to such endeavours. Indeed the Platonic theory of Forms and Spiritualism have something in common, though Spiritualism would not have regarded the material world as 'unreal', but as having a preliminary order of reality.

In *Plato and Platonism* Richardson would also have found approval for the introspective passion that enabled her to write her books, the quality that Miles Franklin called, with as much truth as malice,²⁶ that 'self-centredness [which] at length harvested some grain from a dark, costive talent'. Socrates, says Pater, 'gave to Plato (most precious of gifts!) an inexhaustible interest in himself'. It was in fact obedience to the Socratic injunction 'Know thyself' that was the mainspring of Pater's books, as it is of Richardson's. In *Marius the Epicurean* we find: 'Before all things examine into thyself; strive to be at home with thyself'. To know oneself in order to be 'at home' with oneself is the injunction of modern psychotherapy, as Richardson well knew, and in obeying it she was enabled to give universal shape to her particular experience.

Pater also could have confirmed her notions of the poet's myriad-mindedness, his capacity for experiencing all there is to experience. Quoting Plato, Pater says:

Or suppose again that a poet finds his way to us, 'able by his genius, as he chooses, to become all things, or all persons, in turn . . .'

(*P.P.*, p. 249)

This is the nature Heinz Krafft describes in *Maurice Guest*:

For we are the artists among nations—waxen temperaments, formed to take on impressions, to be moulded this way and that, by our age, our epoch . . . [Guest] seems open to impression.—And impressions are the only things that matter to the artist. (*M.G.*, pp. 497-8)

Alongside both should be set the passage at the end of Chapter V of *Myself When Young*:

And gradually the conviction deepened that, to a writer, experience was the only thing that really mattered. Hard and bitter as it might seem, it was to be welcomed rather than shrunk from, reckoned as a gain, not a loss.

Of central importance is what Pater has to say about Plato's choice of dialogue as a way of seeking truth, which leads up to a concept of tragedy which Richardson put into practice:

²⁶ In *Laughter, not for a Cage* (Sydney, 1956), p. 150.

From first to last our faculty of thinking is limited by our command of speech. Now it is straight from Plato's lips, as if in natural conversation, that the language came, in which the mind has ever since been discoursing with itself concerning itself, in that inward dialogue, which is the 'active principle' of the dialectic method as an instrument for the attainment of truth. For, the essential, or dynamic, dialogue, is ever that dialogue of the mind with itself . . . (*P.P.*, p. 127)

Again and again Richardson's characters hold a dialogue with the self: Maurice and Louise and the young Laura all indulge in internal debate. And in *Richard Mahony* conversation between two persons resolves itself repeatedly into an argument between two opposing principles; the whole dialogue between Richard and Mary, in fact, can be reduced to a debate between the claims of the visible world and the claims of the unseen. It is always Mary Richard 'has to convince'.

Pater's view leads straight back to Hegel. The concept of dialogue involved a consideration of drama, hence of tragedy, and of Hegel's theory of tragedy, which is the underlying principle in Richardson's handling of her opposing characters. She may have known it independently in the original, or from Robertson; if she did not, Pater could have informed her. Hegel is writing of the death of Socrates, and Pater quotes:

In genuine tragedy, then, they must be powers both alike moral and justifiable, which, from this side and from that, come into collision . . . Two opposed Rights come forth: the one breaks itself to pieces against the other: in this way, both alike suffer loss; while both alike are justified, the one towards the other: not as if this were right; that other wrong. On the one side is the religious claim, the unconscious moral habit: the other principle, over against it, is the equally religious claim—the claim of the consciousness, of the reason, creating a world out of itself, the claim to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. II, p. 102) (*P.P.*, p. 81)

It is in accordance with such a theory, surely, that Richard and Mary Mahony are presented; we are convinced now by the one, then thrown into uncertainty by the other. For 'creating a world out of itself', we might substitute Mary's cry that Richard thinks no one's point of view but his own is right. Only his mental collapse prevents them both breaking themselves to pieces. Not only in *Plato and Platonism* but

throughout Pater's work one is constantly coming across affinities of attitude in these two writers, who on the surface are so different.

Both Pater and Richardson believed that the world of eternal flux and the world of eternal rest were not forever divided, though Richardson as a Spiritualist had perhaps more clear-cut views about their reconciliation than Pater. But she would have assented to Pater's view of the duty of philosophic man in life:

Surely, the aim of a true philosophy must lie, not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself, but in the maintenance of a kind of candid discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement; the unclouded and receptive soul quitting the world finally, with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered the world still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come. (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 241)

Contemporary man has been so conditioned by psychological propaganda to believe that virtue consists in adapting oneself to the society in which one finds oneself that Pater's concept of the true philosopher and Richardson's portraits of tormented misfits will seem perverse and idiosyncratic. But in a world dedicated to the conformity that spells death, it is Pater and Richardson who are on the side of modern biologists concerned with the survival value of variety. And their fundamental belief that the particular is 'the vehicle and only possible expression of the Absolute', that matter is the garment of spirit, imparts to their work a balance and a serenity that the most tragic circumstance cannot shake. One has only to think of the last paragraphs of *The End of a Childhood*, or of *Richard Mahony*, to grasp the point.

According to Richard Church, Richardson's fundamental philosophy was 'that of Donne and Dunbar: a sense of outrage that the eternal is betrayed by the temporal'. Church was writing of *The End of a Childhood*, it is true, but even so the statement is an over-simplification. Her sense of outrage was a temporary affair: much more constant is the kind of attitude we find in Pater; a clear-eyed facing of fact without much disposition to register an emotion, such as is contained in the passage in *The Renaissance*:²⁷

²⁷ Fontana Library edition, pp. 223-4.

We are all *condamnés* . . . we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among 'the children of this world', in art and song.

There is emotion here, of course, in a word like *condamnés*, but it is not a sense of outrage. Like Pater, Richardson is aware of the fact that life is an interval, which must be filled in, between the cradle and the grave; something of the detached irony of the observation is conveyed through the mind of Richard Mahony in *Ultima Thule*:

He trudged on, with the sole idea of somehow getting through the day . . . of killing time. And as he went he mused ironically, on the shifts mortals were put to, the ruses they employed, to rid themselves of this precious commodity, which alone stood between them and an open grave. (*R.M.*, p. 877)

The passage from Pater has further implications, however. The basic fact expressed in the above sentences is bald and inescapable. What is interesting is the way men respond to such a fact. The response of both writers is similar. Of the many solutions devised to solve the problem of filling in the interval between birth and death the wisest, according to Pater and Richardson, is artistic creation. In Richardson, the artist is never, or hardly ever, an admirable creature, but he is always an enviable creature, only to be pitied when his inspiration fails him. Her short story 'Succedaneum' is an expansion of Pater's belief that in the aesthetic realm is to be found 'the ideal reality denied us by the Heraclitean, scientific world view'. All Richardson's novels, whether Pater was the source of their intellectual basis or not, explore the three separate ways of passing time which he mentions. *Maurice Guest* is the way of high passions; a certain listlessness, or lack of drive, but above all, a specific illness, vitiates Mahony's aspirations. *The Getting of Wisdom* and later *The Young Cosima* point to the way of art as a means of transcending the difficulties of mundane life and its sordid human relationships.

It is in *Marius the Epicurean* that the similarities of outlook are most marked, perhaps because, like *Richard Mahony*, it is an account of a spiritual quest, and because, like Richardson's hero, Marius is a dreamer. The form that the quest takes, the guise under which it is presented are completely different in each book, but the underlying dilemma is the same. In each, the two basic alternatives of matter and spirit are offered

early in the narrative; in *Marius* these alternatives are explored in terms of Stoicism and Epicureanism; in *Mahony* they are dramatised in terms of matter and spirit, mammon and God; in both some sort of unifying principle of life is seen in suffering. Suffering indeed becomes a means of hammering matter into spirit. Stoicism rouses Marius's resistance: We are constructed for suffering! What proofs of it does but one day afford . . . (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 192)

His interpretation of the human predicament leads him to reject Stoicism to align himself with 'a heart even as mine, behind this vain show of things'. The same affirmation of pain as a bond occurs during Mahony's vision in *Ultima Thule*: '. . . pain the bond that linked all humanity: not in joy, in sorrow alone were we yokefellows'. Marius finds a moral principle on his conclusion:

The only principle, perhaps, to which we may always safely trust, is a ready sympathy with the pain one actually sees. (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 201)

This is the principle Mahony as a medical man has tried with varying success to live by and which in his despair he is trying to reassert. One is reminded of the point from which Pater sets out: his embodying of the vision of the Apollonian ideal in the form of the Temple of Aesculapius in the first book. Aesculapius, the symbol of modern medicine, was a Wanderer, who travelled about in search of healing, of wholeness. Both Marius and Mahony become aware of the possibility of a resolution of their divisions through a sympathetic identification with humanity, but neither has any opportunity to make it effectual in action. Mahony has been all along a sick man and his physical fate is already determined. Marius is wounded before he can make his insight effective and dies soon after. For each of them, a brief vision of the divine must suffice to justify a life-long quest.

In addition to this fundamental similarity of outlook, we find a great similarity in detail as the book progresses. In both *Marius* and *Mahony* occurs the notion of life as a kind of sleep from which humanity must awaken. In both, the concept of music works behind the argument as 'a principle of sanity and reality in all things', the principle ordained by 'the Divine Reason . . . lending to all life and matter what life they had'. Pater argues that this is the real meaning of the immortality of flesh and spirit:

. . . a continuance, if not of their material or spiritual elements, yet of orderly intelligible relationships, like the harmony of musical notes, wrought out in and through the series of their mutations . . . (*M.E.*, Vol. I, p. 131)

In both we find the 'tyrannous reality of things visible' to be more immediately impressive than the tenuous claims of the spirit, especially when expressed in such warmly human terms as Marius's question to his dying friend:

'Is it a comfort . . . that I shall often come and weep over you?'—

'Not unless I be aware, and hear you weeping!' (*M.E.*, Vol. I, p. 119)

The lines, as beautiful and moving as poetry, remind us in substance of Mary's resistance to conventional Christian notions of heaven, her preference for the bodily presence, and of Mahony's recognition of his need for the tangible after his attempts to communicate with his dead daughter in *Ultima Thule*.

In Marius we find, as in Mahony, a temperamental restlessness, of which intellectual curiosity is only one expression:

In truth, one of his most characteristic and constant traits had ever been a certain longing for *escape*—for some sudden, relieving interchange, across the very spaces of life, it might be, along which he had lingered most pleasantly—for a lifting from time to time, of the actual horizon. (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 114)

Marius's chief escape route is the imagination, as it is for Richardson herself and the young Laura. Marius is intent on:

working his way from the actual present, as far as he might, with a delightful sense of escape in replacing the outer world of other people by an inward world as himself really cared to have it. (*M.E.*, Vol. I, p. 133)

As with Richardson:

To move afterwards in that outer world of other people, as though taking it at their estimate, would be possible henceforth only as a kind of irony. (*Ibid.*)

For Mahony, ironic detachment is not possible, nor has he the capacity for losing himself in the creative act which is not an escape but an act of defiance. For his creator it is otherwise. Art, for both Richardson and Pater, emerges from 'the desire to retain what is so transitive', but its

exercise becomes finally a religious way of life, since it brings spirit and matter together 'under their purest and most perfect conditions'.

Mahony's striving to accomplish something, he knows not what, is a poignant example of the artistic temperament devoid of artistic ability. His situation is far worse than that of the artist whose genius fails him momentarily, for he is condemned to see Pisgah but never set foot in it. He can recognise the kind of longing expressed by Marius but never take a step to realise it:

To create, to live, perhaps, a little while beyond the allotted hours, if it were but in a fragment of perfect expression—it was thus his longing defined itself for something to hold by amid the 'perpetual flux'. (*M.E.*, Vol. I, p. 155)

Mahony's torment is the perpetual consciousness of Time passing and nothing to show for it, not even the second-rate work of a minor artist.

The argument between accident and design inevitably comes up in both books. 'Chance or Providence? Chance or Wisdom?' Marius, like Mahony before he returns to medical practice again in Ballarat, muses on the insoluble problem. And though both are fortified by the belief in the one soul moulding all things, they share a conviction that there is a fundamental sadness, built into the fabric of things:

No charity of ours can get at a certain natural unkindness which I find in things themselves . . . (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 195)

For there is a certain grief in things as they are, in man as he has come to be, as he certainly is, over and above those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable—some inexplicable shortcoming, or misadventure, on the part of nature herself—death, and old age as it must needs be, and that watching for their approach, which makes every stage of life like a dying over and over again. (*M.E.*, Vol. II, pp. 199-200)

And again:

Almost all death is painful, and in everything that comes to an end a touch of death, and therefore of wretched coldness struck home to one, of remorse, of loss and parting, of outraged attachments. (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 200)

This is why, for Marius, Plato's doctrines seem unfeeling and inhuman 'as tending to lessen his resentment at nature's wrong'. His is the stance of the realist, of the mind that does not set out either to deceive

itself, like the Christian Scientist, or to kill human feeling like the Stoic. Marius concludes that:

the forced and yet facile optimism, refusing to see evil anywhere, might lack after all the secret of genuine cheerfulness. It left in truth a weight upon the spirits; and with that weight unlifted there could be no real justification of the ways of Heaven to man. (*M.E.*, Vol. II, p. 56)

The same weight is left upon the spirit by the visit of the Bishop to the Mahony's household at Barambogic, with his set determination not to scratch below the surface. He didn't want to spoil his own comfort by being forced to see things as they really were. (*R.M.*, p. 861)

For both Pater and Richardson, the 'certain natural unkindness in things themselves' is simply a fact, to be accepted, not glossed over, but not erected into an occasion of bitterness, or brushed aside because of the possibility that it might be merely a stage in the scheme of things. Both Marius and Mahony are kept from 'the theatricality of mysticism' by: the instinctive recognition that in vigorous intelligence, after all, divinity was most likely to be found a resident. (*M.E.*, Vol. I, p. 124)

The same is true of their creators, whose vigorous intelligence prevents them from taking off into the 'intense inane'. For this reason it can be said of Richardson, as has been said of Pater, that she 'sought a mythic pattern in reality and did not attempt to impose it from outside'.²⁸ The 'naturalistic' method which Richardson adopted bears witness to this statement and its fitness as an exploratory tool would certainly have been made clear to her from her reading of Ibsen, Zola, and nineteenth-century German novels, in which naturalism and mysticism were, as we have seen, by no means incompatible.

Where Richardson and Pater diverge is in their stylistic practice. There is an element of the virtuoso about Pater which is completely absent in Richardson. United as they would have been in principle about the necessity for incessant striving after a greater fineness of truth, about the fusion of fact and the sense of the fact in reaching truth, in practice the elements in this fusion are given different weight in each writer. It is no disparagement of Richardson to say that, like Holz and Schlaf, she

²⁸ See Gerald C. Monsman, *Pater's Portraits: Mythic Patterns in the Fiction of Walter Pater*, especially the Introduction, for a discussion of this point.

looks forward to the twentieth-century art of the camera, while Pater was content to try to force more and more out of the brush. One feels that Richardson would have been delighted with the art of a Bergman, a Resnais, above all with that of Teshigahara, the creator of *The Woman of the Dunes*, if she could have lived to see it. In her writing she aimed at a transparent style in which no trace of the author might be discerned: her sense of the fact is kept under strict control. In Pater, however, the sense of the fact is nearer the surface: an emanation of the personality of the writer throws a veil, even if the most gossamer of veils, between the reader and the narrative, modifying his response to what he reads in a way Richardson is careful to avoid. The essential subjectivity of her work is conveyed not at all in the element of style which has to do with the choice of words and their order in the sentence, but in the structure of the ideas. And so successfully did she 'hide her life', like Pater and D'Annunzio, that if it had not been for the clues she herself finally disclosed in her autobiography, it would have been difficult to read this structure aright.

IV

What Pater made of the Heraclitean and Parmenidean antithesis owed much to German idealist philosophy, in particular to the work of Hegel. William Wallace's translation of the *Logic* was known to him and was probably the source of the distinctions he made between the two Greek philosophers: the centrifugal tendency of the one, the centripetal tendency of the other. It is more than likely that a later edition of this translation with the *Prolegomena*, published in 1892, was known to J. G. Robertson, especially since it was dedicated to Jowett, whose work he must have known. Hegel's predecessors, Fichte and Schelling, were certainly approved of by Robertson, as Nietzsche was not, and it would be strange if their ideas and Hegel's had not been discussed in the Robertson household. Richardson is likely therefore to have encountered them directly, as well as in German Romantic fiction and poetry. She would have welcomed Hegel's attempt to prove that matter is:

the necessary object and counterpart of spirit, in which spirit reveals, and through which it realises, itself; and that indeed the material world only shows its ultimate meaning, when we regard it as the

natural environment and basis for the life of spiritual beings,²⁹ and his attempt to link his view of things with the idea of evolution or 'development', for her father's religious and philosophical beliefs would have acclimatised her to similar ways of looking at things.

The sources of Richard Mahony's spiritual and intellectual aspirations are twofold, and are to be found partly in idealist philosophy, partly in Spiritualism, its amateur and often absurd counterpart. These aspirations must therefore be seen in relation to the mental climate of nineteenth-century Europe, of which the intellectual life of the colony of Victoria was a part. Mahony and his wife, though as far removed as it is possible to be from allegorical constructions, reflect in their modest way the two sides of the great debate that followed the protracted dissolution of the world-view loosely referred to as 'the great chain of being'. Spiritualism, like Hegelianism, was only one of the attempts to assimilate the objections to this view and to reinstate it in a new form which would be compatible with the findings of modern science. Many of the most eminent scientific minds of the day acknowledged the necessity of this task, though men like T. H. Huxley and Henry Maudsley, the great English psychiatrist, whose book *Body and Mind* was widely read,³⁰ did not concern themselves directly with it. They saw it as their duty to find out all they could about the material world immediately to hand. A. R. Wallace, on the other hand, co-discoverer with Darwin of evolution by

²⁹ See article on Hegel by Edward Caird, Master of Balliol, in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, 1925 edition.

³⁰ Maudsley's beautifully-written and undeservedly neglected book, *Body and Mind: an inquiry into their connection and mutual influence, especially in reference to mental disorders*, was published in London in 1870. The book is made up of the Gulstonian Lectures delivered to the Royal College of Physicians earlier in the same year, together with an essay entitled 'The Limits of Philosophical Enquiry', Maudsley's reply to an address under that title given by the Archbishop of York to members of the Edinburgh Philosophical Association in 1868. There is a further essay entitled 'The Theory of Vitality'. The book was widely read in Australia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and its contents would certainly have impressed Richardson's father, especially its linking of insanity with syphilis. Some of Maudsley's insights anticipated Freud's by many years, particularly on the subject of sex; and it is regrettable that his work has not captured the lay mind instead of Freud's, if only because of its greater fortifying effect.

natural selection, took an active interest in the attempts of Spiritualists to find a solution to the philosophic difficulties posed by Darwinism; so did the chemist Sir William Crookes, and Cromwell Varley, the 'electrician to the Atlantic cable', mentioned by Mahony in *The Way Home*. It is plain throughout the novel that Mahony is in touch with the ideas of all these men, and investigation of the life of Walter Lindesay Richardson reveals him as much more closely in touch. The general stance of Mahony, which is substantially that of Walter Richardson and his daughter, is similar to that of Maudsley, who pointed out in *Body and Mind* that:

the materialist, as such, is not under any logical constraint whatever to deny either the existence of a God, or the immortality of the soul or free will. (p. 123)

He supports this contention by reminding his readers that:

Whosoever believes sincerely in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as . . . all Christians profess to do, must surely have some difficulty in conceiving the immortality of the soul apart from the body. (p. 123)

He winds up his argument by asking:

Is the Creator's arm shortened, so that He cannot endow matter with sensation and ideation? (p. 125)

Maudsley was a convinced evolutionist, but like Spencer believed Evolution received its impetus from the Unknowable, some mysterious power.

He saw no reason to restrain intellectual curiosity:

while keeping its inquiries within the limits of the knowable it may examine critically, and use all available means of testing, the claims and credentials of any professed revelation of the mystery. (p. 122)

But along with the curiosity went an intellectual humility which also has its parallel in Mahony's thinking:

Encompassing us and transcending our ken is a universe of energies . . . how can man, then, the 'feeble atom of an hour', presume to affirm whose glory the heavens declare, whose handiwork the firmament showeth? Certainly true science does not so dogmatise.

(p. 133)

Mahony's conclusion, after turning from Darwin and Huxley to the mystics is

. . . there were mysteries at once too deep and too simple for learned brains to fathom. (*R.M.*, p. 558)

Maudsley's book was published during the period of Mahony's investigations and it is likely that Walter Richardson read it early in 1871. That he knew it is clear from an extract he made from his Commonplace Book, which in a garbled form was published in *The Harbinger of Light* not long before his final breakdown. There is reason to believe that his daughter also knew it, and she certainly knew the Commonplace Book. Moreover, before she began *Richard Mahony*, she had resumed acquaintance with a childhood friend, who married into the Maudsley family in 1890. This was Grace Stretch, sister of the young Maldon curate, later Bishop of Newcastle, with whom Ethel Richardson had, as a girl, fallen passionately in love; Grace's husband, Sir Henry Carr Maudsley, was a celebrated Melbourne surgeon, one of whose sons later became a psychiatrist. It is unlikely, therefore, that Richardson would have been ignorant of the work of the elder Maudsley on a subject which had much significance for her.³¹ A reading of Maudsley would certainly have confirmed Walter Richardson in a habit of mind acquired long before, which in turn was passed on to his daughter. His interest in the continuity of material and spiritual existence dated back to his student days in Edinburgh. It was originally as much scientific as religious and arose from the profound passion for truth, that saving grace of the Victorian intellect, which appears to have been his dominating characteristic, if his published writings represent him truly. But there was nothing in Maudsley which would have refused expression to the religious side of his nature, and his turning to Spiritualism originally was a quest for concrete evidence of the synthesist position rather than an enterprise in wishful thinking. Certainly German idealist philosophy owed much to the mystic Swedenborg, whom the Spiritualists adopted, along with Pythagoras, as one of their 'seers', but Swedenborg also was one 'for whom the visible world existed'. Both Spiritualism and Idealism represent, it has been

³¹ What Maudsley had to say about heredity is likely to have sunk deep into H.H.R.'s mind. For her his 'tyranny of organisation' seems to have been equivalent to Fate. But she would also have been strengthened by his doctrine that 'a completely fashioned will is the true mark of a strong mind . . . the strongest force is quiet force'—in other words, will offered an escape from the tyranny of organisation, to some degree at least.

claimed, a schizoid tendency exhibited by certain temperaments whose 'intense desire for synthesis cannot be satisfied within the bounds of science and normal experience'. Swedenborg would seem to present a classic case of such a temperament. After a highly successful life as a scientist, he devoted all his energies for many years to his gigantic synthesis of Christianity, ancient tradition, and science. His *Arcana Coelestia* was a quarry for Spiritualists in search of doctrines and he provided the movement with what intellectual authority it could muster to justify its more bizarre activities.

Spiritualism emerged in the United States in the 1840s and swept through northern Europe in the late sixties and seventies.³² A ripple of its wave reached the shores of Victoria in the fifties and gathered strength in 1869, when Dr Walter Richardson became the first president of the Victorian Association for Progressive Spiritualists. Like many other 'hard-reading colonials', he knew his Swedenborg and it is not surprising to find Richard Mahony in possession of a set of the *Arcana*.

Swedenborg's mysticism was, in deference to its Christian element, theistic, not pantheistic. He held that 'the sun of the spiritual world was pure love from Jehovah God who is in the midst of it'. In his view God was not in nature, but nature was in God. Christ was the Divinum Humanum, a manifestation in time of God Himself. Both these views occur in Spiritualism, in much the same form. God is spoken of as the architect of the universe and Christ as a kind of superior elder brother to man.

Fundamental to Swedenborg's teaching was the doctrine of correspondences according to which everything in the natural world corresponds exactly with everything in the spiritual world.³³

³² References to the beginning of the movement known as 'modern spiritualism resulting from the occult phenomena occurring in the Fox family, at Hydeville, New York in 1848', are copied into Walter Richardson's *Commonplace Book*.

³³ The quotations are taken from Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* and from *Conjugial Love* (the spelling is important). His work is so repetitive that there is little point in citing pages and the editions are copiously indexed. Walter Lindesay Richardson's *Commonplace Book* contains extensive quotations from *Heaven and Hell*.

not only the natural world in general, but in every particular. Therefore whatever in the natural world comes into existence from the spiritual world is said to be in correspondence with it. It must be known that the natural world comes into existence and continues in existence from the spiritual world, precisely like an effect from its effecting cause . . . What correspondence is may be seen from the human face. In a face which has not been taught to dissemble all the affections of the mind come to view in a natural form as in their image.

This doctrine is the crux of Spiritualism, which sought constantly to demonstrate, as Mahony put it:

the continuity of existence; the nearness, the interwovenness, of the spiritual world to the material; the eternal and omnipotent presence of the Creator. (*R.M.*, p. 559)

From the notion of correspondences, Swedenborg developed the concept of Heaven as the Grand Man, ruled by the Lord as a unit; then arrived, by a logical sleight of hand, at the conclusion that:

The Lord is the only Man and they only are men who receive the Divine from him.

The identification of the Divine and the Human, 'the Lord alone is Man', is the summit of the synthesising man's ambition: its Hegelian version is that God, or the Absolute, is Man-in-Progress, secular, evolving man, as in the quotation from Pater earlier. It is difficult to reconcile the notion that God is Man with the notion that He is transcendent, but both Swedenborg and the Spiritualists take this in their stride and it must be confessed that they get some encouragement to do this from Christian sources. The psychological basis of this attitude would seem to lie in an intense need to identify with, or even to supplant the father-figure, and it is not surprising that Richardson was attracted to a doctrine with this sort of content. The psychological motivation is inextricably intertwined with a perfectibilist view of the universe and this certainly is implicit in Swedenborg's doctrine, though he would have dissociated himself quite emphatically from the modern manifestations of it described by John Passmore in the last chapter of his *The Perfectibility of Man*. This brilliant book, granting that its author is inclined to under-rate what is of value in the mystic tradition, is indispensable reading for those tempted to commit themselves to it without examining it logically.

Swedenborg's fundamental axiom that all things in the universe have relation to goodness and truth was of more moral use; from this he deduced that man has will and understanding, the first concerned with goodness, the second with truth. He postulated two worlds: the spiritual, inhabited by spirits and angels, and the natural, inhabited by men. There were two orders of angels, Celestial angels who received the Divine Influx more interiorly, and Spiritual angels who received it more exteriorly. Celestial Love is love of the Lord, Spiritual Love is love of the neighbour. He regarded the natural world as a preliminary stage of preparation for the spiritual world, in which the will and the understanding would then finally be brought into harmony and the spirit made ready for Heaven or Hell. Man he regarded as a bridge between the natural and the spirit world. Heaven and Hell were the consequences of the natural world, and angels and devils were not independent creations but evolved from Man. It is easy to see how the Spiritualists' attempt to incorporate the 'development' theory into their system derives from Swedenborg. Mahony, who, we are told explicitly, was a student of Swedenborg, sympathises with this attempt:

For his part, he could not see why the evolution-formula should be held utterly to rule out the transcendental-formula. (*R.M.*, p. 557)

The notion of further spiritual development lies behind Swedenborg's ethical system, which like that of the Spiritualists later, laid great stress on the formative value of works, rather than faith:

Love in act, that is, the life of man, is what endures. Love in act is work and good.

In *Richard Mahony*, this aspect of the doctrine is embodied in Mary Mahony, though her 'understanding' of course is not conformed to her 'will'.

As a consequence of his ethic, Swedenborg held that it was essential for a man to play a full part in the employments of the world, otherwise he would have no opportunity to bring his 'externals' into harmony with his 'internals'. Ascetics, he declared, were not acceptable in Heaven because 'they induced anxieties which disturb the happiness of angels and have to be sent away'(!). Mahony's attempt therefore to lead a fully active life in the society of his time is not contrary to his spiritual aspirations, as has been sometimes implied. Swedenborg's metaphysic is close to the Neoplatonic concept of a world-soul, a creative intellect

'from which the material world is called forth by a process of emanation'. This process he conceived as set in motion by love: 'The Divine of the Lord in Heaven is Love' and goodness and truth were the divine fire and the divine light issuing from love. The direct opposite to the Divine Love he regarded as love of self. He held that there were four different ages of men: the Golden Age (gold signifying celestial good) when 'celestial men', nearest to God, thought from correspondences themselves, 'the natural things of the world serving them as means of thinking in this way'; a Silver Age in which men thought not from correspondences themselves, but from a knowledge of correspondences; a Copper Age, when men did not even think from that knowledge; and finally an Iron Age when men became completely corporeal and the knowledge of correspondences was lost. Swedenborg distrusted the *mens rationalis* and regarded all *a priori* knowledge as residing in the soul and as having been lost when at the Fall of man the soul was separated from the body. It could be restored, he thought, by a return to Adam's primitive integrity before his expulsion from Eden. (The parallels with Brennan's thinking at this point are obvious.) Swedenborg was preoccupied for about ten years in devising methods for realising his dream of regaining Paradise. The link with Pythagoreanism is strong and the ideas of both are reflected in Richard Mahony's explanation of his restlessness. Body, according to Swedenborg, was the instrument of spirit in this quest, though the face of a man's body differs greatly from the face of his spirit:

The face of his body is from his parents, but the face of his spirit is from his affection and is an image of it.

The corollary is that every man, as far as he is spirit, is 'as his ruling love is'.³⁴ The world of spirits, he taught, was:

not Heaven, nor is it Hell, but it is the intermediate state or place between the two . . . For to that place a man comes after death and then after a certain time he is either raised up to Heaven or cast down into Hell according to his life in the world.

These passages can be compared with the scene in *Ultima Thule* where through the 'elder ghost', Mahony communicates with his dead daughter Lallie:

For she had been but a seamstress in her day, and a seamstress she

³⁴ Cf. 'Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also'. St Luke, xii:34.

remained; having, it would seem, gained nothing through her translation, either in knowledge or spirituality. (*R.M.*, p. 805)

Swedenborg's teaching that the body is a mere garment is also adopted by Mahony. The mystic claimed that the dead informed him:

It was well to cast aside that which had served them as a body and for bodily functions in the world; and they wished me to say that they were not dead, but were living as men the same as before, and had merely migrated from one world into the other, and were not aware of having lost anything, since they were in a body and its sensual things, just as before also in understanding and will, as before having thoughts, and affections, sensations and desires, of the same quality as in the world.

In the episode in *Ultima Thule* referred to above we have:

Firmly convinced of the persistence of human individuality subsequent to the great change, he had now been graciously permitted to see how thin were the walls between the two worlds, how interpenetrable the states. (*R.M.*, p. 805)

The same belief occurs in H. H. Richardson's own letter to Oliver Stonor quoted in Chapter 1.

Swedenborg regarded death as a resurrection, and the resuscitation of the spirit as sometimes a gradual process, sometimes as long-drawn out: In consequence, when the body is separated from the spirit, which is what is called dying, man continues to be a man and to live. I have heard from heaven that some who die, while they are lying upon the bier, before they have been resuscitated, think even in their cold body, and do not know but that they are still alive, except that they are unable to move a particle of matter belonging to the body. This belief is made the basis of one of Richardson's last short stories, 'The Coat'. It had been incorporated by that time into Spiritualist 'doctrine'.

The over-riding aim of Swedenborg's whole system is the marriage of truth and goodness made possible in love. For a man to be a whole man his will and understanding must conform to one another:

For neither in Heaven nor in Hell is anyone permitted to have a divided mind; that is, to understand one thing and to will another, but everyone must understand what he wills and will what he understands.

Such a passage states the schizoid's³⁵ problem very clearly and may be compared with passages from *Niels Lyhne* already quoted and with Mahony's constant quest for wholeness. Swedenborg's concept of wholeness is bound up with his thinking about the relations between man and woman analysed in *Conjugal Love*, and this thinking has a direct bearing on the picture of the marriage of Richard and Mary Mahony.

The man, says Swedenborg, born to be intellectual, acts from reason; the woman, born to be voluntary, acts from love. Certainly everyone, whether man or woman, has both understanding and will, but in man understanding predominates and in woman, will. In Heaven there is no predominance and the mind is not divided. There the married pair would be one angel, since the understanding, the male characteristic, would be conformed to the will, the female characteristic (here we have a restatement of the ancient view that man before the Fall was hermaphrodite). In the natural world what often appears to be a true marriage is not true in the spirit, but the opposite may also hold, so that in the spirit world dissensions fall away and a true unity ensues. A truly married pair is an image of the Divine, since it symbolises the union of truth and goodness.

These ideas can be seen very clearly in the presentation of Mahony and his wife; there is a basic bond between them, but their will and understanding are in constant strife. Intellectual striving is characteristic of Mahony, and will or love in action characteristic of Mary. While he is dying, Mahony turns to her again, and there is a sign that the conflict will be resolved. Swedenborg's belief that love is initiated by the female and is instinctive in her, whereas the man receives love, is also illustrated in the personalities of Mahony and Mary. Mary's sympathy is instinctive and practical, her love spontaneous and unshakeable; Mahony's is manifested intellectually always through his sensitive understanding.

A cognate point, which has a bearing on Spiritualist thinking, is Swedenborg's insistence on infinite varieties and diversities:

. . . in no case is hell or heaven wholly the same as one to another, as it is impossible that any one man, spirit or angel, should ever be wholly like another even as to the face . . . every unity is formed out of the harmonious concurrence of many things . . . every unity has

³⁵ The word is not used derogatively.

its existence from diversity, for a unity that is not the result of diversity is not anything; it has no form and therefore no quality.

For there to be a true unity between Mahony and his wife, therefore, there would have to be a concurrence of diversity; the implication is that this will come about in the spirit state. The story, 'The End of a Childhood', bears out this interpretation: Mary's rejection of a second marriage, her adoption of Richard's stance when considering it, are, below the commonplace surface, an expression of her sense of an indissoluble bond.

The insistence on the necessity for diversity is characteristic of the Protestant emphasis on the sanctity of the individual conscience, as Dr Smith has pointed out,³⁶ and this is a primary article in the Spiritualistic credo. It explains its opposition to dogmas, priestly castes or sectarian conformity of any kind: a dislike which is expressed frequently enough in *Richard Mahony*. Mahony's independence of mind is revealed early in the book when Polly complains of his annotations of the Bible:

We can't afford to let our lives be governed by what other people think, Polly. Nor will I give any man the right to decide for me what my share of the Truth shall be. (*R.M.*, p. 171)

This aspect of Swedenborgianism has obvious relevance for a modern world dedicated to a deadening uniformity. Variety, as Darwin stated and recent biologists reaffirm, has an indispensable survival value to the species and deserves encouragement wherever it appears. Swedenborg's defence of diversity, Pater's respect for the man who refused to adjust himself too easily to circumstances, Jacobsen's and Richardson's discernment of the heroic element in the misfit, indicate a certain astringent realism, a native commonsense, an acknowledgment of the particular which is characteristically northern European. In comparison Stoicism or certain distorted forms of Buddhism seem peculiarly facile; even, in their desire to avoid pain at all costs, faintly frivolous.

That side of Spiritualism with which most people nowadays, like Mary Mahony, are least in sympathy is not its general system of beliefs, but the manner of its search for evidence to support it. The search itself is justifiable enough; to complain that it is characteristic of the schizoid temperament to look for evidence of the continuity of existence, of the

³⁶ See F. B. Smith, 'Spiritualism in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century' in the *Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 3, 1965, p. 249.

power of mind over matter, or for any knowledge whatever that helps to alleviate the fear of extinction and its opposite suggests an unwarranted degree of self-satisfaction in the critic.

The common attitude to death nowadays is compounded of personal terror and cynical callousness, an attitude which would have seemed contemptible to Walter Lindesay Richardson, his daughter, and their composite portrait, Mahony. Ivan Illich has pointed out how a *distorted* individualism and misdirected technology have led to a situation in which long life and health are possible for the few, and disease and death the lot of the many:

The great masses have incorporated into themselves . . . 'the technological imperative': the idea that whatever is technologically possible ought to be made feasible, at least for a few. I happened once to go through Latin America right after Dr Barnard, who substitutes hearts. In Brazil the big stadium was filled twice to acclaim Dr Barnard: and the people who acclaimed him didn't have the medicines to clean their intestines of very simple worms.³⁷

The spirit behind such a passage is the spirit behind the contention of Walter Richardson that proper sanitation and decent housing for all would do more to eradicate zymotic diseases than dubious methods of vaccination. It is the same spirit which moved 'Dr Mahony' to reprove a slatternly mother in Barambogie for allowing her Chinese husband to feed her rachitic infant on 'filthy messes' (*R.M.*, p. 775). What the best minds in the Spiritualist movement were aiming at was the liberation of *all* men from ignorance, from physical and spiritual bondage, and from the superstitions that prevented them from realising their innate capacities. Their motives cannot be condemned, any more than those of the medical profession can be condemned, because quacks and hypocrites fail to live up to them.

The part played by Walter Richardson in this search for enlightenment is best left until the chapters dealing with the novel for which his life provided the scaffolding. What we are concerned with at the moment is the intellectual history of his daughter.

Olga Roncoroni has summarised Richardson's religious beliefs as follows:

Her own strong, unshakable conviction was that there would be a

³⁷ See interview in *The Listener* (London), 16 December 1971, p. 828.

future life, in which, freed from the burden of one's earthly body and its limitations but with added wisdom gained from our experiences in this world, one would go forward joyfully to greater spiritual heights. Hers was no 'orthodox' belief; she had no use for harps and crowns; and as to the punishment of hell-fire, she held that one made one's own hell: a purely mental one. (P.R., p. 106)

A letter of Richardson's to her sister, dated 11 April 1942, supports this view; she is evidently trying to reassure her sister about old age:

As for our wrinkles and fading faces, they will automatically disappear when we reach the next plane. You'll find yourself as young and fresh as you ever were, but with all the wisdom you've gathered in your passage through this life, added to the youth and freshness. So it's silly to worry about the passing of time and the marks it leaves behind it.

Both passages show the traces of the kind of doctrines to be met with in *Heaven and Hell*. Miss Roncoroni, discounting the idea that Richardson had a morbid attitude to death, continues:

H.H. had a tremendous *interest* in death and what follows it . . . She read and studied books on both Eastern and Western religions; and, having done so, she distilled, as it were, her own philosophy from these. She belonged to no sect and attended no Church; but she was the least materialistic person I have ever met. I found her theories logical, uplifting, and encouraging, with the result that my fear [of death] gradually left me and today I have completely lost it. This I owe entirely to H.H.R. (P.R., p. 106)

The paragraph reveals the power of Richardson's convictions as well as that same independence of mind inherited, not only from the father, but also from the mother in their attitude to religion. It is easy to trace in the novel a similar growth of Richard Mahony's spiritual independence, but there is also a slipping of the chains of orthodoxy in Mary's mind, however differently her freedom finds expression.

At what point in her life Richardson became convinced, as her father had been, of the continuity of existence beyond the grave it is difficult to say. That she remembered anything of his direct participation in the Victorian Spiritualist movement is unlikely; but it is possible that she learned much more about this participation from her mother than has been disclosed. How much attention Mrs Richardson gave to the move-

ment after her husband's death is not known, but a paragraph in Denovan's *The Evidences of Spiritualism*³⁸ carries a suggestion that she may not have been as isolated from her husband's friends after his death as Mary Mahony is in the novel; in the novel, indeed, Richard had at the last no friends. Denovan is introducing an account of one of Dr Richardson's visits to a séance in London, reprinted after its appearance in the English *Spiritual Magazine* in 1874. He writes:

I regret to say that some time after Dr Richardson's return to this colony, he was seized by a fatal malady, caused, it was understood by his friends, through a sun-stroke, and intensified by heavy losses in the mines, in which he was a large investor, and which, acting upon a highly sensitive and nervous temperament, brought on the disease of the brain which eventuated in his death.

Dr Richardson was a member of the medical profession, and, in addition to the arduous duties thus daily devolving upon him, he took an active interest in the progress of Spiritualism, of which he was a sincere and consistent adherent. He was much beloved and regretted by his widow and family and a large circle of friends.

(p. 534)

Denovan's book, which contains several references to Walter Richardson, was published in 1882, the year before Ethel Richardson entered the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, only three years after her father's death. It would be strange if one of the 'large circle of friends' had not drawn Mrs Richardson's attention to the book, or if the twelve-year-old daughter with a passion for reading did not know of it from her mother. (Denovan's remarks incidentally are interesting as revealing the 'official' contemporary view of the cause of Richardson's brain disease; they also in some sense make amends for the failure of *The Harbinger of Light*, to which Richardson was a regular contributor, to provide an obituary notice.)

Among the books remaining from her father's library in the Maldon days Richardson mentions only *Ecce Homo*, *Where Are the Dead*, or

³⁸ W. D. C. Denovan, former member for Sandhurst (Bendigo) in the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, was acquainted with the Richardsons. His book was published by W. H. Terry, editor of the Spiritualist journal *The Harbinger of Light*, to which Dr Richardson contributed for over eight years.

Spiritualism Explained, and *The Unity, Duality and Trinity of the Godhead*³⁹ and comments:

What I made of their contents, I cannot imagine. But they may at least have been useful in showing a child that not all the world thought alike. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 50)

Internal evidence, however, would suggest that she knew of Denovan's book: passages from *The Way Home*, referring to 'apports of flowers' and so on,⁴⁰ read suspiciously like the accounts of the experiments with Mrs Paton in Melbourne, in which Dr Richardson and Alfred Deakin and others took part. One reason for her not mentioning it in her autobiography may have been precisely because of its direct references to her father.

Towards the end of her life, in any case, she wrote the letter to Oliver Stonor already quoted, affirming the continuity of life after death. During the period of time which separates the child from the old woman lies a history of considerable activity in the field of psychical research, which at the moment is not easy to document. What it was that led to her active involvement in the movement it is impossible to say; we tend to forget moreover how widespread was the interest in psychical research in the early years of this century and indeed until the 1930s. Richardson shared an interest in the subject with Yeats in Ireland, Rilke in Germany, William James in America, Hodgson and Deakin, Brennan and O'Dowd in Australia, to mention only a few outstanding names among her famous contemporaries.

In *Myself When Young* (p. 94) Richardson remembers feeling supercilious about a young parson who read horror stories until he was too frightened to go upstairs to bed:

The day came, however, when I was to go through an almost similar experience, and then, remembering him, I thought more kindly of him. It was in a very old London house (not my own) containing a

³⁹ *Ecce Homo* by J. R. Seeley (London, 1865); *Where are the Dead?* Anon. (published by Simpkin, Manchester, 1873, 1875); *The Unity, Duality and Trinity of the Godhead* by B. S. Nayler, Melbourne.

⁴⁰ See *R.M.*, p. 682. See also Denovan, *Evidences of Spiritualism . . .*, pp. 218-19, for similar experiences with a London medium, Mrs Guppy. Walter Richardson records his presence at one of Mrs Guppy's séances in his *Commonplace Book*.

stair-case which, after dark, nothing would induce me to go up by myself. Not because I had supped on literary horrors, but for a much more substantial reason.

Her promise to tell more of this experience in a later chapter is not fulfilled and the autobiographical portion of *Myself When Young* ends with a description of her marriage, the ill omen of the presence of thirteen guests, and the mention of the death of two of those present, within the year, one of them her mother. The only other accounts of Richardson's occult experiences available so far are those given by Olga Roncoroni. She begins by stating emphatically that Richardson's interest in psychic research was strictly scientific:

She had no use for demonstrations of clairvoyance following a religious service; or for any sittings with alleged 'mediums' which were not conducted under strictly test conditions by scientific and professional men and women well qualified to detect and expose fraud.

Views such as these are similar to those which find expression in Dr Richardson's letters and notes. Miss Roncoroni continues:

She belonged to three psychic research societies which were then functioning in London, including the oldest of these, among whose members were Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett, and many other trustworthy authorities on this difficult subject. In the course of forty years she sat with the best-known psychical mediums of the day from many countries, including the two famous brothers Willi and Rudi Schneider. Sometimes results were interesting, sometimes fraudulently produced 'phenomena' were detected and the 'mediums' exposed as impostors. (P.R., p. 77)

The daughter, it is clear, studied her subject under far more favourable conditions than her father had done, except during the brief period he spent in Europe in 1873-4.

Miss Roncoroni's next reference to the occult is a lengthy account of the psychic powers of Richardson's housekeeper, Irene Stumpf, whose presence in the household at Lyme Regis, where the Robertsons used to spend their holidays, resulted in a series of 'poltergeist' phenomena; Richardson alone, we are told, was able to keep them within reasonable limits.

Richardson's letters support what her companion had to say about her

spiritual beliefs. In June 1940 we find her writing to Mary Kernot about the death of her friend's husband in these terms:

. . . you know I think by now how little weight I lay on death itself—look on it merely as a passing from room to room—and the best we can wish those dearest to us is a swift and painless exit. (P.R., p. 121)
At her own husband's memorial service she had comforted one of his colleagues in almost similar words. In 1934, about a year after Robertson's death, we find Mrs Kernot replying to a letter:

In the account of your getting into touch with your husband I was at first startled, but exceedingly sympathetic. You were most fortunate in being already in touch with conditions favourable for recognition of his nearness. How moving the experience. What you tell me about your visit to the professional medium impresses me exceedingly, coming from you who I believe to be a keenly critical observant woman, the evidence seems clearly indisputable. A mind-reader could not surely extract facts that you did not remember? unless he were able to deal with your subconscious mind? I can well believe that smiles may return to your face . . .⁴¹

Six years later, when the 'Evelyn' of *Myself When Young* died, Mrs Kernot asks: 'I wonder if you will attempt to get in touch with her?' In the same year, Richardson wrote to Mrs Kernot, in an attempt to allay Mrs Kernot's fears about the bombing near Hastings:

Of course we should all go in a direct hit; but what is to be will be. And as you know I have no fear of death. Very often indeed feel that a change from this troubled world would be a relief. So, whatever happens, think of me as just having 'gone upstairs'—as Sir Oliver Lodge so neatly puts it. And waiting there with a handshake for your arrival. (P.R., p. 133)

It is obvious from these exchanges that Mrs Kernot had been familiar with Richardson's spiritualistic beliefs for a long time. In her notes on the unpublished letters a reference occurs to the fact that Richardson had belonged to Harry Price's laboratory for a few years; there follows a brief comment to the effect 'and then succeeded only with other well-known investigators'.

Price, the author of, among other works, *Fifty Years of Psychological Research*, was a one-time conjurer, who devoted himself to exposing

⁴¹ See Kernot letters, unpublished, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

fraudulent mediums without losing his belief in the continuity of material and physical existence. In 1934, after the Senate of the University of London had ruled that psychological research was a fit academic study, his laboratory and equipment were housed for a time within the University itself.⁴² Richardson recommended Price's books to Mrs Kernot in a letter and seems to have sent her one of Sir Oliver Lodge's.⁴³

Richardson's preoccupation with Spiritualism was no doubt complex in origin. Whether or not she was merely carrying on the practice of her parents, particularly of her father, or whether she engaged in it as the result of some tragic experience of her adult life, like the death of her mother, it seems clear that she *needed* her particular form of belief, which is summed up dramatically by Denovan in a lecture he gave at Sandhurst in February 1873, a lecture which Dr Richardson probably attended. Denovan reprinted the lecture in his book and the passage is part of the peroration:

Man lives and preserves his identity after death! Matter—his physical body—returns to the dust from whence it sprung; but the spiritual body, which preserves all that's beautiful and good within us, lives as the Eternal one himself. (p. 46)

The last lines of *Richard Mahony* contain the substance of such a view, and the biographical material suggests that there was an element of will involved in holding it, as far as the novelist was concerned. Certain entries in Richardson's notebooks sound a note of depression at variance with the effect that might have been expected from such a belief. Speaking of old age she writes, after quoting a verse from Hardy:

To sleep for five hours instead of eight, and wake up unrefreshed. For the other three to lie ceaselessly trying to fit the jig-saw: why this, why that? (P.R., p. 123)

It is not surprising that Hardy's poems were among Richardson's favourites later in her life. The tone of these poems strongly resembles the tone of much of Richardson's own writing: the music is nearly always in a minor key, but both writers brace themselves from time to time to

⁴² Price himself later came in for strong criticism. See Trevor Hall and Eric Dingwall, *The Haunting of Borley Rectory*.

⁴³ *The Survival of Man*. In an appendix to this book is printed Kant's letter describing Swedenborg acting as a medium.

achieve a major chord. Both writers are continually asking the question: why this, why that? Both, it is interesting to note in passing, suffered a deep revulsion of feeling over war with Germany, Hardy because of the first one, Richardson over the second one as well.

Another of Richardson's notes dated July 1943 reads:

'The great business of life is to be, to do, to do without, and to depart,' wrote John Morley. It seems to say everything. (P.R., p. 148)

Later still, in a note in April 1944, she likens herself to the characters in *Maurice Guest*, who were forever drumming their fingers on the window-pane:

Real spirits in prison. Maurice himself the chief of them. (C'était moi.) (P.R., p. 152)

The tone of these remarks is not the one of joyful expectation which is characteristic of the Spiritualists among whom her father moved, but that of a guest who has not enjoyed the party and is anxious to leave. It is true of course that the comments could have been the result of loneliness, bereavement, prolonged stress during the war, and increasing ill-health. It would have been very surprising if it had been otherwise. But it is also a note struck often enough in the novels and short stories: the apprehension of an ineradicable *ennui* at the centre of existence, Pater's 'a certain grief in things as they are', which no conviction of continuing evolution seems to have been able to assuage.⁴⁴ The writer's mood is transferred to Mahony in *Australia Felix*, when Mahony is brooding over the quarrel with Henry Ocock:

Of course he had lived the affair down; but the result of it would seem to be a bottomless *ennui*, a *tedium vitae* that had something pathological about it. (R.M., p. 372)

As to the validity of her belief itself, Richardson was too intelligent and well-informed not to know that the only possible verdict was 'Not proven', and that the nature of the belief laid the onus of proof on those who held it. Her real motive for embarking on psychical research was probably the same as that of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, the physician-poet of the

⁴⁴ The extant photographs of Richardson and her sister even as young women are remarkable for the ingrained sadness behind the eyes, though the general expression may seem serene.

early nineteenth century, who wrote in a letter to his friend Thomas Kelsall in 1827:⁴⁵

I am now already so thoroughly penetrated with the conviction of the absurdity & unsatisfactory nature of human life that I search with avidity for every shadow of a proof or probability of an after-existence, both in the material & immaterial nature of man.

Whatever private reservations Richardson had, she certainly regulated her outward life in accordance with the belief she had 'distilled' from her study of Eastern and Western religions and psychic phenomena. She behaved, that is to say, 'as if' this belief were true, and it served her well. Beddoes, on the other hand, overcome by *tedium vitae*, committed suicide.

For both of these writers whose response to 'grief in things as they are' was so different, the classic questions 'whence, why and whither' mattered more than any others, and Richardson's work cannot be understood fully unless these questions are regarded as central.

⁴⁵ See *Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, ed. H. W. Donner (London, 1935), pp. 629-30. Beddoes committed suicide not long after the amputation of a leg because 'Life was too great a bore on one peg, and that a bad one'.

Chapter 3

Il y a des gens si remplis d'eux-mêmes, que lorsqu'ils sont amoureux ils trouvent moyen d'être occupés de leur passion sans l'être de la personne qu'ils aiment.

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD



Flight into Love

I

WITH THE TRANSLATION of *Niels Lyhne*, Richardson's brief apprenticeship was finished: her own true subject had been made clear to her and she proceeded to give it expression, first in the tragic mode in *Maurice Guest* and then in the comic mode in *The Getting of Wisdom*. It might be said, perhaps, as she herself acknowledged late in life,¹ that she acquired wisdom while writing *Maurice Guest*, and by her ruthless exposure of the dual-self of Maurice-and-Louise was thus enabled to contemplate Laura, her earlier self, with an amused detachment.

She began to write *Maurice Guest* in 1897,² using the experience nearest at hand for background and with all the essential facts in her heart and

¹ Mrs Kernot merely notes the contents of the letter in which the admission occurs; it is dated 7 June 1939.

² According to Olga Roncoroni; Richardson herself says she began it a few months after her marriage. Cf. *M.W.Y.*, p. 143 with *Some Notes on My Books* reprinted from the *Virginia Quarterly in Southerly* (Sydney), No. 1, 1963, p. 9. The context of Richardson's own version is interesting as showing an impulse to record happiness: 'My first plan had been hardly more than that of pinning the happy Leipzig days to paper. But other forces were at work; and very soon the characters involved in the tragic love-story had it their own way.' Some caution, however, is always necessary in accepting Richardson's public utterances at their face value. One of these states that she always knew the ends of her novels in advance. The two dates may be made compatible perhaps by assuming that the diary-like writing began soon after her marriage, while the love story proper got under way in 1897.

her head. Her student days in Leipzig, were, so she tells us herself, the happiest she had had so far in her life, and though the novel she founded on them is a sombre one, it is full of zest and energy and power, qualities characteristic of a youthful genius sure of its direction. As it progressed she began to use, in *The Getting of Wisdom*, the experience immediately preceding her Leipzig period, that of her school-days after the death of her father. In *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, she probes back as far as she can, bringing to light with relentless honesty the 'terrible memories' left to her by the long deterioration and 'the slow sad death' of the father.

She had come to Europe with three burdens on her mind: the hopeless love for 'Evelyn', from whom she had recently parted, and for the Maldon clergyman, Jack Stretch;³ the sense of suffocating constriction caused by her experience of boarding-school and the few months of music-teaching which followed; and, most serious of all, the tragic load of childhood suffering, with its hidden fears of a fatal inheritance. The protracted nature of this suffering, the loss of a father at an age peculiarly important to a girl, were bound to have consequences which would make it difficult for her to define her sexual role or her proper relationship to either parent. It is not surprising therefore that *Maurice Guest* is concerned with the widest possible range of sexual relationships and that some of these are highly ambivalent. Whether she set to work deliberately to rid herself of her three burdens by putting her personality difficulties into fictional form cannot be proved, but the correspondence would suggest some conscious purpose apart from an artistic one. The last novel, *The Young Cosima*, far from departing from a logical confessional order, completes it by providing a totally objective parallel to Richardson's own psychic situation and suggesting an explanation for it.

Myself When Young and the letters to Nettie Palmer, as well as evidence supplied by her nephew, make it clear that, as we might expect, the trilogy and *The Young Cosima* were the hardest of the books to write, *The Getting of Wisdom* the easiest. By comparison with the rest of her experiences, those of her school-days and her brief teaching career lay lightest upon her, and the passionate intensity of *Maurice Guest* suggests

³ This passion, she says in a draft version of *M.W.Y.*, cast a shadow over her life for the next ten years, i.e. until she was about twenty-four. It still had power to shake her in middle age when she discussed it with Stretch's younger sister Grace Maudsley, during World War I.

a conscious sense of relief in self-expression, a liberation of pent-up feelings.

Even so, she took her time over it; the book was published only after eleven years of work in 1908 and it is not surprising that it has a maturity unusual in a first novel. It is perhaps from a comment written in her diary towards the end of her life⁴ that we find what the novel meant to her, especially if we set it beside the remark in *Myself When Young* which describes her newly-discovered pleasure in writing:

For my work on *Niels* continued to absorb me, and I felt that at last I had discovered what I liked best to do. To sit alone and unobserved, behind a shut door, and play with words and ponder phrases. (p. 126)
Compare the passage from the diary:

When I was revising *Maurice Guest* I was struck by the number of times people went to the windows and either leant their foreheads or thrummed on the glass. Real spirits in prison. Maurice himself the chief of them. (C'était moi.)

The first passage written for publication, read in the light of the second, a private comment, has all the air of making a virtue out of necessity.

The second passage is interesting for several reasons. First, because of the way Richardson speaks of her characters, as though they were beings independent of the author's control of them; her words reveal the share the unconscious played in a writer usually regarded as slow, deliberate, and fully aware of what she was doing.

The echo of Flaubert, 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi', is also revealing, plainly pointing to the subjective element in a writer who tells us she had learned from Flaubert to keep herself out of her work.

More interesting still is the context of the remark, which implies that the novel was written in a mood of unhappy frustration, an implication that does not square with Roncoroni's cheerful account of Richardson's early married life in Germany, where more than half the book seems to have been written. The most likely explanation, supported by later comments in letters and diaries, is that the novel was undertaken in order to dissipate the mood, and that the mood was a recurrent one.⁵ In

⁴ Quoted in P.R., p. 152. Cf. also pp. 136, 137.

⁵ References to moods of deep depression can be found throughout the available correspondence. According to Richardson, her husband also suffered from moods of 'Celtic melancholy', see p. 507.

a letter to Mary Kernot for instance, in 1939, speaking of 'the agonies of youth', Richardson says:

I wrote many of my own out in it and came out a saner and quieter person. Though *Maurice Guest* lovers would have preferred me to remain in my unregenerate state.

We are reminded here of the letter quoted by Pater in his essay on 'Style', referred to earlier, in which Flaubert wrote to a woman he loved: The only way not to be unhappy is to shut yourself up in art, and count everything else as nothing. Pride takes the place of all beside when it is established on a large basis. Work! God wills it. That, it seems to me, is clear . . . I continue my labour like a true working-man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, never troubling himself whether it rains or blows, for hail or thunder. (pp. 25-6)

Flaubert's remedy for unhappiness is the moral imperative underlying *Maurice Guest* from beginning to end, an imperative which Maurice is constantly disobeying. On this level, he pays the price of self-destruction, but the moral level is not the only one to be considered. The same imperative in a slightly different form appears in *The Getting of Wisdom*: the young Laura is moving towards the notion that if she cannot bend the real world to her liking, she can create through writing an imaginary one to suit herself. It is certainly the remedy which Richardson adopted for herself, though why, after her marriage, she should have found it necessary to withdraw into art and labour 'like a true working-man' is not yet wholly clear. She certainly worked steadily without recognition, never troubling herself 'whether it rains or blows' until the appearance of *Ultima Thule* in 1929, and her earnings over thirty-odd years of writing life averaged out at a shilling a week.

The most interesting phrase of all in the passage is 'real spirits in prison', for it provides evidence that she was conscious of a feeling of bondage. The need to escape from it is the theme which haunts all her works, and it is certainly the impulse behind the two actions of Maurice Guest which alter the course of his existence: he flees to Leipzig to study music, to escape the bondage of provincial life, and then escapes into love of Louise from the 'imprisonment' of the music-student's routine.

The parallels with Richardson's own life are exact enough here.⁶ A really dedicated student would hardly read books while practising scales, as she did herself, and as she makes Maurice do. Maurice's excuse, that Liszt did so, is beside the point.

To draw Maurice, indeed, she would, as she pointed out, hardly have needed to step outside herself, whatever her husband might have claimed about the 'mosaic of influences' which produced the book.⁷ Louise is a more complex portrait, in which the same aspects of her own nature appear as they do in Maurice, along with the differences. Maurice perhaps is the conservative side of her nature momentarily overthrown, Louise the radical side, temporarily drawn towards the conventional; together they present a picture of sexual ambivalence that seems to have had a personal origin. The portrait of Louise also owes something apparently to a school-girl memory, as we learn from the correspondence with Mary Kerlot: 'Why did you make Louise an Australian?' she asks in an early letter, to which Richardson apparently replied. Mrs Kerlot also asked: 'Did the name Dufrayer stick to you from the girl I used to talk of?' Unfortunately, Richardson's replies to these questions are inaccessible.

But Louise in appearance and temperament has a more immediate provenance. She is modelled to some extent on a partner in a liaison notorious in Europe at the turn of the century. On page 329 of the novel she is described as 'the pale girl with Italian eyes', and the resemblances to Eleonora Duse, the great actress who was the idol of Europe at the time are unmistakable. Duse's love affair with the novelist and poet Gabriele D'Annunzio was common knowledge. D'Annunzio himself wrote an account of it in *Il Fuoco*⁸ published in 1900, which, Professor Robertson tells us, his wife had read; certainly his work was reviewed frequently in the magazine *Cosmopolis*, and Richardson during her residence in Germany was reading in Italian. M. A. Clutton-Brock's article in *Southerly* touches briefly and not very clearly as far as chronology is concerned on the part played by Duse in providing inspiration for Louise.⁹ When

⁶ Richardson's dislike of the life she was leading in Melbourne after leaving school comes out more strongly in the draft versions of *M.W.Y.*

⁷ See: *M.W.Y.*, p. 62: 'I had just to magnify and re-dress the old pangs'.

⁸ See: translation in the Modern Library, New York, edition, entitled *The Flame of Life*.

⁹ See: 'Mrs Lins', *Southerly*, No. 1, 1967.

Maurice Guest was published, Richardson's only sister Lilian, who had followed the writing of it in detail, was living in Munich with her first husband. Her daughter-in-law, in the above article, writes:

More excitingly, Eleonora Duse, on whom Louise, the heroine, was closely based, was coming to Munich. Henry was very much interested in her and it was Lil's job to find out as much as she possibly could about her habits and tastes. Her acting was world-famous and she was fêted wherever she went. Lil bustled about and discovered, amongst other things, that of all the multitudes of flowers showered upon her, the Duse liked violets and always kept them by her. Lil ordered twenty-five bunches of violets to be delivered to the theatre from Henry.¹⁰

Lil was enchanted by the Duse's performance. 'For me, dear Sister, I must say it, she was only one person and that was Louise. How truly you have described her I only realized as I watched every little movement and action.'

The niece does not make it clear when or where Richardson saw Duse and fell under her spell, but Duse was in London in 1893 and soon after in Berlin and again in London in 1895; it could have been any one of these occasions, or it could have been in 1898-9 when Richardson was convalescing in Italy after an illness. There are certainly striking similarities between the descriptions of Duse by her later biographers and the descriptions of Louise in the novel, while whole passages of *Il Fuoco* could, *mutatis mutandis*, refer to Louise.

For example, we are told by Frances Winwar in *Wingless Victory* that Duse was 'a plain pale child, who, when her face was illumined by emotion suddenly became beautiful' (p. 115). Richardson apparently noticed this characteristic which the actress had retained. Louise's pallor, her plainness, except for those who are moved by her, or when she is animated by strong feeling, are constantly stressed.

Winwar mentions Duse's faculty of losing her own identity in what is outside herself; Louise has the same faculty. Maurice notes it at the performance of *Carmen* (p. 341) and it is described in an even more significant passage a few pages further on, where she is identified with the source of life itself:

The sun was getting low; the foliage of the trees in the opposite

¹⁰ Violets have emotional significance for Louise in the novel.

gardens was black, with copper edges, against the refulgence of the sky. She leaned her hands on the sill, and gazed fixedly at the stretch of red and gold, which, like the afterglow of a fire, flamed behind the trees. Her eyes were filled with it. She did not think or feel: she became one, by looking, with the sight before her. As she stood there, nothing of her existed but her two widely opened eyes; she was a miracle wrought by the sunset; she *was* the sunset—in one of those vacancies of mind, which all intense gazers know. (p. 357)

The symbolism of this passage reveals itself in the later events of the novel. Though the paragraph heralds Louise's decision to accept Maurice as a lover, it is the *setting* sun which is associated with this decision. We are reminded of the fact later when their relationship is in ruins and she tells him: 'The beginning was the end'.

Frances Winwar mentions Duse's slow, melancholy eyes, large grave mouth, the dress which sculptured itself to her body, her swift changes of mood, her withdrawnness, her solitariness: the same descriptions are applied to Louise. Again, Duse, like Louise, lived her life very much in public and it is likely enough that her views on love were well known. C. Antona-Traversi, in *Eleonora Duse*, quotes her as having written to a journalist:

There is the love that absorbs all one's will, all one's strength and intelligence. In my opinion that is the truest love—but it is certainly fatal . . . So it is with high art.

D'Annunzio's biographers, F. Nardelli and A. Livingston, make several references to Duse that could apply equally well to Louise, especially to the beauty of Duse's voice, its clarity and range of tone and to the beauty of her hands and gestures. D'Annunzio is quoted as saying:

Oh Eleonora, what a soft shadow you can draw over your voice . . . With a gesture of her hand she could animate a landscape . . . the touch of her fingers left a glow of light . . .

D'Annunzio, indeed, dedicated his *La Gioconda* to 'Eleonora Duse, of the beautiful hands'. We are also reminded by his biographer of his remark that Duse could lapse into a complete impassiveness and 'stand like a statue in a flaming garden'.

Remarks of this kind may be compared with Maurice's description of Louise's voice when he overhears her conversation with Schilsky in the wood:

What she said was inaudible to him; but it was enough to be able to listen, unseen, to her voice. Hearing it like this, as something existing for itself, he was amazed at its depth and clearness; he felt that her personal presence had, until now, hindered him from appreciating a beautiful but immaterial thing at its true worth. At first, like a cadence that repeats itself, its tones rose and fell, but with more subtle inflections than the ordinary voice has: there was a note in it that might have belonged to a child's voice; another, more primitive, that betrayed feeling with as little reserve as the cry of an animal. Then it sank, and went on in a monotone, like a Hebrew prayer, as if reiterating things worn threadbare by repetition, and already said too often. Gradually, it died away in the surrounding silence. There was no response but a gentle rustling of the leaves overhead. It began anew, and, in the interval, seemed to have gained in intensity; now there was a bitterness in it which, when it swelled, made it give out a tone like the roughly touched strings of an instrument; it seemed to be accusing, to be telling of unmerited suffering. (p. 150)

Towards the end of the book, there is a similar elaborate description of her movements and her hands. Heinz Krafft is talking to Madeleine: Spring, colour, light, music, perfume: they are all to be found in the curves of a perfect throat or arm . . . She knew this. Her instinct taught her what was required of her. She would fall into an attitude, and remain motionless in it, as if she knew the eye must feast its full. Or if she did move, and speak—for she, too, had hours of a desperate garrulity—then one was content, as well. Her vitality was so intense that her whole body spoke when her lips did; she would pass so rapidly from one position to another that you had to shut your eyes for fear that, out of all this multitude, you would not be able to carry one away with you. If some of her ways of expressing herself in motion could be caught and fixed, a sculptor's fame would be made—A painter's, if he could reproduce the trick she has of smiling entirely with her eyes and eyebrows.—And then her hands!—Mada, I wonder you other women don't weep for envy of them. She has only to raise them, to pass them over her forehead, or to finger at her hair, and the world is hers.—Do you really think a man asks soul of a woman with such eyes and hands as those?—Good God, no! He

worships her and adores her. There is only one place for him, and that's on his knees before her. (p. 501)

Both these passages, especially the second, with Krafft's odd use of the past tense at the beginning, have something of the set-piece about them, like the description of Duse's gestures in Rilke's *Malte Laurid's Brigge*. It is legitimate to ask at this point whether Richardson strains credibility by inserting such set passages into the text. She compels acceptance of the first by having carefully built up the picture of Maurice's passionate hunger for every detail about Louise and of his morbid curiosity about her relations with Schilsky, while we have had plenty of evidence of his adoration of the visual aspect of her beauty. We accept the second because it is put into the mouth of Heinz Krafft, who, it is taken for granted by all his friends, is in the habit of making long speeches on aesthetic topics; moreover he is talking to Madeleine who can be counted on to deflate his eloquence with an astringent remark.

The two passages certainly justify the comment of Richardson's sister about Duse: 'How truly you have described her . . .' The homage paid to Louise by Krafft is surely Richardson's tribute to the actress. The descriptions arouse in the reader a strong sense of being a member of an audience, listening and watching and being utterly ravished by sounds and gestures. The Louise-Duse described here is emphatically not the *femme fatale*, the Lamia-figure, beloved of the Romanic decadence, in spite of the fact that on two occasions elsewhere the word 'Medusa-like' is associated with Louise's face and hair.¹¹ Neither woman, however, is out to destroy, but simply intent on expressing what is in her to express. Louise is 'il fuoco', the flame of life to which D'Annunzio likened Duse—and himself, the Poet—round which moths flutter because they cannot help it, and for whom therefore she has understanding and compassion. Even this detail is subtly incorporated into *Maurice Guest*; we find it in an incident that occurs during a quarrel between Maurice and Louise, when he is complaining about her irresistible attractiveness to men: She caught a moth that was fluttering round the lamp, and carried it to the window. When, a moment later, he turned and gave her another unhappy look, she felt a kind of pity for him, forced as he was, by

¹¹ Cf. the photograph of Duse, No. 238, in Ingeborg Schnack's *Rilkes Leben und Werk im Bild*.

his nature, to work himself into unhappiness over such a trivial matter . . . (p. 462)

The parallels between Duse and Louise range from physical details and trivial gestures to characteristic emotional attitudes. Duse, for example, is described by her biographers as a woman subject to premature ageing, a feature emphasised in Louise, and in the 'Perdita' of *Il Fuoco*. And it is most instructive to compare the detailed description of Louise's eyes, their setting, and in particular the eyelid which so fascinated Maurice, a fascination which he analyses at the end of his love affair, with the photographs of Duse in Nardelli's *D'Annunzio*. The similarity is plain. Duse, in real life, like Schilsky in the novel, tore to pieces a bunch of red roses when tense about a performance. Her mother, like Louise's, was a dancer.

The most striking resemblances in emotional attitudes can be seen in *Il Fuoco*,¹² where we read of

. . . the pale passionate face, the mouth full of thirst and eloquence, the forehead that was as beautiful as a beautiful manly brow, the eyes that lengthened out from among the eyelashes, hazy as if a tear were continually coming up to them and melting there unshed: the whole passionate face full of light and shadow, love and sorrow; the feverish strength, the trembling life. (p. 158)

Even closer is the similarity in obsessional devotion to the love-object. In *Il Fuoco* we read:

Her infinite gratitude gave her an anxious need of finding some great gift for him.

'What can I do, what can I do for you? Tell me! . . .

Let me serve, let me serve!' . . .

She longed to possess the world that she might offer it to him.

(pp. 158-9)

Later we have:

'You excite me. Sudden fury seizes me!'

'It is like hatred.'

'No, no, don't say that.'

¹² It is worth remarking here that the spirit of Wagner hangs over *Il Fuoco*—indeed he appears in it—as that of his music does over *Maurice Guest*. The preoccupation with transience and permanence is also central to *Il Fuoco*. Cf. pp. 210-13.

'You shake me and rend me as if you wanted to make an end of me.'

'You blind me. After that I know nothing.' (p. 168)

A similar kind of erotic feverishness pervades the passion between Louise and Maurice just at its turning-point. Louise asks:

'What can I do to show you how I love you? Tell me what I can do?' (p. 408)

On the next page we find Maurice saying:

'Sometimes, it seems as if there were something else . . . something that's not love at all . . . more like hate—yes, as if you hated me . . . would like to kill me.'

Her whole body was moved by the sigh she drew. 'If I only could! Then I should know you were mine indeed.'

And Maurice again:

'It's like a kind of rage that comes over one.'

Throughout *Il Fuoco*, Perdita (Duse) is referred to as 'the wandering woman'; throughout *Maurice Guest*, Louise's restlessness, her congenital discontent, her homelessness, her need for variety, movement and excitement are constantly emphasised. Like Duse and D'Annunzio, both Louise and Maurice, no matter to whom they unite their lives, are 'never to be at rest, never to be at peace'. Here we have, of course, a definition of the life-impulse itself, which in one sense they represent. Louise, like Duse, could have taken for her motto the line from one of Gaspara Stampa's poems, which Duse was fond of reciting: *Vivere ardendo e non sentire il male*.¹³

Yet when we have said all this, it still remains true that Louise is a creation in her own right. Startling as the similarities are, the differences are more important. Most important of all, Eleonora Duse was a totally independent creature, as much a single-minded artist as D'Annunzio or Schilsky; her love was an extension of her art and her art came first. For Louise, love is not so much her art, as, more precisely, her life; if unable to love, she is not really alive. Art can be practised without a partner, even, if need be, the art of acting; love expressed as sexual passion can not. Then again, Louise lives almost entirely, as Keats longed

¹³ 'To live consumed with fire and not to feel the pain.' Gaspara Stampa was a 16th-century Italian poet who told the story of a consuming passion from first infatuation to final disillusion in a series of sonnets. She was much admired by Rilke, who knew Duse personally.

to do, a life of the senses; any deeper level is purely intuitional. Duse, it is clear, possessed intellect as well as passion and intuition, so far as intuition can be regarded as distinct from intellect and passion. Louise, in fact, is an original variation on a set of themes of which Duse was one. Richardson's passion for her provided further nourishment for the seeds of creation already quickened into life by Jacobsen.

II

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to identify the original material, stirred into activity by Jacobsen and Duse, and it must not be forgotten that we are operating with hindsight. When the novel was published, none of it could have been obvious, though it would have been clear enough that the author had observed, if 'he' had not felt, a wide range of emotions not usually dealt with in polite novels. As late as 1922, Hugh Walpole, in his Introduction to the novel, was still referring to 'Mr Richardson' and no one who reads the account of Schilsky's farewell 'stag-party' at the end of Book I would be surprised at that.

In assessing the autobiographical content of the novel, we have to beware of identifying any one of the characters with one particular person in real life. Richardson is not either Maurice or Louise, she is both at the same time; she is also Johanna Cayhill, and Madeleine, Krafft, and Avery Hill: all the most convincing characters indeed are partly aspects of her own character, which it seems she was trying to bring to consciousness and accept. It is interesting, for instance, that the only real defender of Krafft, the only one who understands him,¹⁴ is the 'respectable' Madeleine, who is apparently as unlike him as it is possible to be. But Madeleine is far from being only the stereotyped, well-adjusted Englishwoman that most critics take her to be: she is capable of surprising us.

The trick of multiple characterisation Richardson could have learnt from Dostoyevsky's *Karamazov*, but it is more likely that she discovered it for herself in the course of creation, as she examined her own temperament. She could also have learnt about it from her husband. In his *Goethe and the Twentieth Century*, Professor Robertson refers to Goethe's

Protean power of assuming many forms, of splitting up his own

¹⁴ See *M.G.*, p. 514.

wondrously complex personality into many simpler component parts.
(p. 91)

Certainly, both Maurice and Louise share the basic restlessness, the 'divine discontent' of their creator, of their creator's father, and, it should be noted, of their creator's mother. Richardson's mother has been too closely identified with the home-keeping Mary Mahony, just as her father has been with the wandering Richard Mahony. Both Maurice and Louise are restless and impulsive; we have Richardson's own word for it in *Myself When Young* that her mother as well as her father was restless and incalculable (p. 129).

Richardson divides between Louise and Maurice some of the elements of her childhood history, though we are told little about Louise's beyond the fact that she came from a Queensland station, felt unwanted by her family, and could remember the deserted mining shafts, the smell of mimosa, on the day of her father's death, and the buggy in which she went to the funeral. The second chapter of the book, however, a flashback to Maurice's early history, contains a good deal of straight autobiography, as the first sentence shows:

In Maurice Guest, it might be said that the smouldering unrest of two generations burst into flame.

In Richardson's case, the unrest was a dual inheritance; in Maurice's, it is his father's discontent that is bequeathed to him:

His father . . . had been a prey to certain dreams and wishes, which harmonised ill with the conditions of his life . . . he satisfied the immediate thirst of his soul by playing the flute, and by breathing into the thin, reedy tones he drew from it, all that he dreamed of, but would never know. (p. 14)

Richardson's father and Richard Mahony, we remember, both played the flute. Like Richard Mahony later, when two choices are open to him, Maurice's father marries and his visions are driven further underground, only to rise to the surface in his son, who 'had a more tenacious hold upon life'. The dull provincialism of Maurice's life parallels the narrowness of the author's own life at home and at school. Her own father, receding from her into illness and insanity, becomes Maurice's 'silent, undemonstrative father, who surrounded himself with an unscalable wall of indifference'. Her mother, absorbed in the struggle to keep the home together, becomes Maurice's:

hard-faced, careworn mother, about whose mouth the years had traced deep lines, and for whom, in the course of a single-handed battle with life, the true reality had come to be success or failure in the struggle for bread. What was art to them but an empty name, a pastime for the drones and idlers of existence? (p. 15)

Here surely is a thumb-nail sketch of the Mary Mahony to come. Maurice, like Richardson, summons to his aid 'all the strengthening egoism, which is latent in every more or less artistic nature'. The qualification 'more or less' is an interesting piece of self-insight. And, just as Richardson did, Maurice regards the prospect of a musical career as a means of escape from his environment. So does Louise, who, when he urges her to take up her music again, tells him: 'I have no real talent. With me, it was only an excuse—to get away from home' (p. 404).

Other characteristics of Richardson herself are also present in these early chapters. Besides the vague longing to be always somewhere else, besides the fear of monotony, of being buried alive, there is also the sense of intense solitude, of being an outsider, of contemplating life while others are living it, expressed not only in the lengthy and very poignant descriptions of such feelings, but also in such small details as occur in the account of Maurice's walk through the streets of Leipzig: 'and it seemed to him he was more frequently off the pavement than on it'. The feeling of being an outsider remained permanently Richardson's own, and part of the aim of the book is the expression of it.¹⁵ Richardson learned to live with it; Maurice becomes a permanent outsider, a suicide: his action may represent the temptation she resisted. But the feeling is also strongly present in Louise, who is 'too fond of life, and too afraid of death' (p. 121) seriously to contemplate suicide. She attempts to deal with solitariness by abandoning herself to another; her one ambition is to lose 'the twofold sense of being'. That she is an Australian, a being from a strange, far country, that she did not feel at home there, or anywhere, are details which help to build up the picture of an isolate. The

¹⁵ She herself felt it strongly in Leipzig, for all her pleasure in the life; she is much more emphatic in her first drafts of *M.W.Y.* about there being no Germans in their circle of friends than she is in the final version. These also make it more evident that she felt her 'colonialism' and found it easier to get on with Americans than with the English residents. In due time these feelings are transferred to Richard Mahony.

resulting obsessive desire to belong, therefore, characterises them both and they are both prepared to destroy themselves to achieve it. The anxiety to be loved reveals itself in small details such as Maurice's 'over-readiness' to help Madeleine in the restaurant (p. 10). The same trait appears in Laura in *The Getting of Wisdom* when she first goes to school. There are hints of a similar trait in Richardson's parents as they reveal themselves in their letters, and Richardson's account of her attempts to adapt herself, at school, shows a like anxiety to belong. The obsessiveness in the real and the imaginary characters may have been intensified as a response to emotional insecurity, but it is also innate. Louise, we are told by Madeleine, 'is not a girl to do things by halves' (p. 53) and on page 84 we find Maurice in one of those moods:

when the entire consciousness is so intently directed towards some end, that, outside this end, nothing has colour or vitality; all that has previously impressed and interested one, has no more solidity than papier maché.

There is plenty of evidence to show that Richardson and her parents were not people 'to do things by halves'. In the novel, moreover, there is an interesting allusion to the power of hereditary conditioning, where those subjected to it are likened to the 'fate-shackled heroes of antiquity' (p. 62).

There is no point in pursuing this line of inquiry any further; the whole book is full of similar examples which reveal its autobiographical nature and declare it to be a drama of self-examination.

Richardson's autobiographical approach to her novel could have found a precedent exalted enough in Goethe. As Professor Robertson said of him: 'Goethe wrote nothing that was not, in the first instance, prompted by some experience of his own' (p. 47) and he refers on the same page to Goethe's remark 'that all his works are but fragments of a great confession'. It would be strange if Goethe's practice had not been discussed by the Robertsons from the earliest days of their acquaintance, and there is every reason to think that it was.

III

Having arrived at something like a just estimate of the part both life and literature played in the creation of *Maurice Guest*, we are in a better position to decide what the book is about, before judging its artistic

merits. This will involve us in an examination of a third influence, that of music, which has never been seriously considered, but which can be elucidated in the course of examining what has been for fifteen years the most influential view of the theme. In an article in *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 2, 1955, Professor A. D. Hope decided that *Maurice Guest* was not a love story but a novel about art, about the difference between genius and talent, between what Nietzsche called 'free and servile spirits', and that *The Young Cosima* is an elaboration of the same theme. For this reason he regards *Maurice Guest* as 'a musical novel'. Because of his great and deserved prestige as a poet, Professor Hope's critical pronouncements tend to be regarded as oracular and definitive in Australian literary circles and in the press. An examination of his view of *Maurice Guest* will be deferred until the next chapter and the present one will take as its point of departure the older view of critics like Nettie Palmer, Green, and Barnard Eldershaw, the commonsense impression of the average reader, and the opinion of its author that the book is in some sense of the word 'a love story'.

It should not be forgotten that Richardson in sitting down to write *Maurice Guest* was *beginning* her career as an artist, and it would be in the highest degree unlikely that her first book would set out to be a thesis-novel about the nature of genius and talent, as Professor Hope claims. She had no notion yet what degree of either she herself possessed as a writer, and her experience of artist-musicians was new and undigested. On the other hand, she had had two intimate experiences of love, one for a man and one for a girl. The second of these had been of a highly obsessional and destructive kind and she had failed to find any balm for her wounds in pursuing a musical career. If she had not met Robertson—a matter of sheer chance—or met him and lost him, she would have been in much the same state as Maurice Guest is in after he loses Louise. Moreover at the time when she had not recovered entirely from her yearning for her old loves, and when her prospects of marriage seemed fated to be long delayed, she was hearing music which evoked in a particularly poignant way her own feelings about the joys and sufferings of love.¹⁶ What more natural than, safe in harbour and able

¹⁶ In one of the early drafts of *M.W.Y.* describing the return from Leipzig to England she speaks of 'the inexorable Tristan sea-motive'; the music was evidently of significance to her.

to order her thoughts, that she should take as her subject-matter the sensations that had been so immediately present to her? What more natural than that she should look back on the adolescent girl she had been and ask herself what those sensations really were which took such a toll of her energy? Were they in fact, as she had thought, sensations of love? The title she first chose for the work, 'Tinkling Cymbals', suggests the direction of her thinking about the subject.

Whatever *Maurice Guest* is or is not, it is surely above all else a searching examination into the nature of love, particularly into the kind of love which is desired not for its own sake, but as a means of pursuing some deeper psychic aim. Richardson's painful love-experiences, she must have noticed, could not, in the nature of things, have had any outcome: why had she twice chosen to embark, as Maurice was once to do, on a hopeless love affair? Why could she not have diffused her feelings over a number of people instead of channelling them into one narrow strait—a point which Maurice examines on page 438 of the novel:

. . . Maurice admitted, besides his constant preoccupation—or possibly just because of it—an innate lack of sympathy in himself, an inability, either of heart or of imagination, to project himself into the lives and feelings of people he did not greatly care for.

The young Laura, Richard Mahony, and Richardson herself, all meet in this sentence. This first novel is a devastatingly honest attempt to put the record straight, to ask: What exactly is love? Is it an end or is it a means? If it is a means, then towards what? To examine a multiplicity of sexual roles and the various forms love takes, from maternal love to prostitution, obviously requires a large number of characters, whose separate interests can be made to interlock convincingly, and the skill with which Richardson meets this demand is one of her chief strengths as a novelist, for which she has not been given, in recent years, high enough praise. The various levels of meaning of which Dante spoke, the literal, the psychological, the moral and the anagogical are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to discuss one without distorting the other. And however much the problem of a particular young person is at the centre of the book, it remains very much an account of 'the agonies of youth' in general, agonies that are themselves evidence of a tremendous

upsurge of life.¹⁷ As a whole *Maurice Guest* makes us feel that painfulness of spring which is an inseparable part of its beauty. The central situation is so powerful that it tends to make us overlook the significance of figures like Ephie, whose bloom is so exquisite because of its very transience. The characters who demand most of our attention have something unusual about them, but Ephie is the type of youth itself, beautiful, hopeful, confident, out-going, yet self-absorbed as youth should be, and above all capricious and vulnerable, like spring sunshine in Europe. She is part of the lyricism of the book and, when she leaves it, it is as though the petals have been blown rudely from a flowering tree. The rest of the book is for high summer, autumn, and winter.

At the beginning of the novel, the same hopeful expectancy and vulnerability appear in Maurice himself, though from the first the tone is more shadowed, hinting already at a resilience that is less firmly grounded than it is in Ephie's simpler, colder, shallower nature. The last paragraph of Chapter II and the early paragraphs of Chapter III indicate a complexity of character, a dualism, the effects of which are unpredictable: With a long and hot-chased goal in sight . . . it is astonishing how easy it becomes to make light of the last, monotonous stretch of road that remains to be travelled. Is there not, just beyond, a resting-place?—and cool, green shadows? Events and circumstances which had hitherto loomed forth gigantic, threatening to crush, now appeared to Maurice trivial and of little moment; he saw them in other proportions now, for it seemed to him that he was no longer in their midst: he stood above them and overlooked them, and, with his eyes fixed upon a starry future, he joyfully prepared himself for his new life. What is more, those around him helped him to this altered view of things. For as the present marched steadily upon the future, devouring as it went; as the departure this future contained took on the shape of a fact, the countless details of which called for attention, it began to be accepted as even the most unpalatable facts in the long run usually are, with an ungracious resignation in face of the inevitable. Thus, with all his ardour to be gone, Maurice Guest came to see the last stage of his home-life almost in a bright light, and even

¹⁷ See introduction to *Siren Voices*, p. xiv: 'It is youth, which, in the novel I am writing, grows, loves, chatters, fails, fights, is disillusioned and swept away.' Jacobsen's words might be a synopsis of *Maurice Guest*.

with a touch of melancholy, as something that was fast slipping from him, never to be there in all its entirety, exactly as it now was, again: the last calm hour of respite before he suddenly plunged into the triumphs, but also into the tossings and agitations of the future. (p. 20) No such qualms about leaving home could have troubled the mind of Ephie.

The same hint of sombreness that pervades the early descriptions of Maurice is carried into the picture of the spring day which opens the chapter immediately following. In the first paragraph, summer is 'lurking' at the heels of spring. There is a reference to the strong 'unreal' sunshine of the afternoon, and there is something sinister about 'the single long bar of light' thrown on the wall above Maurice's piano. The feeling of bondage, already alluded to in the account of Maurice's earlier life, is strongly present once more in this new environment, and a melancholy awareness of the gap between the promise of the morning and the reality of the afternoon, between expectation and jaded realisation suffuses the whole passage:

He leaned over and looked down into the street far below—still no one there! But it was only half-past four. He stretched himself long and luxuriously, as if, by doing so, he would get rid of a restlessness which arose from repressed physical energy, and also from an impatience to be more keenly conscious of life, to feel it, as it were, quicken in him, not unakin to that passionate impulse towards perfection, which, out-of-doors, was urging on the sap and loosening firm green buds: he had a day's imprisonment behind him and all spring's magic was at work to ferment his blood. How small and close the room was! He leaned out on the sill, as far out as he could, in the sun. It was shining full down the street now, gilding the canal-like river at the foot, and throwing over the tall, dingy houses on the opposite side, a tawdry brightness, which, unlike that of the morning with its suggestion of dewy shade, only served to bring out the shabbiness of broken plaster and paintless window; a shamefaced yet aggressive shabbiness, where high-arched doorways and wide entries spoke to better days, and also to a subsequent decay, now openly admitted in the little placards which dotted them here and there, bearing the bold-typed words *Garçon logis*, and dangling bravely yellow from the windows of the cheap lodgings they proclaimed vacant. It was very still; the

hoarse voice of a fruit-seller crying his wares in the adjoining streets, was to be heard at intervals, but each time less distinctly, and from the distance came the faint tones of a single piano. How different it was in the morning!

The defects in the writing are obvious enough: the Germanic long-windedness, which imposes friction on the movement of the prose in such phrases as 'by doing so', 'as it were' and in the solecism 'not unakin'. What has not been attended to is the poetic organisation of this and many similar passages, the confident use of naturalistic description as symbolism, to impose a mood, or convey character. 'Imprisonment', for instance, is a curious word to use of a situation so ardently desired, and it is to be noted that it is used some time before Louise appears on Maurice's horizon. His will is precariously balanced independently of her and the notion of Louise as a figure of evil, out to destroy, rests on no firm basis. The phrase 'How small and close the room was!' follows hard upon 'imprisonment'. Already, before Maurice has fairly embarked on his long-sought career, his wide horizons have shrunk once more. The full sunlight 'gilds' the river, bestows on the houses a 'tawdry brightness', reveals the real shabbiness of apparently imposing houses. The instability of Maurice's nature is echoed in the contrast between the original intentions of the houses and their present decay, and in phrases like 'shamefaced but aggressive shabbiness', 'bravely yellow', in the emptiness of the lodgings compared with the aspiration of the placards. Maurice's piano is 'silent', his resolution for the moment spent, a fact emphasised by the fading voice of the fruit-seller and the faint tones 'in the distance' of a 'single' piano.

The quietness and plainness of Richardson's style, a style which deliberately avoids phrase-making, should not blind us to its art. There is a sureness of construction about the above passage, a shapeliness, which would not put a more practised writer to shame, and an organisation of imagery quite unusual in an English novel of this period. Even the placing of the exclamation, 'How different it was in the morning!' comes at exactly the right point to disturb the effect of stillness and mark the transition from silence to sound in the lines that follow.

These two passages are crucial to an understanding of what is to come. They are signposts obviously to the basic personal conflict of a particular young man uprooted from a conventional environment and thrown into

one completely novel, but they are still at this point typical of the situation of youth in general, with its conflicting desires and its general uncertainty of direction, confronting the new adult world. It is fitting therefore that the novel should be bounded by two spring seasons. On the first and literal level, *Maurice Guest* gave English fiction a new Bohemia, the cosmopolitan world of the German music student, which has its own interest and provides a firm time-structure: the two or three years of study spent by the average student. Maurice's story begins on a fresh blowy spring day, full of the promise he feels in himself; it ends on the same kind of day two years later, when he shoots himself. In between the two springs unrolls the yearly calendar of the student's life: the weekly concerts, the term recitals, the great performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, ending with Schiller's 'Ode to Joy', which close the musical year; the recurring holidays of winter and summer, the daily routine tasks, the incessant practice, punctuated by lively social activities. Leipzig becomes as familiar to the reader as to Maurice; we know the streets, the river, the woodland surroundings, at all seasons of the year; we know the cafés, the lodgings into which the students surge to hear the work of their fellows; the studios where they have their lessons. We know too the traditions established by the great musicians who lived in the town in earlier days; we know the rivalries of the teachers of the present, their allegiances to the great modern composers, facts which add to the impression of depth and solidity, and to a sense of permanence. The students will come and go, suffer and rejoice, but music will remain. Above all, it is, as it should be, the *sounds* of Leipzig which make it come alive for us, while, at certain points in the action, the daily background cacophony recedes, and a particular work is singled out as a focus for the emotional situation. Maurice's resolve to work is connected with the C major phrase in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; the visit to the opera *Carmen* foreshadows the fatal change in the relationships between Louise and Maurice. The choice of the opera is psychologically right: it too deals with an obsessive, destructive passion and there are resemblances between the Maurice-Louise-Schilsky triangle and the Don José-Carmen-Escamillo triangle. Again, Louise's visit to the last two acts of *Aida*, the opera in which two lovers are buried alive, precedes her decision to accept Maurice as a lover. The short-lived but significant intimacy between Krafft and Maurice has the prelude to *Tristan and*

Isolde with its love-death *motiv* for its theme-music. The opera itself is not without undertones of homosexuality. What Maurice calls the 'glittering shallowness' of Mendelssohn accompanies the dissolution of his bonds with Louise. The music indeed often provides an ironic commentary, sometimes comic, sometimes tragic, on the action and is one of the devices therefore by which the author keeps herself out of the book. Take, for instance, the scene on pages 94-5 in which Maurice on a sudden impulse kisses Ephie. Ephie, who is a youthful parody of Louise, in so far as she wants power over men, has been teasing him. The action has a complex effect on both of them, sensitively described. It gives Maurice a vicarious sense of achievement: it is what he has wanted to do to Louise. It fills Ephie with disappointment because Maurice is not Schilsky, but also with satisfaction since it proves her power: 'Him too!' she tells her reflection in the mirror afterwards, unaware that Maurice 'when he was not actually with Ephie, [he] was not much given to thinking about her'. But it is the final sentence that tells us how we are to regard the Ephie-Schilsky subject: 'Besides, from there, he went straight to the latter half of an *Abendunterhaltung*, to hear Fürst play Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Händel*'.

Just as masterly is the account of the visit to *Die Walküre*¹⁸ and of the cross-currents of emotion set up in the various lovers, all of whom are at odds with the company in which they find themselves. Maurice is still vainly looking for Louise in the audience when the music begins and is about to question Madeleine:

But at this very moment, a peremptory fanfare rang out behind the scene, and Madeleine said: 'The sword motive, Maurice,' to add in the same breath: 'There's Louise.'

He looked behind him. 'Where?' (p. 111)

The image of the sword, with its connotations of love and death, becomes

¹⁸ A copy of *Thematische Leitfaden durch die Musik zu Richard Wagners Tristan und Isolde* by Hans von Wolzogen (Leipzig, 1888) belonging to Professor Robertson, signed and dated by him 'Leipzig, 1890-91', is in the archives of the University of Tasmania. With it is bound *Der Ring der Nibelungen*, of which only *Die Walküre* is underlined. In the manuscript draft of *M.W.Y.*, Richardson speaks of Robertson as knowing more about music and having a wider view of it than anyone she had ever met. Presumably it was not only her literary education she owed to him.

the *motiv* for the drama off-stage as well as on. Because it is embedded so quietly and naturally in the text, because critics have made up their minds in advance that 'naturalism' and 'poetry' are opposite poles, the immense skill of this opera-scene has been ignored. Even Johanna's prim allusion to the incestuous relationship between Siegmund and Sieglinde¹⁹ in the opera play their part in its effect: it is a comic commentary on the hidden obstacles that can sunder lovers, and also on one element of her own feeling for her sister. *Maurice Guest* is indeed a musical novel, but not in the sense usually meant.

The story enacted against this background which forms such an integral part of it, is, on the literal level, the story of a young man of slightly more than average talent who leaves home to become a musician but who is diverted from his purpose by his passion for a woman who is in love with another man. She, in order to forget her own unhappiness at her rejection by her lover tries to satisfy the young man's need of her, but his passion arouses no lasting response in her and her rejection of him destroys him. Her lover, deemed by his colleagues a musician of genius, returns and the woman marries him, but whether she gains a lasting happiness in doing so is left in doubt; there is a marked ambiguity about the ending which makes it far different from the conventional rounding-off of a Victorian novel. For the book is not, in the last analysis, a demonstration that a certain kind of character deserves a certain kind of destiny, but an agonised questioning about why one should *have* a particular kind of character, a cry of protest against the fundamental irrationality at the heart of things. It is indeed Richardson's first attempt at Hegelian tragedy, in which the conflict is not between right and wrong, but between two points of view of equal validity. 'Yes. Perhaps you're right—you *are* right', says Louise in reply to some piece of commonsense wisdom of Maurice's, 'But I am right, too' (p. 392). And what she speaks is true. It is worth remarking at this point that both Schilsky and Maurice oppose Louise's impulsiveness on the same ground. During the first of their quarrels we are permitted to witness, Schilsky accuses Louise of imprudence:

But it's just like you. You would throw the whole of one's future into the balance for the sake of a whim. (p. 107)

¹⁹ 'Das unglückliche Geschwisterpaar', according to Wolzogen.

Compare with this, Maurice's comment on page 393 in reply to Louise's question, 'But what of the present?'

'Isn't it worthwhile sacrificing a brief present to a long future?' Maurice of course *does* sacrifice his future, as Schilsky does not. Except in musical ability, Schilsky is far closer to that pattern of prudence, Dove, than he is to Maurice Guest.

Even on the literal level, the book is, it is clear, more than the conventional unhappy love story with an unusual setting. But when we consider the psychological complexity, which extends far beyond the two principal characters, the moral issue it raises, that salvation is to be sought in work, the sense it conveys of uncontrollable forces shaping men's destinies, we begin to see that it demands a far more attentive kind of reading than has hitherto been given it.

On the non-literal level, the novel is divided into three parts which follow a rhythm Richardson seems to discern in life itself: desire, fulfilment, disillusion. This description of the rhythm, however, is only partially satisfactory; it remains on the psychological and moral levels, and takes no account of ultimate meanings. It would be better described in the terms used to define the rhythm of tragic action in Francis Fergusson's *The Idea of a Theater* (p. 31): Purpose, Passion (in the sense of suffering) and Perception. Indeed on this view the purpose of the first book is indicated in the epigraph, taken from Petrarch:

S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?

Ma s'egli è amor, per Dio, che cosa è quale?

[If it is not love, whence comes what I feel?

But if it is love, by God, what kind of thing is it?]

It is in this first book that the inquiries into the nature of different kinds of love are set in motion. Maurice's obsession with Louise and Louise's with Schilsky are shown side by side: Schilsky's cold sexuality, his preference for fame rather than love begin to be displayed—if Shakespeare had put him into *Antony and Cleopatra*, he would have been of Octavian's party; Krafft's devotion to Schilsky, Avery Hill's dependence on Krafft, Madeleine's attraction towards Maurice, Ephie's infatuation with Schilsky, the possessive devotion to Ephie exhibited by Johanna, which masks a need to dominate, Dove's feeling for Ephie, which is of a similar kind, all these and a number of minor varieties are held up for inspection, and throw light on the total meaning.

In the second book, under the stress of suffering or passion, perceptions are prepared for, even partially achieved. The epigraph to the book indicates the kind of answer we are to get to the question posed in the first:

O viva morte, e diletto male!

[Oh living death and delightful pain!]²⁰

The first piece of perception about the nature of the love felt by these characters comes with the inevitable end to Ephie's romance with Schilsky. Maurice gains a real insight into Johanna's feeling for her sister: He held Johanna's hand in his, and saw her gauntly slim figure outlined against the bare sitting-room. It was not likely that they would ever meet again. But he could not summon up any very lively feelings of regret. Johanna had not touched him deeply; she had left him as cool as he had no doubt left her; neither had found the key to the other. Her chief attraction for him had been her devotion to Ephie; and now, having been put to the test, this was found wanting. She had been wounded in her own pride and self-love, and could not forgive. At heart she was no more generous and unselfish than the rest. (p. 260)

This passage should be compared with the comic account of Dove's reception of the news of Ephie's entanglement with Schilsky. Maurice's interpretation of Dove's feeling is equally perceptive:

As Maurice listened to him, he could not help thinking that Johanna's affection had been of the same nature as Dove's, in other words, had had a touch of the masculine about it: it had existed only as long as it could guide and subordinate; it denied to its object any midget attempt at individual life; it set up lofty moral standards, and was implacable when a smaller, frailer being found it impossible to live up to them. (p. 262)

The irony of both passages is, of course, that so far there is no self-insight. It is not until the third book, after profound and prolonged pain, that Maurice is brought to realise, through Louise's bitter accusations, that his own motives for loving her are far from altruistic and that there is little to choose between him, Johanna, Dove, Herries, Schilsky and the rest.

²⁰ *Male* has many connotations: evil, ill-luck, pain, sorrow, harm, misunderstanding.

(That little, however, is important.) It becomes increasingly clear in the second book that love, in the real sense of the word, the love that desires the happiness of the other, even at the cost of its own unhappiness, does not enter into any of these relationships, and that each of the three main figures, as well as the minor ones, is in its own way pursuing the deepest needs of its being; each is secretly making use of the other for its own narcissistic purposes. Schilsky, indeed, more honest or more ruthless about his particular purposes, has already sensed the threat to them from Louise and has fled, in the fine, climactic scene, sordid but powerful, which ends the first movement. After this, his presence in the book is felt through the other characters and he does not return until he has carried out his own aims, towards the end of the novel.

The effect of his rejection on Louise and its consequences for Maurice form the subject of the second movement. Maurice rescues her from the 'living death' to which she has condemned herself by shutting herself up in her room and refusing to go anywhere, but in so doing prepares the way to a worse kind of 'living death' for both of them. It is in this book that the strong need for self-abnegation which characterises both Louise and Maurice begins to reveal itself more fully, a 'blind desire to kill self' alongside a blind will to self-assertion. Their will to assert the self, however, depends on something outside themselves and without it each is lost. Unlike Schilsky, they are not self-contained, and joining two such natures together is a disaster. Their progressive dependence on one another demands a gradual withdrawal from the social life around them and the reader's attention is increasingly focused on them in isolation: two lovers 'buried alive'. Nevertheless, though the ties with Madeleine, among others, are loosened, Madeleine's acceptance of the fact, her generosity of spirit, enables the real bond of friendship between her and Maurice to survive. Outwardly untouched by suffering, she learns wisdom by watching and alone among the characters moves steadily from self-interest and expediency towards some sort of disinterested affection. She is intended, no doubt, in her relationship to both Krafft and Maurice, to be a demonstration of the fact that friendship without a sexual element is possible between a man and a woman—a situation which seems natural enough nowadays, but was by no means taken as a matter of

course a hundred years ago.²¹ Her castigation of Dove, a type of one of Dante's 'trimmers', deserves particular attention (pp. 482-3).

The third book, headed by the quotation from Dante's *Inferno* ' . . . dove il Sol tace' [. . . where the sun is silent] describes the inevitable outcome of the yoking together of two dependent creatures, whose aims in the nature of things demand that they have different kinds of partners. The feverish course of their brief intimacy is described in relentless detail, too relentless, perhaps, for our assaulted nerves cry out for relief, like those of Louise, and we too are thankful when Schilsky appears on the scene once more. The line from the *Inferno* puts the passion between Maurice and Louise where it belongs: in the domain of the She-wolf Avarice, which Dante places among the sins of Incontinence. It is not for nothing that Maurice and Louise are presented as devourers of one another:

Drop by drop, they drained each other of vitality, two sufferers, yet each thirsty for the other's life-blood. (p. 448)

Out of context, the sentence appears melodramatic; in its setting, it is as acceptable as similar images in the *Inferno* itself. A passage in this section of the book already alluded to in another connection comes back to mind when we read an entry in Richardson's notebook, made after the death of her husband in 1933. Maurice, trying to find reasons for the intensity of Louise's feeling for him, says:

' . . . it seems as if there were something else . . . something that's not love at all . . . more like hate—yes, as if you hated me . . . would like to kill me.' Her whole body was moved by the sigh she drew. 'If I only could! Then I should know that you were mine indeed. Part of you would never be mine, though we spent all our lives together.' (p. 409)

In her autobiography Richardson speaks of her need for the absolute certainty of total possession, when describing her infatuation for 'Evelyn'. In her notebook, when the infatuation and *Maurice Guest* were far

²¹ One may note, for what it is worth, that Madeleine in the novel has at times the same relation to Maurice, i.e. guide, companion and mentor, as Robertson had to Richardson during the Leipzig days, and that the real-life relationship continued throughout marriage. Richardson remarked in a letter to Ida Leeson, for example, that her husband was her 'best friend'.

behind her, she reveals the persistence of this longing for reassurance, which is a symptom of insecurity:

Odd to think that I shall never need to be troubled about his whereabouts again. Death has *had* him; it is over; he is safe now for ever.

My heart can be at rest in his eternal absence. (P.R., p. 103)

Maurice's passion for security in love is of the same kind and as destructive as Louise's. Schilsky escaped her demands and preserved what feeling he had for her by taking flight. Maurice, without aim or goal apart from her, destroys every vestige of affection between them by his desire to possess her completely, not only her present and her future, but also her past. It is this last demand that she finds intolerable and rightly so. The supreme irony of this intensely ironic book is that, having rescued her from burial alive, he solemnly and relentlessly proceeds to bury her again under his insatiable load of erotic 'avarice', so that whatever feeling she had for him turns to implacable hatred as she struggles for breath. 'Oh, it's stifling!' is an expression often on her lips as their relationship takes its downward course. There is no doubt here that Richardson is facing up to her own past behaviour: one has only to remember the exorbitant demands she made on 'Evelyn', described in *The Getting of Wisdom* and in *Myself When Young*, to grasp the point.²²

By some mysterious paradox, both Louise and Maurice are happiest when the love object is out of reach. In the early days of his passion, when Louise is merely a remote, delightful possibility, a star to steer by, Maurice's powers are most fully awakened and he works with a zest never to be recaptured, proving Krafft's contention that the best of things is wishing for them. In similar fashion, the very uncertainty of her existence with Schilsky is what Louise most misses and craves. It is the predictability of Maurice's thinking and his habits that arouses her distaste. With Schilsky, happiness is irrelevant; variety and excitement are greater needs.

Fundamentally, Louise cannot do without Schilsky, not at all because he is a genius, either amatory or musical, but because he is a certain kind of aggressive male with sadistic tendencies, who can fulfil the needs of her particular nature, a nature which is torn between the desire for power and the desire to be overpowered, between narcissism and masochism, a nature only fully itself when assured from outside of its selfhood. Louise

²² See *M.W.Y.*, pp. 70-1.

is not really very much interested in Schilsky's work, though she follows its progress in detail, in the same manner in which she might keep an eye on a feminine rival. She is in fact jealous of his work, just as later she is jealous of Maurice's. Her letter to Schilsky from Dresden (p. 64) and her conversation with him in his lodgings make it quite clear that she wishes to have the central place in his life, and that for him that place will always be secondary:

He talked volubly of the instrumentation he was busy with. But she, who could point out almost every fresh note he put on paper, saw plainly that he had not been at work for more than a quarter of an hour. (p 104)

When she begs him to come to the opera with her:

He struck the table with his fist. 'Good God, can't you get it into your head that I want to work?' (p. 106)

His reply would satisfy the Nietzschean doctrinaire, for whom Cosima Wagner, or rather his idea of Cosima Wagner, would be the ideal woman.²³ For Louise, however, art is not necessarily to be preferred to life and her rejoinder to Schilsky deserves, though it does not get, an answer:

I should think I could . . . You are always busy when I ask you to do anything. You have time for everything and everyone but me. If this were something you yourself wanted to do tonight, neither your work nor anything else would stand in the way of it; but my wishes can always be ignored.

The response to this piece of feminine logic is the typically male: 'Now don't make a scene, Lulu'.

The quarrel continues, and ends in the reconciliation of a brief embrace:

and for some moments they stood like this, in the absolute physical agreement that always overcame their differences. (p. 108)

It is an agreement which many women would find unsatisfactory, since Schilsky's sexual prowess is obviously deficient in tenderness, or any sort

²³ Cosima was far from being 'the recreation of the warrior', but much more like 'the warrior'. She had, if Eckart and Richardson are correct, a masculine drive for power. It is interesting to note that she herself destroyed her correspondence with Nietzsche. See Count du Moulin Eckart's *Cosima Wagner*, Vol. II, p. 862.

of psychic component. But although Louise values tenderness and sympathy, she values masterfulness more.

After her confidence in her femininity has been shattered by the narcissistic injuries Schilsky has inflicted on her, by philandering with other women and then deserting her, Louise is temporarily vulnerable to the temptation of tenderness:

[Maurice's] words to her . . . had given her back strength and assurance. She was no longer the miserable instrument on which he tried his changes of mood; she was again the giver and bestower, since she held a heart and a heart's happiness in the hollow of her hand. (p. 359)

She is guarded against disappointment, she feels, because she has herself well in hand and

there was no chance of the blind desire to kill self arising, which had been her previous undoing . . . (p. 360)

The desire does of course inevitably arise, for she cannot unmake herself; and since Maurice, unlike Schilsky, does not *want* her to obliterate herself, her desire to do so has no outlet. If Maurice had satisfied her conflicting needs and brought them into harmony, their relationship would have had some chance of success, whatever his professional competence might or might not have been. As long as she is the centre of his life, he has a hold on her. Now and again, he stumbles on the secret which made her tolerate the fact that she was not the centre of Schilsky's life: a display of aggressive maleness. She is always attempting to arouse the same quality in him and rejoices when, in a rage for instance, he takes command, even beats her. But having momentarily seized the mastery, instead of, as she says, subduing her mentally as well as physically, he repents and hands the control back to her, so that her feeling for him collapses. It is the failure in this area that directs her attention to his inadequacy as a musician. It is absurd for critics to link the lover and the musician together as equally inadequate. There is no reason in the world why a man of only moderate talent in music should not be highly satisfactory in bed. Indeed, the odds are that he would be more satisfactory: he would be more likely to have his mind on the woman than the artistic genius would. The genius would be thinking how he could make use of the occasion afterwards. Louise loves Schilsky's genius because she finds him satisfactory as a lover: his prowess in music

is an attribute of his maleness. She begins to attend to Maurice's lack of genius when he ceases to be wholly absorbed in love.

The contrast between genius and talent indeed has a central relevance in the sexual situation which is absent from the musical situation, and it is in this area that less than justice has been done to Maurice himself.²⁴ This becomes clear if he is compared, instead of being contrasted, with Louise.

Heinz Krafft, in the conversation with Madeleine which opens Chapter IX of Book Three, describes her as one of the women who have 'a genius for loving', though his concept of loving is severely limited. Heinz, Louise's only real rival in Schilsky's affections, knows in fact what Louise's women friends are trying vainly to say when they complain that she cannot exist without a man. He knows too what Louise herself really means when she declares to Maurice:

It's myself I think of, first and foremost, and as long as I live it will always be myself. (p. 332)

In psychological terms, this could be regarded as the expression of a schizoid personality so doubtful of itself that it can concentrate on nothing else. But psychological categories are never adequate to the task of explaining the mystery of human personality. Krafft sees deeper than that; he grasps the fact that it is also the expression of a ruthless 'artist', whose 'art' in this case is the sexual passion which demands a partner and whose selfhood it is to have no self, the point made by Keats in one of his letters,²⁵ when he spoke of the chameleon poet and argued that it is the artist's capacity to enter into other experiences which makes him what he is. Krafft, in this scene with Madeleine, makes the same point in contrasting the individualism of the English with the waxen temperaments of the Germans.²⁶

²⁴ At Rochlitz and for a long time afterwards, Louise seems to have been sexually satisfied by Maurice, possibly because he allowed her the initiative in love-making which Schilsky had denied her. Once her narcissism had been 'repaired', however, the masochistic side of her nature would be bound to reassert itself.

²⁵ See *Letters*, Keats to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818.

²⁶ Cf. H. S. Chamberlain, *Richard Wagner*, General Introduction, p. 22: 'The Germans have, partly owing to the geographical position of their country, partly and more especially to their own powers of assimilation, received artistic impressions from every side which they have industriously worked up.'

For we are the artists among nations—waxen temperaments, formed to take on impressions, to be moulded this way and that, by our age, our epoch . . . (p. 497)

He explains Louise's behaviour in the same terms:

a woman of the type we're speaking of, is as often as not the flower of her kind.—Or becomes it.—For see all she gains on her way: the mere passing from hand to hand; the intense impressionable nature; the process of being moulded—why, even the common prostitute gets a certain manly breadth of mind, such as you other women never arrive at. Each one who comes and goes leaves her something: an experience—a turn of thought—it may be only an intuition—which she has not had before. (p. 500)

Heinz's observations are those of a morality grounded on a doctrine of aestheticism, fashionable at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe: Madeleine's common sense resists it, but she cannot marshal the arguments against it. Heinz would have been on firmer ground if he had invoked a metaphysical argument, for in a sense it is not herself that Louise serves, but what she stands for. Like the young Teresa in *For Love Alone*, indeed like the Cleopatra of Shakespeare's play, she is a vessel of Aphrodite, the figuring forth of a principle of love and life that must find a thirst to quench. What Maurice cannot grasp is that love and life have their own laws, the first of which is that they must continue to exist at all costs, must continually renew themselves, if they are not to atrophy. It is Louise's constant need for renewal that baffles him, for though in both Maurice and Louise the desire for change and the desire for security exist side by side, the intensities are different. The traditions of Maurice's blood are weighted on the side of the settler type, those of Louise's are on the side of the nomad. It is not for nothing she is drawn as an Australian, which to the European mind in the nineteenth century was the type of the wanderer, strange and exotic, remote from normal civilised experience. When Maurice strikes out from the known, it is with the aim of reaching another *known*: 'a resting-place and cool, green shadows' . . . 'just beyond' . . . (p. 20). For Louise, such an aim is the temptation of weariness, a seduction from her natural state, which is to abhor the known. For she is like life itself, the *ewige Frau*, fleeting and changeable as the water to which Madeleine likens her, which yet remains always water. What really holds her to Schilsky is precisely that

she can never be sure of him; in him she finds the permanence-in-variety she craves; every encounter with him has the excitement of a new encounter. The association of Krafft with Schilsky is for her a necessary condition: she needs a rival and Krafft is the ideal kind of rival, since as an androgyne he presents no permanent threat.

In this admirably-managed debate with Madeleine, Krafft perceives in Maurice the same capacity for absorption in another as he perceives in Louise:

But I'll tell you this . . . Since I've seen what our friend is capable of; how he has allowed himself to be absorbed; since, in short, he has behaved in such a highly un-British way—well, since then, I have some hope of him. He seems open to impression.—And impressions are the only things that matter to the artist. (p. 498)

Krafft, in short, does not contrast Maurice and Louise, but, however doubtful he feels about Maurice's musical capacity,²⁷ recognises a similarity between them in emotional capacity. *What he does not perceive is the danger in this.* In fact, Maurice's feeling for Louise is very like hers for Schilsky; they are interwoven, not contrasting figures. The account of their relationship shows them constantly changing attitudes, switching roles. 'Is it forever?' Louise asks him, just as she is about to let him make love to her; yet not long afterwards she is lamenting 'this dead level of monotony on which she had fallen'. He has assured her that having her he wants nothing else in the world, but as soon as he has her, he is worrying because he cannot possess her past and may never possess her future.

This possessiveness, which both exhibit, is founded at bottom on an immense egoism, which has nothing to do with love at all, but primarily with survival, with self-affirmation. Louise freely acknowledges this; Maurice disguises it as devotion to her, but the devotion is always to her in relation to himself. The real truth is that he is an incomplete being, unable to order his life without her, as she is unable to order hers without Schilsky, and this in Nietzschean terms is behaviour proper to a woman, but not to a man. In spite of the surface differences between them, which they and their friends perceive, the behaviour of Louise and Maurice towards a love-object shows them as very much alike in their deep-rooted psychic demands. And here is the crux of the matter. It is this

²⁷ He never openly and unequivocally expresses such doubt.

fundamental likeness that is the real reason for the antipathy between them. As Richardson has drawn her, Louise is what has come to be regarded, rightly or wrongly, as the basic feminine woman, the type which a man like Nietzsche could hardly have avoided regarding as 'natural'. All the accepted ideas about women at the moment are of course in confusion. Nietzsche's doctrines of the Superman and our inherited views of the 'natural' role of women may turn out to be founded merely on a mistaken notion of the moral superiority of brute strength. But for the purposes of this novel Louise resembles the basic feminine woman postulated by the psychologist Helen Deutsch in a book called *The Psychology of Women*. She is the kind of woman who seeks a harmonious balance between narcissism and masochism in order to remain confident of her femininity, the woman who needs to obey and serve, whose honour, in Nietzsche's words 'is always to love more than she is loved', who loses her 'self' in order to find it. With such needs she is repelled, not attracted, by the man who defers to her. Recognising behind Maurice's intensely masculine exterior, traits which are part of her own nature, she instinctively withdraws from him, and any attempt to accommodate him to her own temperament inevitably fails. *For the feminine woman can tolerate no weakness which she interprets as a feminine weakness*, though she can tolerate any number which she regards as purely masculine, as Louise does with Schilsky. The attitude of the three to their music defines them sexually and is intended to do so; Richardson's interest in them as artists is secondary, not primary.

The basic sexual similarity between Maurice and Louise (surely the two parts of Richardson's nature) is supported by other likenesses which we have touched on; they are both obsessive, intense, unable to compromise, as Dove says, 'un-English'. They are both outsiders, Louise, even more than Maurice, being bereft of friends and acquaintances. Maurice's sense of isolation as he contemplates the strange city at the beginning of the book foreshadows his whole future relation to it. He is in it, but not of it. His room, when Madeleine visits it at the end of the book, seems as if it 'had never been properly lived in'; his very name indicates his status in the world. He is the eternal substitute to whom Louise and Krafft turn when Schilsky is not available; the eternal inopportune, the man who always appears at the wrong moment, as he does for his fatal final interview with his music-teacher Schwarz. As with Richard Mahony

later on, as with the young Laura in *The Getting of Wisdom*, ordinary people take his 'candour for impertinence, his reserve for distrust': the words are Madeleine's. This inability in both Maurice and Louise to form facile relationships throws them all the more upon a love-object. Louise formulates this attitude in the words:

'If I had my way, we should shut ourselves up alone, and live only for each other. Not share it, not make it just a part of what we do.'
'But man can't live on nectar and honey alone. It wouldn't be life.'
'It wouldn't be life, no. It would be more than life.' (p. 405)

It is the hunger for more than they can have which brings them nearer to the Nietzschean-Wagnerian ideal than the supposed disciple Schilsky. This hunger is in itself a virtue which makes the life of man a continuing adventure, but it is a virtue which creatures like Louise and Maurice have to pay for in ontological insecurity, in the painful divisions of their natures of which they are fully aware. Their frank recognition of their warring impulses indeed lends them dignity and preserves for them the reader's sympathy. We cannot condemn Maurice or Louise for weakness when they have already done so themselves, in terms which make us ready to accept the notion that there must indeed be some force outside them propelling them to certain actions.²⁸ Maurice mentions it first in relation to his decision to become a musician. Writing to his parents, he says:

Something stronger than myself drove me to it, and if I am to succeed anywhere, it will be here. (p. 13)

Having fled from music into love, he attributes this action to similar forces. Speaking of his ungovernable longing for Louise, while preparing to tear himself away from her:

... he saw with a flash of insight that, though he went away as far as steam could carry him, he would never, as long as he lived, be safe from overthrows of this kind. It was something elemental, which he could no more control than the flow of his blood. (p. 354)

The same feeling is present in one of the final scenes, where he is trying to fathom the meaning of his passion:

While she played in Schwarz's room, she had turned and looked at

²⁸ Robertson is surely right on this point. See *M.W.Y.*, p. 160: 'At no time is she [Louise] a creature of evil intent; but equally with him [Maurice] a plaything of forces outside her control'.

him, and it had seemed to him then, that some occult force had gone out from the face, and struck home in him. And it had never lessened. (p. 545)

Louise appears to herself to be governed in like manner. The whole tenor of her argument with Madeleine after her illness implies it: You will never know what it is to be taken out of yourself, taken and shaken, till everything you are familiar with falls away. (p. 217)

Again, when she has decided to accept Maurice as a lover:

Without conscious effort on her part, the solution to her difficulties had been found . . . but not by her; it was the work of some force outside herself. (p. 358)

Both Louise and Maurice in short are always denying the commonsense notion held by their well-meaning friends (and by so many literary critics who write about the book) that it is only necessary to exercise one's will-power and one can stop loving at once, if the love is in opposition to one's worldly interests. That making a career is more important than loving a woman is a view evidently shared by Norman Jeffares. In his Introduction to the Sun Books edition of *Maurice Guest* he speaks of Maurice's being 'punished' for his wrong decision in loving Louise! With reckless inconsistency, he chides Madeleine a few pages further on for being a Puritan. One of the marvels of modern literary criticism is the moral rectitude which inspires it; one gets the strong impression that critics as a race have risen beyond the temptations of frail humanity. Maurice has more sense: he knows that a moment of perfection is worth a lifetime of the second-rate. 'If it is any consolation to you,' he tells Madeleine at the end, 'I owe you the greatest debt of my life.' One of the admirable things about Maurice indeed is his insight into himself, which grows as the book grows and which enables him to define his convictions and his values more clearly as the result of painful experience. He develops from a vaguely discontented provincial Englishman with a faint streak of adventurousness into a figure closely resembling the Tristan type, if of humbler material, for whom passion is the only reality. In the very first chapter of the book he shows himself well aware of the divisions in his temperament:

He watched until the last late-comer had vanished. Only he was left; he again was the outsider. And now, as he stood there in the deserted square, which, a moment before, had been so animated, he

had a sudden sinking of the heart: he was seized by that acute sense of desolation that lies in wait for one, caught by nightfall, alone in a strange city. It stirs up a wild longing, not so much for any particular spot on earth, as for some familiar hand or voice, to take the edge off an intolerable loneliness.

He turned and walked rapidly back to the small hotel near the railway station, at which he was staying until he found lodgings. He was tired out, and for the first time became thoroughly conscious of this; but the depression that now closed in upon him, was not due to fatigue alone, and he knew it. In sane moments—such as the present—when neither excitement nor enthusiasm warped his judgment, he was under no illusion about himself; and as he strode through the darkness, he admitted that, all day long, he had been cheating himself in the usual way. He understood perfectly that it was by no means a matter of merely stretching out his hand, to pluck what he would, from this tree that waved before him; he reminded himself with some bitterness that he stood, an unheralded stranger, before a solidly compact body of things and people, on which he had not yet made any impression. It was the old story: he played at expecting a ready capitulation of the whole—gods and men—and, at the same time, was only too well aware of the laborious process that was his sole means of entry and fellowship. (p. 12)

The likeness to the young Laura, faced with the new world of school, to Richard Mahony, faced with a new practice, and to Richardson herself when faced with a new social situation, is now obvious.

The dream that follows immediately on this passage puts the search for the unattainable, which Maurice is to locate in his longing for Louise, in more archetypal terms:

Once more he was wandering through the streets as he had done the previous day apparently in search of something he could not find. But he did not know himself what he sought. All of a sudden, on turning a corner, he came upon a crowd of people gathered round some object in the road, and at once said to himself, this is it, here it is. He could not, however, see what it actually was, for the people, who were muttering to themselves in angry tones, strove to keep him back. At all costs, he felt, he must get nearer to the mysterious thing, and, in a spirit of bravado, he was pushing through the crowd to reach

it, when a great clamour arose; every one sprang back, and fled wildly, shrieking: 'Moloch! Moloch!' He did not know in the least what it meant, but the very strangeness of the word added to the horror, and he, too, fled with the rest; fled blindly, desperately, up streets and down, watched, it seemed to him from every window by a cold, malignant eye, but never daring to turn his head, lest he should see the awful thing behind him; fled on and on, through the streets that grew ever vaguer and more shadowy, till at last his feet would carry him no further; he sank down, with a loud cry, sank down, down, down, and wakened to find that he was sitting up in bed, clammy with fear, and that dawn was stealing in at the sides of the window. The cry 'Moloch' evokes the image of the great devourer of human sacrifices, and flight, destruction, and death are the chief ingredients of the dream. The 'cold, malignant eye' reminds us of Richardson's fear of being stared at, and Richard Mahony's pathological phobia about eyes watching him. But the chief point of the dream is that the pursuer suddenly becomes the pursued: the goal to which he is hastening becomes something from which he longs to escape; like Mahony, Maurice is both hunter and prey: the quest for the unattainable becomes something from which he is compelled to flee. Implicit in the dream is the figure of the divided self, the picture of ontological insecurity. But though the difficulty is presented as a personal one, it is at the same time representative of a general human dilemma; certainly we are now beginning to perceive with some clarity that the restless, aspiring spirit of man can bring him to the point at which it is possible for him to destroy himself as a species; incontinent avarice is likely to undo us all. Slowly and painfully Maurice is forced to learn the lesson that to cling to things, to clutch at them in the effort to possess them permanently is the surest way to lose them, but however much his intellect is aware of the fact it has no power over his will. A conviction of the uselessness of human effort possesses him as he perceives Louise's growing apathy towards him:

The twilight induced sensations like itself—vague, formless, intolerable. A sudden recognition of the uselessness of human striving grew up in him, with the rapidity of a fungus. Effort and work, ambition and success, alike led nowhere, were so many blind alleys: ambition ended in smoke; success was a fleeing phantom, which one sought in vain to grasp. To the great mass of mankind, it was more than

immaterial whether one of its units toiled or no; not a single soul was benefitted by it. Most certainly not the toiler himself. It was only given to a few to achieve anything; the rest might stand aside early in the day. Nothing of their labours would remain, except the scars they themselves bore. (p. 457)

The words apply as much to his effort to succeed in love as they do to his former musical ambitions. As for his love, he sees where his quest for absolute certainty is tending, but is powerless to abandon it: In his lucid moments, he knew that he was making her life a burden to her. What wonder if she did, ultimately, turn from him? But his evil moods were now beyond command. . . The idea that this other, this smirking, wax-faced man, might somehow steal her from him hung over him like a fog, obscuring his vision. It necessitated continued watchfulness on his part. And so he dogged her, mentally, and in fact, until his own heart all but broke under the strain. (p. 476)²⁹

And again:

He was losing her, steadily and surely losing her, powerless to help it—rather it seemed as if some malignant spirit urged him to hasten on the crisis . . . (p. 492)

Finally, when everything between the two of them has been destroyed, except the mysterious fascination she has for him, his early dream of the unattainable quest is translated into erotic terms, as he watches her in the moonlit room fast asleep:

Something in the look of the face, blanched by the unreal light, made him recall the first time he had seen it, and the impression it had then left on his mind . . . For this face it was . . . which held him . . . this face which drew him surely back with a vital nostalgia—a homesickness for the sight of her and the touch of her—if he were too long absent. It had not been any coincidence of temperament or sympathies—by rights, all the rights of their different natures, they had not belonged together—any more than it had been a mere blind uprush of sensual desire. And just as his feelings for her had had nothing to do with reason, or with the practical conduct of his life, so they had outlasted tenderness, faithfulness, respect. Whatever it was that held him, it lay deeper than these conventional ideas of

²⁹ Cf. similar passages in the 'Evelyn' episode in *The Getting of Wisdom*.

virtue. The power her face had over him was undiminished, though he now found it neither beautiful nor good; though he knew the true meaning of each deeply graven line.—This then was love?—this morbid possession by a woman's face. (p. 545)

Maurice then goes on to try to pin down the detail of the face which possesses him:

Whatever it chanced to be, it was, in most cases, an insignificant characteristic, which, for others simply did not exist, but which, to the one affected by it, made instant appeal, and just to that corner of the soul which had hitherto suffered aimlessly for the want of it—a suffering which nothing but this intonation, this particular smile, could allay . . .

He finds this feature in the setting of Louise's eyes and concludes: But what a meaningless thing was life, when the way a lid drooped, or an eyebrow grew on a forehead, could make such havoc of your nerves! . . . The strong man tore himself away while there was still time, or saved himself in an engrossing pursuit. He, having had neither strength nor saving occupation, had bartered all he had, and knowingly, for the beauty of this face. And as long as it existed for him, his home was beside it. (p. 546)

These are not the meditations of a pillar of provincial rectitude who has suddenly seen the error of his ways, but of a man who has come painfully to perceive with great clarity the terror of perfect beauty and the price it demands of those who wish to grasp it. It is a price he has paid willingly and is prepared to go on paying; the ideas are formulated in Richardson's words and not Maurice's, but he has framed his actions and is to frame them still, in accordance with them. The words 'nostalgia', 'homesickness for the sight of her', 'his home was beside it' raise once more the notion of psychic harmony, or wholeness, which is the real object of his flight into love.

It is just after this point that Schilsky returns, and Louise, as homesick for him as Maurice is for her, goes back to him. Then indeed Maurice is 'homeless'. Without Louise it is useless to try to solve his ontological difficulties; after a glimpse of perfection, he cannot dream another dream. That she was a dream he acknowledges as he burns her letters before going out to kill himself: he had seen her, he admits, 'only as he wished to see her'. The passage to this perception, from the delusion of 'the

active-brained dreamer' with 'little or no eye for the life about him' described at the beginning of the book, follows an undeviating line. The musical life, the life of love, indeed, are the shapes his undefined dreams take; it is the dreaming itself that is necessary to him; when he grasps what he has imagined, he is adrift until he can shape another dream.

As Louise tells him:

You seem to enjoy finding out things you can feel hurt by.—But have I ever complained? Did I not take you just as you were, and love you—yes, love you! I knew you couldn't be different . . . But you?—what do you do? You talk as if you worship the ground I walk on: but you can't let me alone. You are always trying to change me—to make me what you think I ought to be. (p. 427)

Maurice is not faint-hearted, as Louise in her natural irritation with him accuses him in this passage of being, but she perceives clearly that he is compounded of discontent, the same discontent she has perceived in herself. She is the unlucky embodiment of his temperamental aspiration (as Schilsky is of hers) which, but for the accident which threw her in his path, might have expressed itself in no more than a vague sense of frustration, and like Edele, in *Niels Lyhne*, she is justly resentful that he charges her against her will with the responsibility for his happiness.

At the beginning, before his acquaintance with her is any more than a possibility, Maurice is nearer to grasping the nature of real love than he is ever to be again. When Madeleine asks him what possible good knowing Louise will bring him, he replies:

Good? Must one always look for good in everything?—I can see quite well that from your point of view the whole thing must seem absurd. I expect nothing whatever from it . . . (p. 53)

This exchange resembles closely what Louise says to Madeleine about her feeling for Schilsky (page 216), when shock has cleared her vision, and what she says to Maurice about love, when she is wearied of his importunity:

'Love!—need we talk about love?' Her face was so unhappy that it seemed to have grown years older. 'Love is something quite different. It takes everything just as it is. You have never really loved me'.

(p. 428)

Much as Maurice resists the idea, it is the truth. With him, as with Louise, love, like music, is a means and not an end. It is suffocation by monotony

he really fears, it is the threat that the self will be buried alive, from which they both flee. What he feared in his home environment was the days that: drip past, one by one, like water from a spout after a rain-shower; and the dull monotony of them [that] benumbs all wholesome temerity at its core. (p. 15)

Likewise, what Louise fears is the deadly monotony of one day exactly like another, in which no demands are made on her feelings. She deliberately postpones Maurice's first visit to her as a lover:

. . . for, in her mind, there lurked the seductive thought of a long, summer day, with an emotion at its close to which she could look forward. (p. 358)

Her insight into Maurice is keen enough, but her love for Schilsky is no more disinterested than Maurice's is for her, and she learns to take Schilsky as he is largely because he forces her into doing so.

Before discussing the dénouement of the novel, which allows Louise to survive and Maurice to perish, it is necessary to say something about the roles of Heinz Krafft and Madeleine Wade in relation to Maurice. These resemble perhaps the roles played by Porphyry and Svidrigaylov towards Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, but they could equally represent the negative and the positive aspects of Richardson's own temperament. Krafft is a direction towards death, Madeleine towards life, in the commonly accepted sense of those words. It has to be remembered, however, that for Krafft, as the conversation about *Niels Lyhne* on page 495 indicates, a preoccupation with death was not necessarily morbid. More important, as a student of *Tristan* he would have been aware that death, in the view of Wagner, and of Nietzsche, at one stage, was a positive affirmation of the truth of feeling, of passion.

It is Krafft who first draws Maurice's attention to the problem of death, and he plays a significant part in edging him towards it. Between them, Krafft and Madeleine are opposite poles of the metaphysical debate that is dramatised in each of the two central figures, the debate between rest and motion; Louise and Maurice are constantly shifting their ground, drawn now towards death, now towards life, but Krafft and Madeleine are sharply opposed, one in defence of the unseen, the other in defence of the claims of the visible world.

Krafft, with his delicate girlish face and his innocent eyes, and his toughly cynical mind, is an androgynous figure, in love with Schilsky,

and a former lover, of sorts, of Louise. His relationship with Avery Hill satisfies her masculine temperament, but she is in the end unable to tolerate his running after Schilsky, in addition to the renewal of his contact with Louise, and commits suicide.

Towards the end of the first part of the book Krafft and Maurice, after some initial antipathy, are drawn together, though Maurice, until Madeleine draws his attention to it, is unaware of the meaning of Krafft's advances. Their first intimate conversation is about death and Krafft describes at some length his visions of its horror and his inability to conceive of his own death, passages in which Richardson is surely writing out the suppressed fears of her childhood. 'Why should one think of death, when one is alive and well?' Maurice asks him, and goes on to point out the commonsense view that brooding about it unfits one for life, that everyone has to die, and that what becomes of the empty shell of the body when the spirit has left it is of no account, a curious parallel with Mahony's view later.

To this conventional piece of wisdom Heinz replies:³⁰

Yes, yes, it is quite true . . . You are like some one I once knew . . . a great musician. I saw him die; he died by inches; it lasted for months; he could neither die nor live. (p. 161)

The hint at Maurice's buried ambivalence passes unnoticed and attention is focused on Heinz's statement that his life is a perpetual struggle against suicide, which, in view of what he has previously said about the horrors of death, is more than strange. It is only long afterwards that we realise that both these remarks are directed at Maurice; they have, as they were intended to do, seeded themselves in what appears to be a 'normal, healthy' mind. Heinz continues his assault on Maurice's commonsense convictions in a subsequent interview, when he plays the prelude to *Tristan* to him, with its love-death theme, hoping to induce Maurice to

³⁰ Cf. Wagner's letter to Hans von Bülow, January 1864: 'Ich kann nicht leben und nicht sterben. Auf welche Art es mit mir ganz aufhört, weiss ich noch nicht.' [I cannot live and cannot die; which mode really belongs to me I don't yet know.] Quoted in Eckart, *Cosima Wagner*, Vol. I, p. 226. Krafft would have been a young boy when Wagner died in 1883, but the Master's long-drawn-out death is vividly described in D'Annunzio's *Il Fuoco*, available by 1900; and no doubt accounts of his last days were common knowledge in musical circles much earlier.

remain with him for the night. Maurice, with no notion what he is driving at, asks: 'What about tomorrow and tomorrow's work?' To which Krafft replies: 'Tomorrow may never come. And tonight is' (p. 167). The words are later to be echoed by Louise, in similar circumstances. Like Louise, Krafft has the ability to live in the present and it is ironical that Maurice, the man who looks before and after, who is willing to sacrifice a brief present for a future happiness, dies, while Louise and Krafft, who never think about the morrow, survive.

When Maurice refuses to stay, the brief friendship is at an end, but Krafft much later finishes the task he had begun by revealing to Maurice, who is already beside himself with jealousy, the triangular relationship between himself, Louise, and Schilsky. That all Maurice's preconceptions of right and wrong, good and evil are now in confusion is symbolised by the piece of natural description which accompanies his brooding on this extraordinary revelation. In the park:

A smell of rotting and decay met his nostrils: as if, from the thousands of leaves, mouldering under the trees on which they had once hung, some invisible hand had set free thousands of odours, there mounted to him, as he lay, all that rich and humid earthiness that belongs to sunless places. And for a time, he was conscious of little else but this morbid fragrance. (p. 509)

Louise confirms the story and the further revelation that their intimacy has been renewed provokes Maurice to thoughts of extreme violence. Heinz's disappearance, apparently to get in touch with Schilsky on Louise's behalf, is followed by the suicide of Avery Hill. This suicide, the sight of the dead girl's face—'one of those which are, all along, intended for death'—bring to the surface all the murderous and suicidal wishes of Maurice and Louise. When Krafft returns, he gives more unsavoury details of his love-life and provokes Maurice to strike him; his reply is to put a piece of paper into Maurice's hand. Schilsky's arrival is the sign that the end has come and, when Maurice is looking for a pistol, he finds himself outside a gun-smith's house in the Klostergasse, at the address Heinz had written on the piece of paper, and recognises the shop as one he had formerly visited looking for Heinz. Now that he has no dream to cling to, nor any hope of shaping another, since he cannot conceive of a greater perfection, the side of his nature brought to the surface by Heinz takes over. Yet—it is impossible to be sure that Heinz, in contributing to

Maurice's decision to die, might not have intended to nerve him to a heroic action. Passages in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* on the subject of voluntary death are suggestive:

A holy denier, when there is no longer time for affirming; he thus knows what to do as regards death and life.

and

In many persons, life is a failure; a poisonous worm gnaws into their heart. Then let them see to it that their dying is all the more a success.

and

I praise my death to you, voluntary death, which comes to me because I want it.

Madeleine's final opinion of Heinz makes us pause about pinning down his motives:

Heinz had as many good impulses as anyone else. But he had reduced the concealing of them to a fine art . . . No one knew Heinz: each of us knew a little bit of him, and thought it was all there was to know . . . You have the idea of him he meant you to have. (p. 514)

For all their differences, Madeleine's distrust of absolutes is at bottom as profound as Krafft's and her words support his own view of truth, expressed in answer to a question of Maurice's:

You think a thing must either be true or not true? . . . Do you believe, when you answer a question in the affirmative or the negative, that you are actually telling the truth? No, my friend, to be perfectly truthful one would need to lose oneself in a maze of explanation, such as no questioner would have the patience to listen to . . . to take into account the innumerable threads that have gone to making the statement what it is. Do you think, for instance, if I answered yes or no, in the present case, it would be true? If I deny what you heard—does that tell you that I have longed with all my heart for it to come to pass? Or say I admit it—I should need to unroll my life before you to make you understand. No, there's no such thing as absolute truth. If there were, the finest subtleties of existence would be lost. There is neither positive truth nor positive untruth; life is not so coarse-fibred as that . . . Truth?—it is one of the many miserable conventions the human brain has tortured itself with, and its first principle is an utter lack of the imaginative faculties. (p. 266)

This is a view founded on the Hegelian notion that nothing can be known

unless everything is known, but there is no space here to enter into epistemological subtleties. In the area of knowledge of which Heinz is speaking, that dealing with human behaviour, his argument has a validity which it would not have in chemistry, for example. It is the most important of the explicit warnings Richardson gives against categorising human beings and their ethical principles. The first comes early in the book in the mouth of the unnamed musician who tells Maurice about the great world of music outside his small home town, and his words remind us of Flaubert's agonised search for the one exact word, of Pater's reference to 'fineness of truth', 'the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within', which is the artist's unending quest; their words express Maurice's aspiration after certainty in its literary guise. The musician is telling Maurice the story of his own obscure life:

. . . it had been his intention to perfect himself as a pianist. Life had been against him; when the resolve was strongest, poverty and ill-health kept him down, and since then . . . he had come to see that his place would only have been among the multitude of little talents, whose destiny it is to imitate and vulgarise the strivings of genius, to swell the over-huge mass of mediocrity. And so, he had chosen that his life should be a failure—a failure, that is, in the eyes of the world; for himself, he judged otherwise. *The truth that could be extracted from words was such a fluctuating, relative truth. Failure! success!—what was success, but a clinging fast, unabashed by smile or neglect, to that better part in art, in one's self, that cannot be taken away?*—never for a thought's space being untrue to the ideal each one of us bears in his breast; never yielding jot or tittle to the world's opinion. That was what it meant, and he who was proudly conscious of having succeeded thus, could well afford to regard the lives of others as half-finished and imperfect; he alone was at one with himself, his life alone was a harmonious whole. [Italics mine] (p. 18)

In the light of passages like these and taking into account the whole tenor of the characterisation, it would be rash to come to the conclusion that the purpose of the book is to exhibit Maurice as a failure and a weakling and Schilsky as an artistic genius who deserves well of life on that account alone.

Before attempting to pass judgment on Maurice, it is necessary to have a much closer look at the presentation of Schilsky than has previously

been done. For a character who plays the vital role in the book that Professor Hope ascribes to him, he is very little *in* it. If the theme is the contrast between genius and talent, it would be natural to expect to be made more conscious of the genius's presence than we are of Schilsky's. The problem of conveying musical genius in a novel is difficult, it is true; since we cannot hear the music, we have on the whole to take the genius on trust. We can do this more easily if we can feel some sympathy with the genius. It is curious therefore that Richardson makes Schilsky such an adolescent, unmitigated lout,³¹ and even more curious that the language she uses to present him has a decided ironic tone. The tone is present in the first allusion to him, and it is important to notice that the allusion is made by Dove, who is the target for Richardson's most marked irony, and whose enthusiasms we are encouraged to view with scepticism: A man named Schilsky whom, it was no exaggeration to call their finest, very finest violinist, was to play Vieuxtemps' Concerto in D.³² Dove all but smacked his lips as he spoke of it. In reply to a query from Maurice, he declared with vehemence that this Schilsky was a genius. Although so great a violinist, he could play almost every other instrument with ease; his memory had become a by word; his compositions were already famous. At the present moment, he was said to be at work upon a symphonic poem, having for its base a new and extraordinary book, half poetry, half philosophy, a book which he, Dove, could confidently assert, would effect a revolution in human thought, but of which, just at the minute, he was unable to remember the name. Infected by his friend's enthusiasm, Maurice here recalled having, only the day before, met someone who answered to Dove's description: the genial [in the German sense, surely] Pole had been storming up the steps of the Conservatorium, two at a time, with wild, affrighted eyes, and a halo of dishevelled auburn hair.—Dove made no doubt that he had been seized with a sudden inspiration. (pp. 23-4)

³¹ Cf. Letters of Strauss and Bülow, ed. Willi Schuh, in one of which Bülow warns Strauss against the risk 'for one of your lively temperament not a menacing one, of becoming a Philistine, becoming a lout, a snob, on the banks of the Isar'. Richardson had evidently noticed independently this risk in the model for Schilsky.

³² According to Percy Scholes, Vieuxtemps' concertos 'lapse at times into the merely showy'. Richardson's musical references are always in character.

The terms of the description hardly predispose the reader confidently to credit either Schilsky or Nietzsche with absolutely undeniable genius. The description of Schilsky's rake's progress through the streets of Leipzig with Krafft and Fürst, shows them, Schilsky in particular, as silly young larrikins rather than as genuine Bohemian artists, and the ironic tone is strongly present in the account of Ephie's infatuation with Schilsky:

And the belief was pardonable on Ephie's part, for Schilsky made it a point of honour to stare any pretty girl into confusion; besides which, he had a habit of falling into sheep-like reveries, in which he saw no more of what or whom he looked at, than do the glassy eyes of the blind. More than once, Ephie had blushed and writhed in blissful torture under these stonily staring eyes. (p. 130)

The trances of 'genius' are not usually referred to as 'sheep-like'. Irony is also present in the words put into his mouth when he is drunk: "The perpetual struggle between duty and inclination for a man of genius!" (p. 197). At times the irony takes a sharper tone which links him clearly with Dove, when for example he enters Fürst's room to play his *Zarathustra*

. . . wholly unconcerned at the lateness of the hour: except in matters of practical advancement, time did not exist for him. (p. 176)

And again:

Schilsky listened to the babble of compliments with that mixture of boyish deference and unequivocal superiority, which made him so attractive to women. (p. 176)

The whole scene is more a tartly humorous treatment of the fatuous feminine hero-worship of Schilsky than a scene displaying his musical accomplishments. What serious treatment of the music there is has a totally different purpose. For the music is mediated to us through Maurice, who is in a state between torture and joy, and all he really hears of it is Krafft's song 'of an eternity that was deep and dreamless, a joy without beginning or end' (p. 181):

But he was thoroughly roused when Krafft, picking up a sheet of music and coming round to the front of the piano, began to sing *Das Trunkene Lied* . . . Schilsky inclined his head, and Krafft sang, in his sweet, flute-like voice:

Oh, Mensch! Gieb Acht!

Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht?
‘Ich schlief, ich schlief,
Aus tiefem Schlaf bin ich erwacht:
Die Welt is tief,
Und tiefer als der Tag gedacht . . .

...
Tief ist ihr Weh,
Lust—tiefer noch als Herzeleid:

As far as this, the voice had been supported by simple, full-sounding harmonies. Now, from out the depths, still of F minor, rose a hesitating theme, which seemed to grope its way: in imagination, one heard it given out by the bass strings; then the violas reiterated it, and dyed it purple; voice and violins sang it together; the high little flutes carried it up and beyond, out of reach, to a half close.

Weh spricht: vergeh!

Suddenly and unexpectedly, there entered a light yet mournful phrase in F major, which was almost a dance-rhythm, and seemed to be a small, frail pleading for something not rightly understood.

Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit,

Will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit.

The innocent little theme passed away, and the words were sung again to a stern and fateful close in D flat major. (pp. 178-9)

The words haunt Maurice's sleep the same night and it surely is abundantly clear that the central interest of the whole scene lies in its connection with Maurice's state of mind, reflected in this orchestration of the ideas of desire and eternity. Richardson's hold on the theme of the novel never relaxes.

Not only is Schilsky treated ironically in the scene in which he is the centre of attention, but he is presented there, and elsewhere for the most part, as repulsive, both physically and morally. He has . . . a skin of the dead whiteness peculiar to red-haired people. His face, on the other hand, was sallow and unfresh; and the reddish rims of the eyes, and the coarsely self-indulgent mouth, contrasted strikingly with the general youthfulness of his appearance. He had the true musician's head: round as a cannon-ball, with a vast, bumpy forehead, on which the soft fluffy hair began far back, and stood out like a nimbus. His eyes were either desperately dreamy or desperately sharp,

never normally attentive or at rest; his blunted nose and chin were so short as to make the face look top-heavy. A carefully tended young moustache stood straight out along his cheeks. He had large, slender hands and quick movements . . .

He spoke in jerks, with a strong lisp, and was more intent on what he was doing than on what he was saying. (pp. 62-3)

The conventional opinion in Leipzig is that he is 'a talented rascal'; the talk is of his 'soiled love-stories', his 'perpetual impecuniosity', his 'inability to refuse money, no matter whose the hand that offered it'. There is also Madeleine's suggestion that he is a thief (p. 54).

In the *Zarathustra* scene, Maurice tries to see him impartially, but has to struggle with his honest opinion that the composer was a 'loose-jointed, caddish fellow'.

The direct confrontations the reader has with him bear out the general opinion, as well as Maurice's less objective view. The conversation between Krafft, Schilsky, and Fürst, while Schilsky is dressing, illustrates him as cold and calculating, and more than inclined to be sadistic, and the same element of calculation enters into his little affair with Ephie. At the farewell party given him by his acquaintances (Krafft and perhaps Fürst alone can be said to be his friends), we learn that he has accepted three thousand marks from an ageing woman, on condition that he leaves Leipzig and Louise, and in retailing this exploit he gives a brutally detailed account of his relationship with Louise, with titillating allusions to the passage with Ephie. After the drunken brawl that ensues when Maurice objects, the scene ends, again with intense irony, with Krafft and Maurice, thoroughly intoxicated, asleep with arms entwined: the one deserted by Schilsky, the other hopelessly in love with Louise.

The next time we see Schilsky is more than 300 pages later, when Maurice catches a fleeting glimpse of him walking down the streets of Leipzig. Finally, we get a brief shot of him with an equivocal reference to his fame as a composer after his marriage with Louise, which Madeleine once prophesied would inevitably take place for the sake of her money. Whether it takes place for any other reason is doubtful: Schilsky in this final scene is absorbed with a new friend, 'a Jewish-looking stranger in a fur-lined coat'. His wife trails behind him, still adoring, and she is accompanied by one who is presumably Krafft:

At her side was a pianist with whom Schilsky had given a concert

earlier in the week—a shabbily dressed young man, with a world of enthusiasm in his candid blue eyes . . .

She was wearing a long cloak. The door, in swinging to, caught an end of this, and hindered her progress. Both she and her companion stooped to free it; their hands met; and the bystanders saw the young man colour darkly over face and neck. (p. 562)

The triangle has become a quartet and Heinz, if it is indeed he, is as unpredictable as ever.

It is a curiously muted scene if its intention is to celebrate the triumph of genius over talent: but a completely appropriate one, in which the restrained suggestiveness is necessary to the effect, if it is read as a coda to an intricate set of variations on the theme of sexual appetite.

One more point about this last scene may be noted and it has an important bearing on the question whether Schilsky is a dedicated artist: His hat was pushed far back on his forehead; his face was flushed with elation; and, *consciously unconscious* of the waiting crowd, he gesticulated as he walked, throwing out the palms of his loosely dangling hands, and emphasising his words with restless movements of the head. [*Italics mine*] (p. 561)

Whatever he is or is not, Schilsky is an exhibitionist: his behaviour at the performance of *Zarathustra* is another example. So much so that we are entitled to ask, as we ask about Louise's love and Maurice's love, whether his dedication is to art itself, or whether it serves some other end. Would he in fact have toiled like Flaubert, 'never caring whether it rains or blows', or, come to that, like Richardson herself, without recognition or reward for nearly thirty years? It is not for nothing that he is first associated in our minds with Dove and what Richardson says about Dove is significant:

. . . in doing this, Dove was not actuated by a wholly unselfish motive, but by the more complicated one, which, consciously or unconsciously, was present beneath all the friendly cares and attentions he bestowed on people. He was never more content with himself, and with the world at large, than when he felt that he was essential to the comfort and well-being of some of his fellow-mortals; than when he, so to speak, had a finger in the pie of their existence. It engendered a sense of importance, gave life fulness and variety; and this far outweighed the trifling inconveniences such well-doing implied. Indeed, he

throve on them. For, in his mild way, Dove had a touch of Caesarean mania—of a lust for power. (p. 103)

Like Johanna's love for Ephie, Dove's solicitude for his friend Maurice breaks down when there is a risk of real inconvenience to his prospects. But it is the reference to 'the lust for power' that is interesting, and the lust for power is certainly prominent in Schilsky's love-life, just as it is in Louise's and as it is in an attenuated form in Ephie's. What we glimpse of Schilsky in his role of artist indicates very strongly that he enjoys the adulation his skill brings him as evidence of his power over others. We remember that part of Nietzsche's doctrine is a doctrine of power: the strong must and should prevail—a doctrine about which Richardson's husband expressed grave doubts.³³ As we have seen, the many kinds of love examined in this book turn out for the most part to be forms of egoism, desires for domination. If love and art are, as Professor Hope thinks, synonymous terms for the purposes of this book, then what is true of love must also be true of art. The novel is more a highly critical examination of Nietzsche's ideas than an endorsement of them; it contains a picture neither of the selfless lover, nor the selfless artist.

In laying bare the real nature of Johanna's love for Ephie, and comparing it with Dove's, Richardson nevertheless makes us conscious of the possibility of a different kind of love. In the same way, in juxtaposing Bach and Wagner in a paragraph at the beginning of the novel, she implies that there is a kind of artistic dedication which has nothing to do with the lust for power or fame. Maurice is wandering through the streets of Leipzig where

. . . the burly Cantor passed, as he had once done day after day, with the disciplined regularity of high genius, of the honest citizen, to his appointed work in the shadows of the organ-loft . . . (p. 6)

'The disciplined regularity of high genius, of the honest citizen' . . . Bach did not find it necessary to behave like a Schilsky in order to produce the Mass in B Minor, and it is doubtful whether he would have regarded genius as an excuse for cruelty, greed, and theft. Bach practised art for the glory of God.

The paragraph ends with Maurice's attention caught by a poster with the word 'Siegfried' on it, a word which symbolises for him the 'easeful and luxurious side of a life dedicated to art—of a world-wide fame; the

³³ See p. 177.

society of princes, kings; the gloss of velvet; the dull glow of gold'. The rewards, in short, of power in art. Wagner practised art for the glory of man.

The *fin de siècle* view of genius is not in fact a view to which Richardson appears to be committed, either in this book or in her own life. She keeps before us throughout the novel the image of the disciplined regularity of Bach, the honesty of Beethoven, as a counterweight to the arguments of Schilsky and Krafft in favour of irresponsible egoism. Fürst, 'our finest pianist', is associated with Beethoven; Maurice longs for this honesty of Beethoven instead of the 'glittering shallowness' of Mendelssohn. It is the remark about Bach which carries the moral imperative of the book, and of which we are reminded as Maurice contemplates Louise's sleeping face, when he confesses the need of 'an engrossing pursuit', a 'saving occupation', as a defence against irrational yearning.

Schilsky has an engrossing occupation, and is presented as enviable, rather than admirable. He is the thoroughly masculine man in the Nietzschean sense, whose occupation comes first with him while it serves his ends, to whom human relationships mean nothing unless they contribute to it. But he is not Bach. Maurice is the man without an occupation; like a woman, he cannot pursue one without a fertilising emotion, without someone to pursue it *for*. It is the second figure Richardson is concerned with, not the first. In comparison with her two great 'failures', Schilsky and Wagner are clockwork figures; she wastes no feeling on them because they do not need it.

Like the old musician who was prevented from carrying out his aims, Maurice chooses to be a failure: he compromises neither with music nor love.³⁴ When Madeleine makes a last effort to rouse him he replies: Some people—like our friend Dove—want affluence, and a fixed position in the provinces. Frankly, I don't. I'd rather scrape along here, as best I can. (p. 535)

Having put his capacity to the test and compared it with genuine capacity,

³⁴ Maurice's attitude is related to that of the erstwhile young music-teacher escaped from Melbourne and terrified that her mother would force her to return there. The manuscript drafts of *M.W.Y.* are very strong on this point, and confirm that if Richardson had not left her teaching post to go to England she would have been asked to give notice. She admits in fact having been a complete failure at the job. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 75)

he refuses to become a hack teacher for money. Having possessed a Louise, he will not make do with a Madeleine. He has had the experience of being a substitute himself and will not put up with substitutes. Richardson makes no comment on his suicide other than what resides in the ambiguities of Krafft's behaviour, and the words of the old musician about success and failure. But perhaps the circumstances of his death are themselves a comment. The last thing Maurice hears is 'the familiar melody to which the soldiers marched . . .'. We are reminded of another failure in the eyes of the world, of Hamlet borne off by soldiers, to the sound of guns. We are reminded also of the words from *Niels Lyhne*, as Niels dies, not only a soldier's death, but the hard death of the sceptic for whom there is no divine consolation. Maurice dies alone and his last vision is of the hatred in Louise's face. He dies, as Krafft silently willed him to do, a *liebestod*, but it is of a peculiarly bitter kind. Like Niels Lyhne, whose end is solitary, he is a failure who is not a failure, an artist who is not an artist: his success is that he remains faithful to his dream. Maurice, in refusing Madeleine's offer, does not turn round at the last moment. He may not be in the classic sense a tragic hero, if one requires a tragic hero to belong to the higher sorts of men. But surely that is the view Richardson is questioning. What she is displaying is the essential tragedy of being human and not divine, of being able to recognise the ideal without having the capacity for reaching it, or living at ease with it. The genuine genius needs no compassion, he is in a sense a sharer in the divine by reason of his creative gift, and is therefore not tragic, unless it fails him. It is the would-be artist, the type of the would-be divine, who is tragic. Underlying the love story, the musical story, the psychological story, is the pattern of man's relationship to the universe in which he finds himself; his continual aspiration after what is just beyond his grasp, of which Maurice's desire for Louise is a symbol. What is beyond his reach draws him on, gives him what he lives by. Louise, in whom the desire for the unattainable is equally strong, wants Schilsky because she can never have him. He gives her what she lives by, simply by always eluding her, by affirming her selfhood without wishing to engulf it. The book is the erotic version of the parable of the nomad and the settler, of the Pythagorean paradox: a version in which intensity of feeling is in inverse proportion to the satisfaction of desire and in which only the heartless are free of suffering (cf. p. 208); in which extremes of joy and

pain are avoided only by the circumspect, whose meagre demands on life match the meagreness of what they have to give it, the 'trimmers' of the *Inferno*.

Maurice's suicide, it is true, may have other implications. Suicide is quite frequently an aggressive action, designed to saddle with a life-long guilt those against whom the suicide wishes to revenge himself. It could be said of Maurice that his action was of that kind, the only aggressively male action of which he was capable. Such an interpretation seems unconvincing: the suicide of Avery Hill has prepared us not to expect that guilt will possess the minds of any of the main characters for very long. And certainly Schilsky, Louise, and Krafft, against whom the action would have been aimed, if it had been aggressive, are, as Maurice would have known, incapable of feeling guilt. That he dies to affirm a passion, as the Tristan-music demands, is the most logical explanation. As far as the autobiographical element in the book is concerned, his death could be regarded as the killing in the self of obsessional, possessive love, of self-love, in fact. It could also be regarded as Richardson's suppression of the masculine side of her nature, since she equates egoism in love with masculinity. In allowing Louise to survive, she is perhaps affirming the kind of love of which she was herself incapable, a consuming, feminine, heterosexual passion.³⁵

But there is more to be inferred from these events than such psychological possibilities. The separate fates of Maurice and Louise make it clear that Richardson has something left to say about the operations of chance in human lives. Maurice's end cannot be read as a homily against demanding too much of life; character cannot wholly determine destiny, for Louise's character was very like his, and yet her destiny was different. Maurice, given the chance of happiness with Louise, made too many demands on her and was deserted. Louise, given the chance of happiness with Schilsky, made too many demands on him and was deserted. Yet Louise was given a second chance and Maurice was condemned, even though both were faithful to their dream. Thus, the book is finally a demonstration of cosmic injustice and a cry of protest against it.

Maurice's bitter outburst when he contrasts himself with Schilsky is the protest of all unhappy men against their given nature: 'He was a genius! . . . what am I? A miserable bungler, a wretched

³⁵ Cf. Wagner's remark about men and love quoted on pp. 460-1.

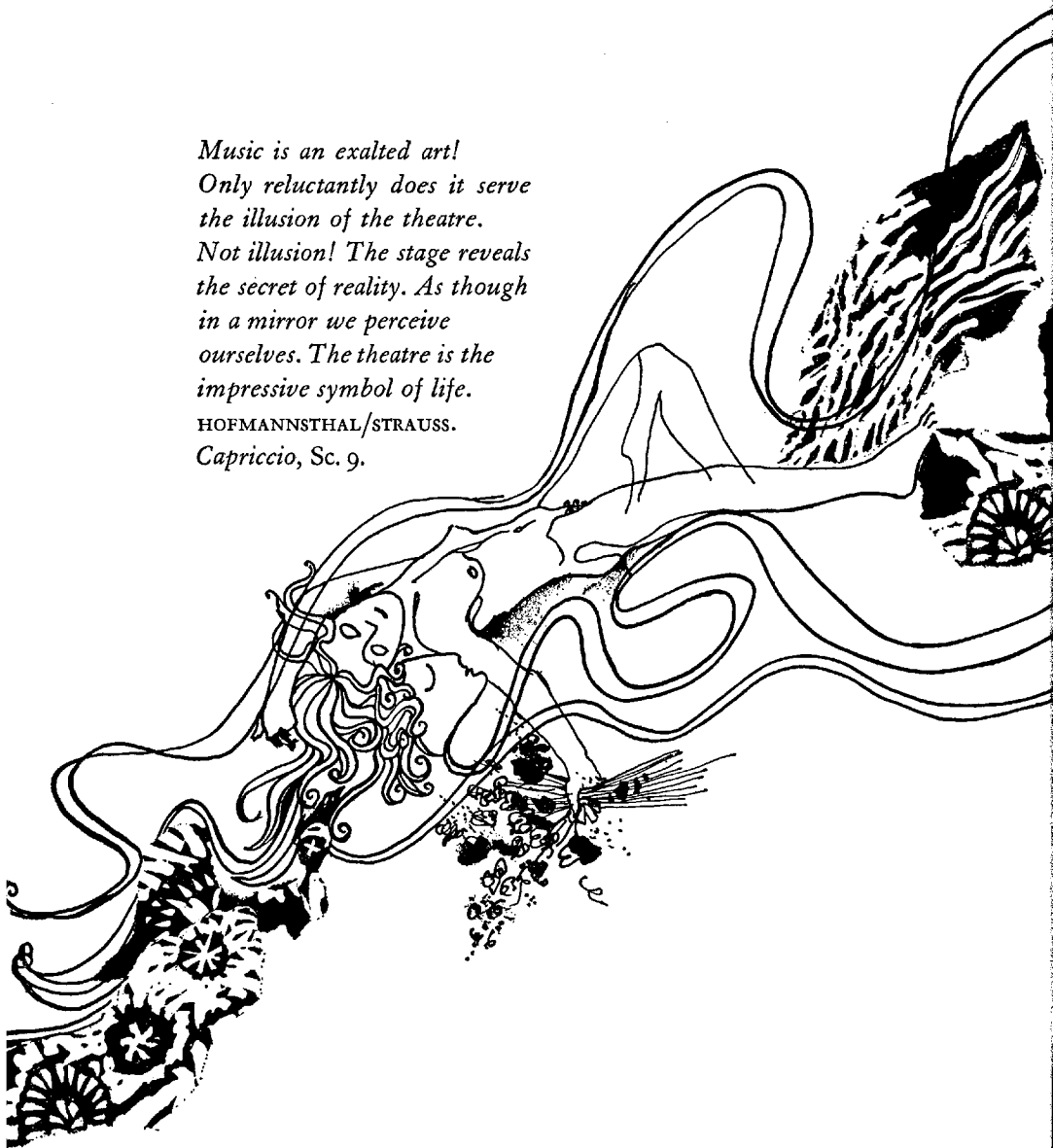
dilettant—or have you another word for it? . . . Let us get at the truth for once by all means!—But what I want to know . . . is, why one should be given so much and the other so little. To one all the talents and all your love; and the other unhappy wretch remains an outsider his whole life long . . . (p. 425)

To this there is no answer, for it is naïve to suppose that self-knowledge will inevitably be followed by an appropriate change in behaviour. There is a stubborn core of irrationality at the heart of things, as Sophocles knew, and man is still forced to accept the limitless unpredictability of the genotype. It is as well that this is so, for the power to change it might bring evils in its train beside which those that we bear already would be trifles.

Chapter 4

*Music is an exalted art!
Only reluctantly does it serve
the illusion of the theatre.
Not illusion! The stage reveals
the secret of reality. As though
in a mirror we perceive
ourselves. The theatre is the
impressive symbol of life.*

HOFMANNSTHAL/STRAUSS.
Capriccio, Sc. 9.



Tristan without Isolde

I

THE SENSE in which *Maurice Guest* can be thought of as a 'love story' has been sufficiently indicated to enable the analysis to proceed on another front. It now remains to discover in what sense, if any, the novel can be called a musical novel, and, if it can be so called, to reveal during the analysis the degree to which the musical 'content' has been fused with the love story.

Professor Hope's thesis that the novel is above all a 'musical novel', by which he means that it is a novel about a philosophy of art, has held the field for fifteen years without ever having been seriously questioned, and since it seems fated to be taken as having settled the problem, a detailed analysis of it may be of some interest.

It should be said at the outset that one of the chief defects of the thesis is that it relies too heavily on secondary sources. Vincent Buckley's failure to examine it before reissuing his own study takes us further still from primary material.

Hope begins with an attack on the 'misjudged realism' of Richardson's prose style, particularly in dialogue, and while some of what he says is justified, if the particular passage attacked is taken out of context, it would certainly be possible to form a different opinion of the style by choosing different passages. In comparison to the number of 'bad' passages, the passages of neutral, unostentatious prose at which Richardson deliberately aimed are predominant. To support his argument here, Hope is taking on trust Leonie Gibson's views about her too careful documentation, her supposed paucity of imagination, in *Henry Handel*

Richardson and Some of her Sources. This book, as has been pointed out, contains some serious errors of fact, several of which are the result of a careless reading of *Richard Mahony*, and it is founded on the curious view that Richardson's prose is bad because it is not like D. H. Lawrence's. Hope has assumed that 'some of her sources' meant 'all of her sources'; he has made no attempt to trace any others, though there were others available even in 1955. He takes for granted, as Leonie Gibson did, that Richardson stuck closely to all her sources, personal, geographical, and historical. Recent work, however, has shown such views to be untenable. Weston Bate has demonstrated how she manipulated her historical sources when it suited her; both Alan Stoller and I have shown where she stuck to facts about her father in *Richard Mahony*, and where she seriously departed from them; the letters and other material recently acquired by the National Library confirm these views and furnish new evidence to support them. It is already clear that Richardson brought her imagination to bear not only on the composition of *Richard Mahony* but also on that of *The Getting of Wisdom*. The same creative re-shaping of material can now be documented in relation to *Maurice Guest*.

Failure to found the criticism of Richardson's prose on more solid evidence would have no importance at all, if Hope had offered it as subjective, impressionistic. This is often the most valuable kind of criticism, which he practises extremely well. But the tone of the article is authoritative, not tentative, and the article has been accepted as authoritative, as defining the book's essential theme.

After this questionable introduction, Hope then offers the routine opinion that 'the novel is also plainly a study of tragic failure'. This view is indefensible for several reasons given in the book itself: first, because Richardson, right at the beginning, carefully draws attention to an analogy of Maurice's final situation, and in doing so gives a clear warning about the danger of making snap judgments on what constitutes success and failure. The old musician who introduced him to the world of music before he left home is what Maurice knows he might become, at the end of his love affair, if he does not commit suicide; the point is made clear in his last conversation with Madeleine. The passage in which this unnamed musician appears is crucial and has already been quoted at length in the previous chapter (p. 148).

Having introduced the 'obscure musician' *motiv*, Richardson no more

drops it than Wagner drops the *liebste* *motiv* after the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. It sounds softly under the other themes in different guises throughout the book, until, towards the end, it is heard clearly once more. If Richardson were taken more seriously as a musician, as a writer steeped in the music of her own time and in the literature which inspired so much of it, there would be less confusion about what is going on in her novels. This novel, in particular, is as heavily 'orchestrated' as the work of her favourite modern composer, and as tightly controlled.

As in Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*, the 'unfulfilled musician' *motiv* sets up a strong hesitation in our minds about pronouncing judgment on 'success' and 'failure'. The passage quoted also draws attention to the verbal difficulties involved in defining 'truth', a *motiv* which, as we saw in the last chapter, Heinz Krafft develops in some detail. The whole novel is constructed in accordance with these views: it prevents our pinning labels on any one of the characters. Our initial expectations of them have constantly to be revised, and then revised again, as we see other aspects of them. Reference to Madeleine's fluctuating attitudes to Heinz Krafft is enough to illustrate the point and her words about him to Miss Jensen, after Avery Hill's suicide, crystallise the perennial difficulty all must face in making human judgments. Each separate person, she says: 'knew a little bit [of him] and thought it was all there was to know . . . You have the idea of him he meant you to have.'

The third point made in the old musician passage relates to the notion of 'harmonious wholeness' as a universal goal. His statement raises a musical as well as a psychological and philosophical question: what exactly is the final chord, the final note, the harmonious wholeness, which the interweaving pattern of these lives and the mood, the *Stimmung*, of the whole novel, demand as a conclusion? Would Hope and Buckley have preferred Maurice to shrug his shoulders about Louise, accept his apparent limitations as a musician, go off and marry Madeleine and found a music-school? This is the course that commonsense British compromise would have dictated and Hope insists that Maurice is typically British. But would anything in the picture of the obsessed young man whom we actually see in the novel have led to such a resolution? Could such a resolution have been called a 'success' or a 'failure'—or what? It is reasonably easy to guess what Nietzsche would have thought of it, even the partial Nietzsche, invoked by Hope and Buckley.

Moreover, Maurice's 'total mediocrity' in music is not *demonstrated* in the novel; his mind is diverted from his music by what he regards as a more compelling aim, and we never see him musically at his best. He is one of those who, unlike Nietzsche, or Rilke, do not believe that the universe can be justified only on aesthetic principles; or he is one perhaps whose aesthetic principles have a wider scope. Not all poems are written: some are lived. Maurice could never have *created* music, it is true, but if Louise had not crossed his path at a crucial moment there are strong reasons for believing he could have learnt to interpret it as a conductor. He needed an outside stimulus, certainly—just as George Eliot did, and Richardson did, not to mention Wagner himself, in order to express themselves—but neither Louise nor Madeleine was exactly the right kind of woman to provide such stimulus. The role of accident in determining human destiny is a biological fact; Hope and Buckley judge Maurice from the point of view of Calvinist fundamentalists; the three clear warnings have not deterred them from dividing the characters into separate groups labelled 'genius' and 'talent', 'success' and 'failure', or from ignoring everything that does not fit into these categories.

Another reason for caution in categorising lies outside the books in Richardson's article about Jens Peter Jacobsen reprinted in *Southerly*, No. 1, 1963; this reprint was obviously not available to Hope (though he could have dug up the original himself),¹ but it was certainly available to Buckley before the reissue of his study. In this article, Richardson makes it quite clear that Jacobsen's attitude to 'success' was similar to that of her old musician—that a man must be faithful to his dream—and that she is sympathetic with this attitude. This, in spite of the fact that both Jacobsen and Richardson are at the same time sceptical about dreamers. If Jacobsen's influence on Richardson is to be taken seriously, as most critics seem to agree that it should be, then the similarity in their moral views must be taken seriously. Their assessment of what constitutes success and failure is one of the closest links between them. In *Niels Lyhne*, it should be noticed, a man's 'dream' is not necessarily concerned with art, and Richardson in the old musician passage specifically states 'in art, *in one's self*'. Niels Lyhne dies, not for art's sake, not for love's sake, but faithful to his doctrine of atheism, which he had once momentarily betrayed.

¹ The Mitchell Library, Sydney, has a complete set of *Cosmopolis*.

A further reason for hesitating about labelling the book a study of tragic failure—a label which Hope himself quietly drops for one which is not quite identical—is the ambiguity of the ‘epilogue’ or ‘coda’. The tone of this episode is far too subdued to be the triumph for ‘free spirits’ which Hope’s interpretation demands. Over it hangs the memory of Louise’s last scene with Maurice in which her vulgar cruelty works strongly against concluding that she is justifiably triumphant. Whatever one feels about Maurice, there is a sense of unease in the reader’s response to Louise in this scene, unless he is totally devoid of compassion. The finale has been dealt with already at some length and for the moment can be set aside.

Hope next considers the question whether *Maurice Guest* is an autobiographical novel. He rejects the possibility only to contradict himself by implication in the last sentence of his article. The main ground of his objection is that: ‘the great and decisive difference between the author’s experience in Leipzig and her hero’s is that for her it was quite the happiest time of her life’. First of all, there is no sufficient reason why a happy author should not write an autobiographical novel and make the central figure unhappy. There are plenty of instances of the reverse process. Nobody knows, for instance, just *when* Shakespeare was happy or unhappy. Wagner composed *Die Meistersinger* at a particularly difficult time in his life.

More serious is the fact that Hope is putting words into Richardson’s mouth to prove a point. What she actually said in her autobiography was: ‘The three years spent in Leipzig were the happiest *I had yet known*’ [italics mine] (p. 98). The sentence is not quite the same as Hope’s, and he is not in a position to pronounce on the matter, only to say that Richardson said the particular words which he misquotes. He overlooks in fact her reference to ‘my happiest and unhappiest memories of Leipzig’ on page 106. A more careful reading of her account of the Leipzig period and a comparison with that given by Matilda Washburn Freund,² which glosses over some unexplained frictions, throw considerable doubt on Hope’s picture of unalloyed happiness. When, for instance,

² See P.R., esp. pp. 13-21. Why, for instance, was it difficult for H.H.R. to marry in Munich, and not for her sister? The drafts of *M.W.Y.* tell us that in the Mozart-strasse flat in Leipzig she went through ‘one of the stormiest times of my life’.

Richardson confessed to her music teacher some time in 1892 that she was leaving him to be married, she says that her resistance was stiffened by the memory of events of the previous year:

. . . the one just past had brought me two experiences that I had no wish to repeat.—That, indeed, I rejoiced to know were behind me, I hoped forever. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 121)

She goes on to describe one of them at some length, a concert at which she had apparently failed to do herself justice because of the sensation produced in her by being stared at by

thousands of eyes, all fixed like gimlets on my miserable self, stuck up aloft before them and their helpless prey. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 121)

A strong sense of failure is associated with the experience, which is no doubt made use of in the account of Maurice's performance at his *Prüfung* in the novel. She does not specify the other experience; it could have been her sister's shattered romance, alluded to coyly by Mrs Freund in her recollections. More likely, it could have been some greater difficulty about the engagement to Robertson than those Mrs Freund delicately slides over.³ The fact is we know only as much about Richardson's happiness and unhappiness in Leipzig as she chooses to tell us and she herself certainly makes no bones about the depression which afflicted her immediately after she left Leipzig, with her marriage still three years away from her. She also mentions the 'ructions' with her mother to which her depression gave rise—an important point which has been overlooked.

Why Hope's second argument that 'she drew on herself and her own experience for more than one of the characters in the book' should rule out its being regarded as autobiographical it is difficult to see. It cannot be that Hope's concept of autobiography is the same as that of the authors of *Who's Who*, or that he looks on autobiography as photography, or even portraiture. None of this was what Flaubert meant when he said 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi', or what Martin Boyd meant when he made the same remark about himself and *Lucinda Brayford*. *Maurice Guest* in fact is an autobiography in most of these senses, particularly in the sense meant by Martin Boyd. The point has already been made clear in the previous chapter and need not be argued again.

Hope continues: 'And one great difference between Henry Handel

³ See Chapter 13, especially pp. 500-2, 506.

herself and Maurice Guest is that he has nothing of the creative artist in him'. What does this blanket statement *mean*? Maurice set out to be a pianist, an executant, and probably a conductor, not a 'creative artist'. In what sense can a pianist or a conductor be compared with a novelist? A novelist is not an executant. The proper comparison would be between a *composer* and a novelist. Schilsky is primarily a composer, in addition to being a fine violinist and an indifferent pianist, but Maurice is not shown as having any ambitions about composition. He is regarded by his teachers and friends as being a promising pianist; so was Richardson. She became more than merely competent, and so might he have done, without reaching international status. She herself showed considerable talent for composition and took lessons for some time after her marriage. But as far as music is concerned, she belongs with the interpreters rather than with the creators, and her purely musical experience runs parallel with Maurice's, not counter to it. Then she abandoned her musical ambitions and took to writing, in response to an acquaintance's invitation to contribute to a magazine, partly, it is clear, because she needed an occupation and welcomed one which could be pursued in solitude. In the novel there is a curious and illuminating allusion to this divergence from the musician's path, in the account of Maurice's burgeoning friendship with Madeleine. The circumstances resemble very closely the accounts of Richardson's own developing friendship with Robertson, when he was guiding her into German music and literature: They also began to play duets, symphonies old and new, and Madeleine took care constantly to have something fresh and interesting at hand. To all this the young man brought an unbounded zeal, and, if he had had his way, they would have gone on playing or reading far into the evening.

She smiled at his eagerness. 'You absorb like a sponge.'

When it grew too dark to see, he confided to her that his dearest wish was to be a conductor. He was not yet clear how it could be managed, but he was sure that this was the branch of his art for which he had most aptitude.

Here she interrupted him. 'Do you never write verses?'

Her question seemed to him so meaningless that he only laughed, and went on with what he was saying. (*M.G.*, p. 50)

Two things catch the attention here. One is the fleeting reference to a

possible alternative occupation. The other is the clear statement of the exact scope and nature of Maurice's ambition. Maurice in fact was not aiming at being a 'Wagner', but a 'Bülow'; Schilsky was aiming at being a 'Wagner'⁴ not a 'Bülow', and the comparison between them is not at all as simple as Hope makes it appear. For, however brilliant a conductor may be, he is not a creative genius in the sense in which Hope uses the word genius; he remains an executant, an interpreter, standing in the same relation to a composer as a good critic to a novelist, or an actor to a dramatist. In point of fact, to fall for a moment into the trap of asking 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' Maurice with his passion for 'serving', his devotion to, his absorption in another being, might have made an outstanding conductor, as Bülow did, with his similar qualities.

Hope next claims that:

for the picture of Schilsky, the creative artist, there is evidence that the author drew on herself—on that part of herself which she was describing in Laura, the school girl in *The Getting of Wisdom*.

What precisely is the evidence? There is no evidence that the young Ethel Richardson at school thought of herself as a creative artist, as the young Schilsky had done. He was a child prodigy, she was not. And would a woman who had not finished her first novel regard herself as 'an artist' to the extent of formulating theories about artists? It is difficult to imagine Richardson, at this point tentative and uncertain of her gift, being arrogant enough to do so. It is even more difficult to imagine that she could see herself, with no creative work as yet in print, as important enough an artist to warrant the writing of 'a portrait of the young artist', though looking back on her schoolgirl self she is able to see signs of an embryo writer. Hope is importing into this particular claim the hindsight of a critic, summing up a writer's finished *œuvre*. Even supposing his claim were true, which 'part of Laura' is he referring to? The Laura who was slithering through sentimental second-rate piano 'pieces', or the Laura who was beginning to get some dim idea of what writing was about as a humble member of the Literary Society? The resemblances between Schilsky and Laura are about as tenuous as they could possibly be. Moreover, we are given considerable insight into Laura's mind and into what 'creative' processes it is at that point of time capable of,

⁴ The real model for Schilsky was in fact a disciple of Wagner's. See pp. 199-205.

whereas Schilsky's interior life, in the final version of the book, is never made real to us. It is curious that, if Richardson had really wanted to make genius and talent the two poles of the novel, she should have cut out the only two passages which deal at any length with the 'artist at work'. In the printed version of the novel, Chapter X of Book One ends with the visit to the opera seen through Ephie's eyes, the young girl full of disappointment because Schilsky has taken no notice of her. A whole typescript page has then been deleted, dealing with Schilsky in the pleasurable throes of composition after Louise had left him to go to the theatre: 'he had at last made a beginning to a movement of his symphonic poem that he had hitherto shirked . . .'. He goes to the opera in the end merely in response 'to a whim of Louise's'. Then follows a description of him seated at the back of the parterre with Louise, listening vaguely and letting the music 'pass over him like an immaterial storm'. A phrase in the second act of the opera sends a shiver through him which results in a sudden intuition about a passage he has written in his tone-poem.⁵ He becomes completely obsessed with his new insight, physically affected by it, and in spite of Louise's darkening face, is unable to hold out to the end. He leaves her to go back to his manuscript. His departure, in the final version, is left unexplained.

The other excised passage concerns the relationship between his attraction to women and his art. It occurs after the little daydream Ephie has of herself as Schilsky's wife, when he should have married her and become a famous violinist in New York (p. 143). The second passage is shorter than the first and deals mainly with his great fear of Louise's jealousy, her primary importance for him, but also with his need of varied stimulation to provide him with energy and ideas. A third passage relating to his flirtation with Ephie is also cut; it has no direct relevance to him as an artist, but merely reveals his desire to avoid a scene, which is important to another stage of the present argument. The excisions and the virtual disappearance of Schilsky from the book have the effect of concentrating attention on the love-theme, not on the genius-theme.

The next stage in Hope's argument involves lumping together in one paragraph H. M. Green's interpretation of the novel and 'Barnard

⁵ Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* suggests Wagner's influence very strongly—but a phrase from *Siegfried* rather than *Die Walküre* as in the novel.

Eldershaw's',⁶ in the course of which justice is done to none of the three. Hope cannot be blamed for relying on what Green said in his early *Outline of Australian Literature*, but Green's fuller treatment of the work was available to Buckley by 1961. The careless reader would gain from Hope's account, and Buckley's silent endorsement of it, the impression that the views of all three critics were the same. Even if one confines oneself to Green's early view, however, Hope's condensation of it is inadequate. Green is in fact correct when he states that 'the atmosphere of intensity and stress heightens, until it grows close and confined, as though prison walls were contracting about the two central characters . . .'. This is exactly the impression evoked in the last section of the novel as the action takes place more and more in Louise's room, and the process is a deliberate equivalent of the music that figures so prominently in the novel. Moreover, Green's reference to 'moths about a flame' which Hope does not quote is strikingly apposite to the imagery associated with Louise, as we have seen, although he was unaware of Richardson's interest in Duse. As for Barnard and Eldershaw, they devote less than one of their twenty-five pages on Richardson to a discussion of *Maurice Guest* and it is impossible to deduce from what they do say that 'they do not really like Louise', as Hope claims. One could with more reason say that Hope does not really like Maurice! They speak briefly of a 'love story'; Green refers to a tragic passion, which is not quite the same. They assume that all Richardson's books, including this one, describe 'in varying intensity . . . a losing battle against life', but they regard Maurice's fate as owing something to accident, which is true. They do not mention Louise Dufroyer except to say that 'the only link with Australia is in [her] nationality'. They do, as Hope says, speak of 'an evil magic to which Maurice falls a helpless prey', but if they regard Louise as the source of it they do not say so. There are, as we have seen, several places in the novel in which Maurice refers to his actions as dictated by a force outside himself; in one of the last of these, the word 'occult' occurs; Louise makes similar observations about her own actions, but neither locates this force in the other as an evil magic, for which he or she is responsible.

One cannot agree with Barnard and Eldershaw that Maurice would

⁶ The pseudonym of Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw was 'Barnard Eldershaw'. The book referred to is their *Essays in Australian Fiction*.

have been happy and successful if he had not met Louise; they too, like Hope, beg the question what is success. But it is possible that he might have gone on to live, as perhaps the majority of human beings do live in Western society, a life of quiet, suppressed frustration of the kind Chekhov described so accurately in *Uncle Vanya* in 1895. Barnard and Eldershaw spend most of their time discussing *Richard Mahony*, and considering that they were writing in 1938 without any biographical publications to help them, as Green also was ten years before, they are extraordinarily perceptive about many things. They note Mary's possessiveness, for example, which they call 'the shady side of love' and which characterises the love of Maurice and Louise, as we learned later it characterised the young Richardson's. They also put their finger on the central concern of Richardson's books:

The thing that ultimately conditions all books is the author's outlook on life. Henry Handel Richardson is above all interested in people. Her preoccupation is not with ideas, philosophical or literary, but with her characters. She sees life as a dualism and a duel, between the *ego* and the *alter*, the *alter* being all that is not *ego*, the external world and its inhabitants.

The last sentence is peculiarly relevant to the outlook on life of the musician on whom Schilsky is almost certainly modelled, Richard Strauss. Two of his finest tone-poems, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *Ein Heldenleben*, a work with himself as hero, illustrate the point. But both novelist and composer, whatever philosophical ideas are embedded in their work, are interested primarily in the relationships of people in a real, visible world. They move *towards* abstractions, but do not take them as their starting-point. What Romain Rolland has to say about the critics who read a lofty symbolism into Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* is equally applicable to much of the criticism of *Maurice Guest*: 'the trite and frigid symbolism is much less interesting than the struggle against death which can be felt in every line of the work'.⁷ In the same way, the frigid abstractions of the genius-talent debate are not what the warm-blooded reader responds to in *Maurice Guest*; he finds the struggle against destruction more interesting.

Hope refers next to Nettie Palmer's view that the novel is 'a study of love, in all its overwhelming intensities and erotic vagaries'. But though the

⁷ Rollo Myers (ed.), *Romain Rolland and Richard Strauss*, p. 179.

quotation indicates that he has read Mrs Palmer's book, he takes no account of Richardson's letter, quoted in the Appendix, which should be a warning to readers who think that her characters are meant to embody aesthetic theories. Of *The Young Cosima*, Richardson writes:

It is not a music novel. Only about people whose trade music was . . . And it was the relationship of the three people that interested me most, not the woman's career. (N.P., pp. 201-2)

The remark would apply with even greater force to *Maurice Guest*. Hope expresses surprise that Richardson's husband should have interpreted the book in the same way as Mrs Palmer, and he does not refer to Richardson's own view that it was a book about love and lovers.⁸ Since Robertson was in a better position than anyone else to know what Richardson felt about love, and presumably what she was like as a lover, it would seem odd to dismiss his opinion without examining it more carefully than Hope does.

Two sentences he quotes from the paragraph in which Robertson describes the book as a novel of passion are of particular interest:

. . . the tragedy of the two principal figures lies in the fact that they are not musicians: whereas the personages who possess in a high degree the musical gift, Schilsky and Krafft, are depicted as abnormal and degenerate. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 155)

The second part of this sentence is a false contradictory, as Hope might have pointed out. But there is a great deal of substance in the contrast that ought to have followed, namely, that those who are genuinely gifted musicians are not tragic.

We come now to the main part of Hope's argument; the steps towards his statement of it are curiously shaky. He declares that it is 'a musical novel', which, he says, means a novel 'about the musical temperament', which means 'musical genius', and finally by this dubious spiral we arrive at the proposition that it is a book about the difference between genius and talent, presumably genius and talent in general. From this point onwards any pretence of logical argument ceases and we have a series of assertions:

the highest manifestation of love and of art have this in common that they require something that we call genius. Louise has the genius for love. Maurice has not.

⁸ See also 'Some Notes on my Books' (*Southerly*, No. 1, 1963).

First of all, what *are* the highest manifestations of love, or, for that matter, of art? Are there any signs of either in this particular book? Neither Hope nor Buckley discusses these very important points. The picture of love presented in the book at times resembles most closely the picture of 'love' given by La Rochefoucauld:

Si on juge l'amour par la plupart de ses effets, il ressemble plus à la haine qu'à l'amitié.

Closer attention to the epigraphs of the novel, particularly the first and the last, might have proved fruitful.

Secondly, 'Louise has the genius for love. Maurice has not'. What sort of love has Louise a genius for?—is a pertinent question. She is presented as having an obsessive passion for Schilsky; Maurice is presented as having an obsessive passion for Louise. Why is one a genius because she finds someone to lavish it on, and the other 'a born failure' because he doesn't? Surely one's experience of life is enough to make it plain that there are large numbers of men and women with a great capacity for warmth and passion, who do not, from sheer bad luck, find a partner to bestow them on. What would these 'Nietzschean' critics have them do? Marry anybody passably presentable who happens to turn up?—a curiously Philistine solution to their problem. Hope fails to see that the situation with Maurice and Louise is identical: the honour of both, to quote again Nietzsche's words about women, is 'to love more than they are beloved'. And fundamentally, this is why they are no use to each other. Louise is fortunate and finds a being to worship in Schilsky, Maurice is unfortunate, and sees nothing to worship in Madeleine. Richardson knew well enough what it was to have much to offer and no one to receive it. The experience turned her in upon herself.

The next part of the essay is devoted to a confused account of the influence of Nietzsche in the novel, based on a highly simplified view of Nietzsche's 'philosophy', which, as far as it can be defined at all, was based on a subjective interpretation of Heraclitus and a very limited knowledge of the doctrine of evolution by natural selection.

There is no doubt that Richardson was in some way 'influenced' by Nietzsche. It is a fact, as Hope says, that she loved his poetry, which also endeared him to Professor Robertson, in spite of his reservations. It is true that 'like Schilsky in the novel', she set him to music; that is to say, we know that she set to music his poem 'Autumn', the wood of which is

vastly different from that of the philosophy as outlined by Hope. How much *Schilsky* knew of Nietzsche's philosophy it is difficult to say. Nowhere in the novel do we find him actually reading Nietzsche, let alone making a study of his philosophy. All we find him doing is composing a symphonic tone-poem entitled *Zarathustra*. It is doubtful whether his knowledge of Nietzsche was any more extensive than that of Richard Strauss, who actually did compose a tone-poem called *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Strauss was not even aware that *Zarathustra* had really existed, but thought Nietzsche had invented him.

Presumably, however, Richardson knew more of Nietzsche than odd fragments of *Also Sprach*; her husband certainly did. The difficulty is to know what is meant by the word 'influenced' in Hope's statement. To say that someone is influenced by Nietzsche is to say nothing. Nietzsche was one of the most inconsistent and contradictory of all nineteenth-century philosophers, and, there is reason to think, deliberately so. *Zarathustra*, it may be noted, was appalled that men should become his disciples, a point overlooked by Hope and Buckley. One can use Nietzsche in fact, as one can use the Scriptures, to support almost any theory one likes to dream up. The assumption that there is a single body of doctrine labelled 'the philosophy of Nietzsche' is a delusion. Krafft's conversation with Madeleine about the Philistine English and the artistic Germans, and about 'moralists' and 'immoralists' is a case in point. Wagner in one of his 'novels' certainly makes a figure of fun of an Englishman, but both Nietzsche and Wagner were continually denouncing *Germans* as the worst kind of Philistines; Nietzsche was never tired of abusing their materialism, their market-place morality. And it is not at all as clear as Hope seems to think that Nietzsche was an 'immoralist', or even an 'amoralist'. His own words on the subject, in 'Apophthegms and Darts', from *The Twilight of the Idols*, if Madeleine had known them, could have silenced Heinz Krafft:

Whether we immoralists do *injury* to virtue?—Just as little as anarchists do to princes. It is only since princes have been wounded by shots that they sit firmly on their thrones again. Moral: We must wound morality by our shots. (No. 36)

This is not the outlook of an amoralist, or even an 'immoralist'. As far as one can discover Nietzsche's positive attitude, he saw conventional middle-class 'morality' as anti-natural: 'To attack the passions at the

root means to attack life itself at the root'. There is nothing in this opinion to excuse indulgence in *fake* passions, in the kind of desperate erotic experimentalism for experiment's sake, which seems to be the keynote of the *avant-garde* circle lightly sketched in around Schilsky, the sort of atmosphere which Romain Rolland criticises so trenchantly in the volume entitled 'The Market Place' in *Jean-Christophe*. To lay this tawdry immoralism at Nietzsche's door is to overlook much of what he wrote. It is also to overlook the influence of Beethoven in the book and Beethoven's influence on Wagner and Nietzsche. From Beethoven, both of them derived the cure for unhappiness, namely, work.

As to his 'will-to-power', just as Nietzsche misunderstood Darwin, along with so many of the bland merchant-capitalists of his day, whom he despised, so Nietzsche's own doctrine of the Overman has been distorted by theorists with an axe to grind. 'Survival of the fittest' was used as a scientific dogma to justify the most appalling horrors of the industrial revolution; and the doctrine of Nietzsche about 'free and servile' spirits has been associated with some of the most abominable crimes in twentieth-century history, though those who committed them were hardly capable of understanding any philosophical idea at all. And for this Nietzsche must himself bear the blame, largely because he failed to see the unwarrantable assumption on which his attack on Christianity was founded. His argument that Christian doctrines of meekness and renunciation, of humility and love towards one's neighbour had bred a servile race depends on the assumption that these doctrines were successfully put into practice. Swift saw more clearly when he distinguished between nominal and real Christianity, and pointed out that to defend real Christianity, to practise it, would be to put an end to 'civilisation' as we know it. The only way to defend Nietzsche is to assume he was being even more devious than Swift; it must surely have been obvious to him that at no time had civilisation ever been organised except upon an ethos of power. Lip-service to Christian doctrines together with actual commitment to self-interest had certainly produced a sense of hollowness, hypocrisy and gloom in German society, particularly after the revolutionary period, and Nietzsche was right to react strongly against Schopenhauer's solution for the problems of life: negation of desire and withdrawal—recommendations which Schopenhauer did not himself practise. Nietzsche was also right to perceive the impulse towards death

and otherworldliness as an unhealthy streak in German Romantic literature and philosophy, but in seeking to eradicate it he opened the way to equally destructive impulses.

Judging by what Richardson has to say about 'failure and success' in the early part of the novel, she would have seen the second fundamental flaw in Nietzsche's doctrine as it is commonly interpreted: the assumption that 'strength' and 'weakness' are what they appear to be. She would have asked, and in fact her books do ask, the question which Romain Rolland put to Strauss, when he was laying down the law on the subject.⁹ The two men were discussing the Boer War, and Strauss, a totally uncritical adherent of Nietzsche, said: 'The English are very civilised and very strong. It is an excellent thing that the strongest should prevail.' Rolland suggested:

But what if the strong were only strong on the surface, if there was in the weak a moral force superior to that of their conquerors and perhaps a source of genius, even of artistic genius, more alive than the English colossus with its mediocre and moribund heart?

To which Strauss replied, ostrich-like: 'Perhaps you are right, I expect you're right; but I prefer to think what I think.' There is a passage in *Jean-Christophe*¹⁰ dealing with youthful inspiration which sounds a similar note of warning against writing off the apparently second-rate. It helps to counteract the crude stereotype of Darwinism in art to which Hope in his article seems committed:

Very often it was mediocre music that produced this intoxication . . .

But in the notes of music even when handled by an idiot, there is such a power of life that they can let loose storms, in a simple soul. Perhaps even the dreams suggested by the idiots are more mysterious and more free than those breathed by an imperious thought which drags you along by force, for aimless movement and empty chatter do not disturb the mind in its own pondering . . . (p. 60)

Nietzsche, and by implication Hope and Buckley, do not consider the possibility that to get rid of the second-rate, to destroy 'the weak' might also mean to get rid of genius. Fine flowers need much compost, as

⁹ Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

¹⁰ Quotations from *Jean-Christophe* are taken from the Modern Library edition (1910) translated by Gilbert Cannan.

George Eliot pointed out, a fact which any student of Shakespeare should have taken for granted. It is hard to reconcile Hope's essay on *Maurice Guest*, indeed, with his splendid 'Ann Killigrew, or the Art of Modulating', in *The Cave and the Spring*.

The dark side of Nietzsche's 'doctrine' is clearly perceived by Richardson's husband, Robertson, and she relied a good deal on his judgment. He reviewed Nietzsche on two occasions at least for *Cosmopolis*, and in his first survey of German literature for the magazine in August 1896, wrote: I find little in Nietzsche's writings but a morbid exaggeration of the individualist movement of our time . . . His philosophy appears to be a philosophy of health and renaissance, but in point of fact it degenerates into a glorification of egoism and primitive barbarism . . . Nietzsche becomes interesting and humane in D'Annunzio . . .

There are many, looking back over the last seventy years, who would endorse the first part of the opinion, without subscribing to his view of D'Annunzio. For Robertson, who saw much in him to admire, the value of a man like Nietzsche—as Nietzsche himself seems to have intended—was:

that they go through their age like ploughshares; they tear up the weeds of conventionality and expose fresh soil to the air. They force men to think the vital thoughts of life all over again. (*Cosmopolis*, October 1898)

To say this, however, is not to worship the ploughshare. Nor, because she admired Nietzsche as a poet, and sympathised with the man, is it necessary to believe that Richardson swallowed his political and artistic opinions whole. His ideas about women would certainly have repelled her; she was a radical feminist, an active supporter of the suffragettes, and an admirer of Olive Schreiner, whose fertilising novel *The Story of an African Farm* is referred to in a humorous context in *Maurice Guest*. There are faint traces of Olive Schreiner's Lyndall in Louise, just as there are, more ironically treated, in Rolland's Colette Stevens. Madeleine in *Maurice Guest* is certainly the answer to Olive Schreiner's complaint that women, except in the poorest labouring classes, as a race have now no work to do in the world.¹¹ Such a view is in direct opposition to the

¹¹ See 'Stray Thoughts on South Africa: The Boer Women and the Nineteenth Century Woman's Question', in *Cosmopolis*, April 1898: 'The Women's Movement of the Nineteenth Century is in its ultimate essence *The Movement of a Vast Unemployed*'.

Nietzschean notion expressed early in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, that the function of women was maternity, that her role was to be the plaything of the warrior. It is well, however, to consider the rider Nietzsche added to this idea, in Part III:

Thus would I have man and woman: fit for war, the one; fit for maternity the other; *both, however, fit for dancing with head and legs.* [Italics mine] (p. 257)

Certainly, no thoroughgoing Nietzschean, as Heinz Krafft is presumed to be, who attended merely to the first part of this saying could have declared, as Krafft does, that the proper place for a man was down on his knees worshipping Louise. (Wasn't that exactly where Maurice wanted to be, and Schilsky did not?) According to the official doctrine, it should have been the other way round. Hope's misconceptions are founded partly on his failure to notice that Richardson's characters are wayward and contradictory—like Nietzsche—as unpredictable as human beings in real life. They will not fall into categories in order to serve an abstraction. As Madeleine points out in reply to Krafft's gibe that women always prefer talent to genius, it is difficult to decide what genius is:

A crack this way, and it's madness; that, and the world says genius. And some people have a peculiar gift for discovering it. Those who set themselves to it can find genius in a flea's jump. (pp. 499-500)

If one is to talk about 'pure Nietzscheanism' in the sense in which Hope uses the expression, one might cite Madeleine as an exponent of it when she advises Maurice:

If you want to get on in life, you must think more about yourself than you do. The battle is to the strong, you know, and the strong, within limits, are certainly the selfish . . . It's harder, I daresay, than it is to be a person of unlimited sympathies; it's harder to pass the maimed and crippled by, than to stop and weep over them, and feel their sufferings through yourself. But *you* have really something in you to occupy yourself with . . . (p. 149)

Who are the 'Nietzscheans' in this book?

What is most likely to have attracted Richardson in Nietzsche is his very ambiguity, the element of riddle in him, rather than any clear-cut dogma such as that which Hope singles out. It is the enigma in Nietzsche, 'the fluctuating, relative truth' that is most present in the

novel, as it is present in life itself. The same aspect is seized upon by Richard Strauss and translated into his *Zarathustra* music.

What Hope has to say about Nietzsche's aesthetics is no more satisfactory than his interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy of the Overman. The whole paragraph indeed in which he deals with Nietzsche's influence on musical circles in Leipzig in the 1890s is extremely confused, in particular when he refers to Nietzsche's later addiction to Bizet. It is true that *Carmen* is Louise's favourite opera, but there is nothing in the account of her preference, or in the description of the visit to the opera, which would associate her passion for *Carmen* with the 'Letter from Turin', in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, or with Nietzsche's demand for the 'mediterraneanisation' of music. The visit to the opera is an element in the poetic imagery of the novel and there is no sign *in the book* of Bizet's being the cult of 'the select few'; we do not know Schilsky's opinion of *Carmen*, or Krafft's, for instance.

There is no evidence that either Schilsky or Krafft was any more aware of Nietzsche's attacks on Wagner than were the other students who were still devotees of Wagner. Krafft is associated mainly with the *Tristan* music, and Schilsky with the Nietzsche of the *Zarathustra* period, as were Strauss and Mahler in the early nineties. Richardson uses the *Carmen* music, as she uses all the musical references in the book, as a commentary on the theme, as an element in building up the atmosphere of a scene. The plot of *Carmen*, as we have noted already, has some striking analogies with the Louise-Maurice-Schilsky situation. The story of the opera concerns the obsession of a man with a woman who is only temporarily attracted to him; the 'gay feelingless' music mimics the language of passion without any real emotion. It is when Louise accidentally touches Maurice during the toreador scene that he realises he cannot keep up his pretence of mere friendship any longer; Louise is repelled as much as attracted by the knowledge of his state of mind, even though her blood is stirred by *Carmen*.

Hope's whole discussion of *Carmen* is beside the point, and his next paragraph is equally unsatisfactory. It shows him attributing characteristics to each member of the Louise-Krafft-Schilsky trio which they simply do not share. They cannot for example be called 'great' simply by applying the adjective 'great' to them, as Hope does. They must be *shown* to be great, and this the author chooses not to do, as Hope admits

in the case of Schilsky, when he states towards the end of his article 'that we see him only from the point of view of his fellow-students'. Richardson is just as non-committal about Louise: to Krafft, she was a genius at love, to Madeleine she was a depraved woman, to Schilsky the source of physical (and pecuniary) satisfaction, to Maurice perfection and then torment: he had seen her, he admits at the end, only as he wished to see her. The same is true of the other three: they find in Louise what they themselves are looking for and the author endorses none of their views. Madeleine's words about the impossibility of knowing the 'real' Heinz Krafft, quoted in the previous chapter (p. 147), are sufficient warning against labelling any of the characters as geniuses, or 'free and servile spirits', as Hope does.

And when do we find them, as he claims in this paragraph, 'enjoying suffering in themselves and others'? Schilsky is not shown 'suffering' at all: his one ambition, as far as his actions are concerned, is to avoid any kind of commotion, or 'scene', as soon as it looks like becoming serious. Louise may be said to be indulging in the enjoyment of morbid grief after his disappearance, but she grasps at the opportunities of diversion or happiness offered her, and her chief anxiety during her affair with Maurice is that such happiness as they have shall last. She enjoys, perhaps as part of her sexual pleasure, the suffering inflicted on her by Schilsky, but only—obviously—if he is present. She is incapable of killing herself for love, or of a life-long mourning for an absent lover. To talk of Krafft enjoying his own suffering is even more question-begging. Hope's claim in this section that the novel is 'thoroughly imbued with some of Nietzsche's leading ideas'¹² is impossible to substantiate if one really looks at what the characters actually do and not at what they think they are doing, and Nietzsche's ideas and the use that is made of them require a much more searching examination than this article gives them. To praise Schilsky as 'the creative genius, the Dionysian artist par excellence' is a distortion of Nietzsche's views and shows no understanding of the *musical* artistic process. It is difficult to believe that Hope is committed to the view that musicians, or poets for that matter, compose in a state

¹² How little *Maurice Guest* is in fact imbued with Nietzsche's ideas can be seen by comparing it with D'Annunzio's *Il Fuoco*, which is saturated with them, through the evocation of Wagner's music-drama and of his aesthetic. See especially *The Flame of Life*, pp. 120-7.

of Bacchic frenzy; no one who had ever read an orchestral score could think so. As Strauss said of Wagner: 'The head that composed *Tristan* must have been as cold as marble.'¹³ One of the chief characteristics of Schilsky actually demonstrated in the little we see of him is precisely his coldness.

It is true that Nietzsche, probably borrowing a remark of Beethoven's, said Bacchus was the god of music, but that is not the same thing as saying that musicians are obliged to be drunk. Rolland, alluding to the idea in *Jean-Christophe*, says:

. . . in Melchior's case, the god was ungrateful to him; far from giving him the ideas that he lacked, he took away from him the few that he had. (p. 30)

Hope has conveniently forgotten Bach, Mozart, Handel, Beethoven and a host of musicians to whom the notion of Dionysian frenzy, especially as an excuse for licentiousness, would have seemed totally foreign. He has forgotten that Schilsky in relation to his music is calm, controlled and quite without nerves, like Strauss himself.

In his reconsideration in 1886 of his early *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, Nietzsche declared that his justification of the world could only be an aesthetic one and argued again that tragedy was a reconciliation of being and becoming, a *fusion* of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. By Apollonian he meant 'beautiful appearances, as deliverance from becoming'; by Dionysian he meant 'strenuous becoming from the self-conscious'. The Dionysian alone was 'an ecstasy, convulsion, intoxication' unless it was accompanied by the desire for 'a tragic insight and perspective in regard to life'. Later, certainly, he was to call 'being' a fiction invented by those who 'suffer from becoming', and though in *The Twilight of the Idols* (1889) he seems to be moving to an affirmation of becoming as a definition of life, it is in no way clear that he is prescribing for art; the Dionysian is a 'bridge', not a goal:

The affirmation of life, even in its most unfamiliar and most severe problems, the will to live, enjoying its own inexhaustibility in the *sacrifice* of its highest types,—that is what I call the Dionysian, that is what I divined as the bridge to a psychology of the *tragic* poet . . . to realise in fact, the eternal delight of becoming, that delight which even involves in itself the *joy of annihilating*. (p. 231)

¹³ Quoted in Ernst Krause, *Richard Strauss*.

This is a view which has intoxicated many artists including Goethe, Dostoyevsky, Rilke and Hope. Dostoyevsky saw most clearly perhaps at what cost it must be held. The phrase 'sacrifice of its highest types' is an odd one for a thinker reputed to be committed to a doctrine of the survival of the fittest, but more interesting is the problem whether any art at all, even music, is possible in a purely Dionysian scheme. If being is a fiction, what becomes in particular of the plastic arts, like painting and sculpture and architecture? What has become of Nietzsche's own definition of art as something 'concerned with forms, tones, words, the whole Olympus of appearances'? To see Krafft, or Schilsky, as Hope does, as mouthpieces for Nietzsche, is to see a very small part for the whole.

More serious even than this over-simplified version of a highly complex writer is Hope's blanket condemnation of Maurice:

Maurice's failure as an artist is total and absolute and it is shown to depend on more than mediocrity of talent. It depends also on his solid virtues . . . the lack of morbidity, the lack of power to transcend the conventions.

One would have thought that the book 'shows' exactly the opposite. The streak of morbidity comes out at the beginning of the novel in Maurice's acutely painful sense of himself as an outsider, aspiring after he knows not what: he already has the 'seed of death in him'. He is from the beginning a prey to a hopeless yearning for the impossible, crystallised in the nightmare at the end of the first chapter, long before he meets Louise. If Hope does not recognise this strain in Maurice, Heinz Krafft does, in the discussion about death in Chapter XII. He also recognises the basic dualism of flesh and spirit present in Maurice's thinking, which is characteristic of German Romantic idealism. After Maurice has stammered out in his lame German the notion that it does not matter what becomes of the shell of the body once the spirit has left it, Heinz says the words already quoted in Chapter 3:

You are like someone I once knew. He was a great musician. I saw him die; he died by inches; it lasted for months; he could neither die nor live. (*M.G.*, p. 161)

As for the solid virtues, the capacity for devotion to work is surely a solid virtue. 'Genius is industry' according to Schopenhauer. Schilsky has this solid virtue at least, to demonstrate his genius, if few others; Maurice has not, unless he has someone to work *for*. Schilsky's concentration on

work is toned down in the final version of the novel; and the effect of this alteration, as we have seen, is to divert interest from his genius, instead of emphasising it. If Schilsky's petty thievery and gratuitous, deliberate brutality to women illustrate his moral grandeur in contrast to Maurice's 'moral limitations', it must be shown very carefully how they contribute to the richness of his artistic productions. This could conceivably have been done, but Richardson has not chosen to do it. As we have seen, she cuts out a passage dealing with the relationship between his moral laxity (according to the conventional view) and his art. Schilsky's unscrupulousness about money and his treatment of women have in fact nothing 'heroic' about them at all, as Hope seems to imply. He was not starving in a garret when he pinched Madeleine's money; and to ignore a woman when one is absorbed in creation is a totally different thing from boasting about one's power over her at a drunken stag-party. A remark of Ernest Newman's—especially the last part of it—about Strauss's predilection for shocking the bourgeois might be applied with equal force to Schilsky:

There is something, excessive, *déreglé* in his nature—and one is bound to say, something small, something of the petty passion for flouting the Philistine that is the mark of a mind not so free from the limitations of the Philistine as it imagines itself to be.¹⁴

As for Maurice's inability 'to transcend the conventions', early in the book he is shown defending Louise's lack of convention as courage (p. 57). He shows no hesitation about becoming Louise's lover without the Church's blessing when he gets the opportunity. Nor does he try to disguise his relations with her, as the Rochlitz idyll demonstrates clearly enough. What discretion he does show, while he is still in control of himself, is on her account, not his. Schilsky himself is not devoid of conventional circumspection; it can be seen in the episode in which Louise visits his room. His motives for it are perhaps less disinterested than Maurice's. He is, at the time, hoping to get more money out of Frau Schaeferle. And Schilsky, like any good bourgeois, *marries* Louise, in spite of Krafft's objections.

Hope next goes on to argue that the trouble with both Madeleine and Maurice is that they are *English*. The cogency of this argument has

¹⁴ Ernest Newman, *Richard Strauss*. Strauss himself referred to Germany as 'the land of the Philistines'.

already been challenged during the discussion about Nietzsche. In addition, one of the comments constantly made in the novel by Dove, by Madeleine, and by Krafft himself is that Maurice is emphatically *not* a typical Englishman. Hope's case against Maurice is partly supported by the omission of that portion of a quotation which would refute it. He breaks off the passage about genius and bunglers, the aesthetic and the anti-aesthetic too soon. Here is the rest of it; it is worth quoting once more:

'... There are bunglers enough.—But I'll tell you this,' he rose on his elbow again and spoke more warmly. 'Since I've seen what our friend is capable of; how he has allowed himself to be absorbed; since, in short, he has behaved in such a *highly un-British way*—well, since then, I have some hope of him. He seems open to impression.—And impressions are the only things that matter to the artist. [Italics mine] (p. 498)

As for Maurice's anti-aestheticism, another of Richardson's excisions is of interest here. In the angry scene where Maurice talks of art to Schwarz, after his concert, Schwarz's remark: 'what have *you* to do with art?' is crossed out. If Maurice's total incapacity as an artist was to be stressed, it should have been left in.

But the most important refutation of Hope's view is Maurice's analysis of his absorption in Louise near the end of the book while he is watching her asleep. This shows his feeling to be exactly of the same kind as Heinz Krafft's, in his eulogy of Louise to Madeleine. That is, the grounds for Maurice's feeling are purely aesthetic. He is tied to her, not for her sterling character, or 'her genius for loving', but because of the curve of her eyelid, the particular line of the setting of her eyes, or, as he says earlier, because of her eyes and her hands. And Krafft does *not* say, as Hope claims, that Maurice has nothing of the artist in him. What he actually says is that the experience he is going through may yet be his salvation as an artist. When he sees that this is not to be, that Maurice is lost to art because he regards his longing for Louise as more important than art, it is Krafft who guides him to his next step, and it is not towards a bourgeois marriage.

Hope's next claim is that Maurice's relations with Louise show him as always servile: Krafft calls his attitude 'a capacity for absorption'. Hope says nothing about Louise's servility towards Schilsky and consequently

does not see where the real difficulty lies in the relationship between Louise and Maurice. Krafft understands very well the type of man Louise needs, as his veiled remark about the whip and his own curious relations with Avery Hill suggest. He knows, of course, because his needs are similar to Louise's. Maurice's erotic nature does not fit into Nietzschean-Freudian stereotypes: aggressive male-submissive female, plus their homosexual equivalents. He has a capacity for absorption, which is commonly called feminine, but that does not necessarily mean that there is anything weak about him, or that he is basically homosexual. He is a man for whom human relationships are important, he is a strongly possessive, monogamous type, with an unconquerable idealism, who has the bad luck to fall in love with a woman who is also basically monogamous and idealistic, in spite of her apparent promiscuity. Unfortunately for him, she is committed elsewhere. There is neither weakness on one side nor 'depravity' or 'genius' on the other. In such a situation, there could be no question of 'elevation by passion or suffering' for either party. Louise's shadow-passion for Maurice is the reverse of elevating, but there is little evidence to show that her passion for Schilsky 'elevates' her, either. It fulfils a need in her, if that can be said to be elevating; she comes to understand where she went wrong with him, but what is 'elevating' about all this needs more demonstration: one might contrast Louise's suffering after her desertion by Schilsky with the effect on Beethoven of his frustrated passion for Theresa von Brunswick. Hope's notion that Louise is 'triumphant' at the end, also needs more evidence. The note of triumph is conspicuously missing in the brief references made to Louise herself. To compare her as Hope does with Dostoyevsky suffering the horrors of the Siberian prison, or Cervantes drudging as a corn-chandler is absurd. She makes absolutely no effort to cope with her suffering on her own, as Beethoven did, but wallows in it, until some sort of rescue comes from outside. She was of course wealthy enough to afford the luxury of morbid grief. Over-idealisation of Louise upsets the balance of the book just as much as does the vilification of her as a *femme fatale*. She is no more a 'heroic' character in the grand sense than Maurice, but simply luckier. The question: 'What would Louise have made of her life if Schilsky had not come back?' is not irrelevant. Nietzsche's 'voluntary death' is beyond her, as absorption in music is beyond her.

Hope winds up his attack on Maurice by falling back on the Aristote-

lian view of tragedy: 'Maurice belongs to the lower sorts of men'. It is curious that Maurice, one of the few characters in the book who exhibit no taint of commercialism, who is ready to jeopardise his whole career for the sake of a consuming passion, should be dismissed in this way, to say nothing of the ease with which Hope begs the question what constitutes the lowest and highest sorts of men. Richardson's reticence on the point is a sign of her wisdom. Hope admits that it is impossible to tell whether Richardson endorses the Nietzschean views that 'Krafft expresses'. (As we have seen, Hope's version of Nietzsche is put more nakedly by Madeleine.) But he inclines to the view that 'she has limited her pictures of genius to those types of people who meet Nietzsche's views exactly'. Without again going into the question-begging aspect of this statement, we must ask what her pictures of genius amount to. As a picture of genius, Schilsky is totally unsatisfactory, partly because he is hardly *in* the book, partly because he is treated ironically, and partly because the 'creative' side of him has been deliberately muted. The simple fact that Richardson's pictures of people who are *not* geniuses are far more alive, detailed and convincing than her pictures of geniuses would in itself seem to suggest that her interests lie with the less gifted. Hope notes the difficulties Richardson is involved in with regard to Schilsky: that we have to take musical genius on trust, since 'we cannot hear the music', and that we see him mainly through the eyes of his fellow-students, who could have been mistaken about his capacity. Instead of becoming suspicious therefore about the validity of his interpretation and looking at the overwhelming weight of evidence against it, he lets the case rest. It is not true of course that musical genius cannot be conveyed in a novel: both Thomas Mann and Romain Rolland have done it, magnificently, by deliberate intention. So did E. T. A. Hoffmann, much earlier. Hope's swift transition of attention to *The Young Cosima* in order to make the point that here is a situation where Richardson can allow genius to be taken for granted, simply diverts criticism from the weaknesses in the previous argument. It also involves him in the unwarrantable assumption that Richardson had an unqualified admiration for Wagner's genius. Here is what she wrote of it in 1895 in an article entitled 'Music Study in Leipzig':¹⁵

The English or American student displays a marked lack of interest

¹⁵ See *Southerly*, No. 1, 1963, p. 38.

in the masterpieces of Glück, Mozart and Weber. Wagner alone prevails, and is today, as ever, the prey of the uncultured, who rave of him with effusive ignorance.

Hope's interpretation of *The Young Cosima* should be read in the light of Richardson's remark to Nettie Palmer about 'relationships' quoted above. Moreover it is simply not true, as he claims, that Cosima grows 'through suffering and experience to the point where, from the Nietzschean point of view, she realises her destiny as a woman'. She is shown *near the beginning of the book* fully conscious of her 'Nietzschean destiny' looking round for someone through whom she can fulfil it. She pitches on Bülow, who cannot satisfy her, then on Wagner, who can.

Hope's account of the Wagner of the later novel is as distorted as his account of Cosima. Alongside the quotation he gives in which Wagner speaks of art as an over-riding madness, it is necessary to place the passage in which Wagner is shown trying to urge Cosima to leave 'all for love', to flee with him to an attic in Paris. It is Cosima who draws his mind back to *The Mastersingers*. In fact, what Richardson is searching for in this book is an explanation of Cosima's desertion of Bülow and of her father. She is not writing a treatise on creative genius. To see either of these books, especially *Maurice Guest*, in terms of these arid aesthetic propositions is to miss their enormous psychological complexity. It is also to miss the real function of the 'music' in the novel.

There is strong reason for believing that Hope's view of *Maurice Guest* is a writer's view, not a reader's. Like Yeats and Rilke, he is a poet who is fond of writing poems about being a poet, or poems about writing poems; in prose as well he has given much attention to such questions as 'the problem of the artist'—whatever that may be. It may not be altogether frivolous to suggest that the real problem of the artist is how to have enough time for his art and get enough to eat as well. That problem solved—as it was for Richardson—the rest is a more or less strenuous kind of play. As Maillol said: 'Je ne travaille jamais, je m'amuse'. However that may be, the assumption that readers in general are interested in 'the problem of the artist' is debatable. As a theme for art, the artist contemplating the artist tends to become tedious. It is certainly not at all evident, as I have suggested in the Introduction, that Richardson wrote about artists, or would-be artists, because she was interested in the problem of the artist, nor is it clear that she regarded the artist as an

unfortunate being, as Hope, following Baudelaire and Rilke, seems to do. Her *sympathies* and her interests as far as they can be discerned are with the talented. Genuine geniuses can take care of themselves.

Personal preoccupations and the Nietzschean allusions in *Maurice Guest* have led Hope and like-minded critics astray. In addition, there is unfortunately a general tendency in Australia to imagine that Nietzsche was the only influential nineteenth-century German philosopher. But the philosophy of Hegel had as much influence on late Romantic writers as that of Nietzsche and his traces are, as we have seen, as strongly present in Richardson's work as Nietzsche's. So is the influence of Schopenhauer, whose ideas Wagner had not completely discarded by the time he wrote *Tristan*, though he was moving away from them.¹⁶ References to Schopenhauer in the final version of the novel are toned down. None of these allusions, however, constitutes a thesis, a system of belief. They are part of the texture, not conclusions to an argument, as Hope seems to think.

II

It remains now to try to clarify exactly what roles Nietzsche and Wagner are playing in *Maurice Guest*, to elucidate in short the real meaning of the term 'musical novel'.

We are first introduced to Nietzsche obliquely in a context which is musical and literary, rather than philosophical, while the two principal 'musical' scenes in the novel are concerned, one with an opera of Wagner's first performed at a time when Nietzsche had not yet denounced him, the other with a symphonic poem based freely on a work of Nietzsche's and influenced by the music of Wagner. Both these scenes, although interesting from a musical point of view, are primarily important as vehicles for the theme of passion.

If the clues given so explicitly by Richardson on page 159 had been followed, they would have provided a far more reliable route to an

¹⁶ Wagner never lost his admiration for Schopenhauer, however, if we accept as true a remark he is said to have made about Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882) not long before his own death, to the effect that anything good in the book was Schopenhauer's. See Eckart's *Cosima Wagner*, Vol. I, p. 998. See also pp. 718-19 for discussion of affinities between Wagner and Schopenhauer.

understanding of the novel than vague generalisations about Nietzsche's philosophy of power. It is on this page that he is first mentioned directly by name. Krafft is instructing Maurice (as Robertson no doubt had instructed Richardson):

Names jostled one another on his tongue: he passed from Beethoven and Chopin to Berlioz and Wagner, to Liszt and Richard Strauss—and his words were to Maurice like the unrolling of a great scroll. In the same breath, he was with Nietzsche, and Apollonic and Dionysian; and from here he went on to Richard Dehmel, to *Anatol*, and the gentle 'Loris' of the early verses; to Max Klinger, and the propriety of coloured sculpture; to *Papa Hamlet* and the future of the *Lied*. Maurice, listening intently, had fleeting glimpses into a land of which he knew nothing.

If it is kept in mind that Richardson began to write her novel in Munich, and that its setting is Leipzig, the references to Wagner, Nietzsche, and Strauss will not seem surprising. Wagner was born in Leipzig, Nietzsche took his doctorate at the University there, Strauss, the inheritor of Wagner's mantle, was born in Munich, and at one time conducted the *Lisztverein* in Leipzig. But even apart from the natural curiosity of a young Australian about the great names with which the town she had come to live in were associated, there is a clear artistic motive for the choice of names in the paragraph above. They are not tossed off at random, in spite of the word 'jostled'. Wagner drew his first inspiration from Beethoven; Berlioz and Liszt were the fathers of 'programme-music' in the Straussian sense; Berlioz's use of the *idée fixe*, mentioned earlier by Richardson, foreshadowed Wagner's use of what came to be known as *leitmotiv* (he himself called it *Grund-thema*), as did Liszt's 'metamorphosis of themes'; and all these men knew one another, Liszt and Wagner very intimately. Chopin seems an odd man out in this company (though Krafft is a Chopin specialist), until it is remembered that he too was a friend of Liszt and of the operatic composer Bellini; unlike the other musicians mentioned, Chopin had no interest in the relationships between literature and music, but he would no doubt have known Liszt's tone-poems based on *The Divine Comedy* and *Faust*; he would have known about the use of the human voice in symphonic forms from Beethoven onwards, and he certainly learnt from Bellini how to make the

piano 'sing'; the lyric, epic, and dramatic qualities of his music have been frequently mentioned. Nietzsche himself, of course, wrote much about the propriety of setting poems to music—or the impropriety!

Coincidences of time as well as place link Wagner, Nietzsche, and Strauss together. Nietzsche was working on *Also Sprach Zarathustra* while Wagner was dying in Venice; Strauss was born almost exactly a year before the world première of *Tristan*, his favourite opera: he conducted it at Dresden on the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death, he quotes from it frequently in his own work, and it was the last music in his mind before he died. He was Musikdirektor in Munich from 1883 to 1889, and from then until 1894 in Weimar, during which period he was obsessed with Wagner's music.¹⁷ He returned to Munich in 1894, the same year in which Richardson first went there: and there he completed his tone-poem *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in 1896. Strauss was born six years before Richardson herself and died three years afterwards; he was regarded as Wagner's musical 'heir' by both Cosima Wagner and Hans von Bülow, so that apart from the appeal his own music had for her, Richardson had other reasons to be interested in him.

Dehmel was a gifted young poet and dramatist, many of whose poems were set to music by Strauss. His play *Der Mitmensch* (1895) and his poems *Weib und Welt* (1896) were no doubt known to Richardson.

Anatol is a play by Schnitzler, published in 1892. Schnitzler, himself a doctor, was the son of a Viennese doctor, who satirised the frivolous society of his home-town. 'Loris' was the pen-name of the young Hofmannsthal, who was later to collaborate with Strauss for twenty years as a librettist for his operas; Max Klinger was an eccentric artist, born near Leipzig, who is remembered for his statue of Beethoven. *Papa Hamlet* was a collection of short stories written jointly by Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf in 1889, probably the first expression of German impressionistic naturalism, from which Richardson certainly learned a great deal; '. . . the future of the *Lied*' brings us back full circle to Beethoven, for whom song was a vexing problem.

In a curious little novel, written in Paris in 1839-40, entitled *A Pil-*

¹⁷ It is also interesting to note that he conducted *Tristan* at Weimar only forty-odd miles away from Leipzig on 17 January 1892, a couple of months before Ethel Richardson's *Hauptprüfung*.

grimage to Beethoven, Wagner, thinly disguised as a struggling musician, discusses music-drama with the composer of *Fidelio* and the Choral Symphony. The main problem is the function of the human voice in relation to orchestration. Beethoven is imagined as saying that instruments represent 'the primal media of the tones of creation and nature' while 'the human voice is the representation of the human heart and its sequestered individual feeling'. Beethoven's supposed difficulty in finding the right words for the final movement of his choral symphony is touched on; Wagner no doubt is thinking of himself as that artistic Messiah prophesied by Mozart who would combine the poet and the composer in one person. The whole novel amounts to an imaginary invocation of Beethoven's blessing on the new music-drama, for which Wagner was trying to find a rationale: that total art whose ends all the other arts, poetry, music, painting, and mime were to serve. Liszt's endorsement of Wagner's views is well known, as is Nietzsche's final rejection of them, and the contribution of Liszt and Berlioz to Wagner's development of dramatic 'motives' has already been mentioned. None of these men invented the concept, but Wagner was the first to make systematic and sustained use of it to enrich and deepen the dramatic significance of his work: he discovered the secret of characterisation in depth in music. All this wealth of musico-dramatic thinking was inherited and carried on into the twentieth century by Strauss. Besides extending the Wagnerian tradition, Strauss further developed the 'programme-music' of Liszt and Berlioz: the symphonic 'tone-poem' which suggests the emotions, spiritual conflicts, characters and actions embodied in poetry, or sometimes painting. In Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* there is a reverse effect—the poem was written after the music, in accordance with the mood it suggested.

From this discussion it is evident that the connection between music and literature during the latter part of the nineteenth century in Europe was particularly close, and it would be natural to look in a novel composed under these influences for the same kinds of connection. If Strauss can compose a tone-poem which suggests the life of an unfortunate musician, or the destruction of a satiated lover, then a novelist may compose a novel on similar themes, with the like intention of stirring intense feeling. The notion of mimesis, of drama, is certainly a unifying element in the passage quoted, and it is in fact an important concept controlling the novel as a whole.

Nietzsche wrote his first version of *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* under the direct stimulus of his association with Wagner and of Wagner's *Tristan*. In *Maurice Guest* Beethoven, Wagner, Bizet, Verdi, and Strauss, all composers of music-drama, in turn provide music for crucial events in the action. Schilsky's symphonic poem *Zarathustra* has close atmospheric analogies with Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and Strauss, like Wagner, was passionately addicted to the art of the theatre. It is not for nothing that Louise is modelled on Eleonora Duse, the actress who found it very difficult to distinguish between mimesis and actuality.

Nietzsche towards the end of his curious love-hate relationship with Wagner called him 'the most enthusiastic mimomaniac perhaps who ever existed even as a musician', and the recent editors of a selection of Wagner's writings express the view that 'the will-to-power in him was the need to subvert the world to his art'.¹⁸

To understand properly the concepts underlying the work of the group of artists in whom Krafft is interested, particularly the concepts shared by Wagner and Nietzsche, it is necessary to trace their origin in the work of Friedrich Schlegel, who in turn like many other German writers, including Goethe, was drawing on a long tradition of Germanic theosophy. For Schlegel 'the spirit of love in its broadest sense was the fuel that ran the Universe and was piped into each human breast'. Directly related to this idea is Schopenhauer's concept of 'a universal will, basically erotic in nature, that is ceaselessly and senselessly spawning and destroying life'. Schopenhauer attributed all men's ills to this will-to-live and advocated non-co-operation with it. Instead he advised man to make it the object of intellectual contemplation!

Wagner, in the 1850s, fell under the spell of Schopenhauer, possibly in a mood of melancholy induced by an unhappy love affair. In a letter to Franz Liszt in December 1854, he wrote that Schopenhauer's chief idea of the final negation of all life:

shows the only salvation possible. To me of course, the thought was not new . . . I have at last found a quietus that in wakeful nights helps me to sleep. This is the genuine, ardent longing for death, for absolute

¹⁸ A. Goldman and E. Sprinchorn (eds.), *Wagner on Music and Drama* (trans. A. A. Ellis, London, 1970); see p. 32.

unconsciousness, total non-existence. Freedom from all dreams is our only final salvation.

It should be noted in passing that Schopenhauer's ideas, at least as they appear in Wagner's letter are based on a crucial misunderstanding of the Eastern concept of Nirvana. Certainly in his music Wagner did not leave Schopenhauer's thought exactly where he found it: in a sense he stood it on its head. *Tristan und Isolde*, as far as the music is concerned, and leaving the libretto aside, is not a withdrawal from desire, or will, but 'a rush to embrace it'. The opera is based on a profound dualism of life and death, and so on an attempt to equate them. Brangäne's substitution of the love-potion for the death-potion in the first act, though it brings the lovers life more abundantly, also brings them indirectly the physical death which Brangäne wished to protect them from, while at the same time it asserts that perfect love is possible only in death. Wagner's thinking on this subject is made clear enough in the music, and it is not utterly impossible to suggest it somewhat clumsily in words. Death is in fact the price man pays for life, that is to say for the emergence into sentience, into consciousness of feeling, out of the primordial unity, out of non-being. If man did not come into existence, he could not die; if he wishes not to die, he must not be born. In Wagner's logic, the corollary of the proposition is that feeling is all we can know; the only certainty of truth, that is to say, *is* passion, as we become conscious of it for the brief interlude between birth and death, during our strange irruption out of non-being. *Tristan und Isolde* is passion; it is the idea made flesh, in musical form; it is not a story *about* passion, but passion itself. This dualism of being and not-being, this saying of *yea* to death, is an aspect of Wagner's thinking that Nietzsche never discarded, no matter how much he seems to reject Wagner's influence in his later railings against him, as the statement from *The Twilight of the Idols* makes clear: 'to realise in fact the eternal delight of becoming, that delight which even involves in itself the joy of annihilating . . .'. There is evidence to suggest that Nietzsche's quarrel with Wagner was less a philosophical one than a personal one: Wagner's capitulation to Cosima von Bülow, to woman, troubled him more than the seeming shift of his views from what Nietzsche felt was a positive to a negative concept of suffering. His gibes in *The Case of Wagner* in 1888, that Wagner wants 'wandering Jews' (i.e. artists) 'to settle down',

that adoring women are their ruin, that feminine love is a refined form of parasitism, strongly suggest sexual jealousy rather than reasoned disagreement. The same tone is markedly present in Heinz Krafft's remarks in Schilsky's 'toilet scene', though Krafft is no simple surrogate for Nietzsche—he is far too 'Wagnerian'. Like Wagner, he supports anti-Semitism, which Nietzsche deplored in Wagner, without fully understanding what he was saying. Like Wagner, he worships the *ewige Frau*, as he indicates to Madeleine in the scene in which he praises the beauty of Louise. He resists Avery Hill and Madeleine because they are imperfectly feminine. 'What is love itself but the eternal feminine?' Wagner had asked in a letter to Röckel in 1854, and again:

Women are our consolation, for every woman comes into the world as a human being, while every man is born a Philistine and it is a long time before he achieves humanity, if he ever does.

The last sentence, quoted with approval by Richard Strauss, would hardly have met with Nietzsche's assent; and it is a definition of Philistine which Hope has missed. In *Maurice Guest* it is Madeleine from the outset who expresses most clearly Nietzsche's view of the *ewige Frau* type; Krafft's attitude to the 'whip' is highly ambiguous. Madeleine pronounces judgment on the consequences for Maurice of Ephie's infatuation with Schilsky in conventional Nietzschean terms, in much the same terms as she had first used to warn Maurice how to treat Louise:

[women] only look down on you for letting them have their own way. Kindness and complaisance don't move them. A well-developed biceps and a cruel mouth—that's what they want, and that's all! (p. 264)

The comment on Ephie is another ironical recommendation to Maurice which he unfortunately does not adopt.

It should be more than obvious by now that simple divisions into Nietzscheans and non-Nietzscheans will not explain this novel; it is Nietzsche himself who should have the last word on the subject:

I mistrust all systematisers and avoid them. The will to system is a lack of rectitude.¹⁹

Maurice Guest and the novels which follow it show the same distrust of systematisers. They are as ambiguous as *Tristan* and as the music of Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, as baffling in their attitude to love

¹⁹ From *Apothegms and Darts* (1888), No. 26.

and art as the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, with whom Krafft has something in common. In the work of all of these artists can be traced the history of the effort to reject Schopenhauer.

We must now consider more closely the purely theatrical links between Nietzsche, Wagner and Richard Strauss, which are the consequences of their concept of music and poetry. The idea of the 'hero' which is central to Wagner's dramatic thinking was inherited from Beethoven and considerably transformed. Strauss was to transform it still further. Beethoven was himself the most heroic figure in music, in the Sophoclean sense, of all time: what greater example of tragic irony exists than a musician of supreme genius who is deaf? Beethoven's music is a long struggle towards joy in defiance of that calamity. His work, as Rolland said, 'is the triumph of the vanquished hero'. Where there is a hero, again in Rolland's words, there will be drama, and there is drama of the heroic kind in Nietzsche's work. Much even of his philosophical writing reads like a dramatic monologue, or a dialogue with the self. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* has a central heroic character, a 'god', a supporting 'cast', scenes, and an action leading progressively to a dénouement. There is also music in it, in the symphonic rather than the operatic sense. Nietzsche himself spoke of *Zarathustra* to his close friend Peter Gast (Guest!) in 1883 as 'almost belonging among the symphonies'. Wagner's own operas are far more symphonic than dramatic in the theatrical sense and Nietzsche's prose-poem is certainly as near Wagnerian music-drama as it is possible for words to be. The fourth part, in particular towards the end, is an incredible weaving of themes and motives into a verbal pattern before Zarathustra's triumphal dance from the darkness of the cave. Its joyful affirmation of the will to work is a clear link with the courageous resolution of Beethoven. Zarathustra asks:

My suffering and my fellow-suffering—what matter about them! Do

I then strive after *happiness*?

I strive after my *work*! (p. 402)

Also Sprach Zarathustra, written out of an abyss of loneliness, is Nietzsche's own Ode to Joy, his Choral Symphony.²⁰ That it lacks Beethoven's tonic inspiration, that its ethic is ambiguous is a measure of the moral distance between them.

²⁰ Nietzsche renounced a promising musical career to devote himself to philology.

With Wagner, the concept of the hero again varies in accordance with the personality of the creator. Wagner was a far less self-sufficient character than Beethoven. He found it difficult to compose unless he was physically comfortable and there was a strong streak of the parasite in him, as there was also in Rilke. Beethoven struggled not only against deafness, solitude and ill-health, but also against continual poverty. Wagner, no matter what temporary hardships he had to put up with, always managed to fall on his feet. It is not surprising then that the concept of hero which emerges from his work, especially in the *Ring* cycle, is of one who is in some sense or other dependent on outside aid, on magic, the gods or the love of a 'pure woman'. It was apparently this turning to salvation from outside which disgusted Nietzsche, especially when it assumed what he understood to be Christian guise.

Strauss's approach to the hero takes us towards the twentieth century, when the hero is giving way to the anti-hero. He is a bridge perhaps between two ages. His heart is with the old traditional hero confronting his destiny with his bare hands; his head knows that the time for that is past: the Enemy has superior armaments. The heroes of his tone-poems and operas therefore tend to lack tragic grandeur: their destiny has a question-mark attached to it. To quote Rolland once more: the work of Strauss is 'the defeat of the conquering hero . . . All that display of human will in order to end in renouncement, in "I don't want it any more!"'²¹

Strauss's uncertainty is probably due to the fact that he perceived the danger in abandoning the admiration of heroes: that it could lead to the disappearance of the concept of heroism itself. He seems certainly to have perceived, as Ibsen did, the peril of dispensing with illusion, and he leans to Wagner's view that there is a truth of illusion which is truer than fact. The words from his *Capriccio* quoted at the head of this chapter illustrate the point. At the same time, like Nietzsche, he distrusts doctrines which divert attention from the visible world, the world of phenomena. He would have agreed with him that the Greeks were superficial out of profundity. Strauss's attitude to the hero, his conflicting attitudes to illusion and reality, his acceptance of the conflict, have a marked affinity with Richardson's own thinking, though they are possibly less profound than hers.

²¹ Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

What Strauss preserves most markedly in his setting of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is its riddling nature.²² He makes no attempt to follow the order of ideas in the poem, but recreates from it a musical order with an intellectual content which is his own rather than Nietzsche's. For Strauss, as for Richardson and Patrick White, there are two stubborn basic facts which interest them most deeply, two equal bedrock mysteries: the fact or mystery of physical life, of Nature, and the fact or mystery of the human spirit. For Strauss their relationship remains an enigma which he can calmly accept. Richardson was to find her own solution in the end, in her particular version of Spiritualism; White, in his novels at least, seems to grow more, not less perplexed, and does not bear perplexity well.

Strauss's symphonic poem has a prologue 'Sunrise', a section which in Nietzsche's 'prose-symphony' occurs much later; the music ends not with Zarathustra's triumphant emergence into the light and his invocation to the great noon-tide, but with a sombre reminder of the basic riddle of the universe: the enigma of the relationship between the fact of flesh and the fact of spirit. It may be that Strauss was thinking of one of Nietzsche's *Dionysus-Dithyrambs*, written as afterthoughts to *Zarathustra* in 1888, perhaps that entitled *Between Birds of Prey*:

Now—

Between two nothings

Huddled up,

A question mark,

A weary riddle,

A riddle for vultures . . .

They will 'solve' thee,

They hunger for thy 'solution'

They flutter already about their 'riddle',

About thee, the doomed one!

O Zarathustra,

Self-knower!

Self-hangman! (p. 181)

²² According to Rolland's diary, 9 March 1900: 'In his mind he really did want to express right up to the end of the symphony the hero's inability to satisfy himself either with religion, science or humour when confronted with the enigma of nature'.

The tone of the music, however, is less tragic than that of this late poem; more a simple inexorable statement of the central and abiding mystery behind man's striving consciousness; there is none of the Sophoclean warning of the destructiveness of self-knowing, or of the futility of 'explanations'. Strauss's translation of the enigma into musical terms is masterly: the ground of the work is the great chord in C major, C-G-C; the prologue begins in C major, the key representing Nature, brute fact; the Finale ends in two different keys, aspiring treble notes high up in B major, with the original C major softly and insistently sounding below. Yet the tonic notes B and C of the two keys are of course side by side, only a semitone apart. Richardson no doubt would have seen the point.

It is obvious that she is at some risk in introducing into a novel a symphonic poem called *Zarathustra* during the period when a symphonic poem with much the same title, having the same origin, was in actual fact becoming well known all over Europe. Strauss's composition was first performed late in the year before Richardson began in earnest upon her book; by the time she had finished it, Newman, looking back on Strauss's tone-poem in 1908, was referring to it as 'the most revolutionary work of our generation'.

The scene in which Schilsky plays the piano-version of his *Zarathustra* is one of the most skilful in the novel. Schilsky however is the emotional pivot of it rather than the musical. He is the unconscious target of Krafft's perverse fit of jealousy and of Maurice's morbid curiosity born of his obsession with Louise; all Maurice hears of his music is the part which bears upon his own emotion, and the erotic atmosphere is heightened by the flutter of adoring women in the student audience. Before Schilsky comes in, there is a particularly subtle touch, when Krafft satirises himself in a wild musical travesty of a tone-poem based on a parody of the poetry of Lenau. This echoes the mood of the song Madeleine had asked Maurice to play for her earlier, the song in which occurs the line, *Liebles und ohne Gott auf einer Haide*, a prophetic glimpse of Maurice's distant fate. The line occurs in Lenau's poem *Einsamkeit* and is therefore an element contributing to the Outsider theme. Krafft's cry: *Das Ich spricht!* (the Ego speaks!), before he begins to play, is a gibe at Nietzsche, Schilsky, and himself.

The music which Richardson gives to Schilsky preserves the mood and

colouring of Strauss's music while disguising it sufficiently to prevent identification. *Werdegang* ('destined development'), *Seiltänzer* (Rope-dancers), *Schwermut* (Melancholy), *Taranteln* (Tarantulas) are certainly Nietzschean themes, but they are not those chosen by Strauss and named in his score. *Das Trunkene Lied* in Strauss's music is not sung (though it is interesting to note that his contemporary, Mahler, gave it to a contralto in his Third Symphony completed in 1896). Strauss, however, preserves the tolling of the bell that punctuates one of the versions of the poem: Nietzsche repeats the poem more than once with variations; and Strauss uses the variation *Nachtwandlerlied* in his score. Though the key-signatures are different in the novel, the feeling of the music is preserved in a passage which a distinguished Australian violinist and conductor has described as

pure, beautiful writing, with no straining for effect. Words such as a conductor might use if he wished to direct his orchestra how to convey the inner meaning of Strauss's music. Phrases such as 'the violas reiterated it and dyed it purple; voice and violins sang it together; the high little flutes carried it up and beyond, out of reach to a half close . . . almost a dance-rhythm and seemed to be a small frail pleading for something not rightly understood,' catch the mood exactly.²³

The description of Schilsky's composition strongly stresses the difficulty of the music, its sheer unplayability, a complaint often levelled at Strauss's music in early days, notably by his admirer Bülow. Strauss's music, unlike Schilsky's, does not 'crash to a close', but there is a tremendous volume of sound in the earlier part of the 'O Mensch! Gieb Acht' section, before it dies away into the enigmatic ending. There is, in short, enough to suggest Strauss in the account of Schilsky's *Zarathustra*, without identifying the music too closely. Schilsky is, to sum up, a vehicle for Strauss's ideas rather than Nietzsche's, or for Nietzsche's only in so far as Strauss understood them.

Other evidence to connect the two musicians is available from several sources. The descriptions given by various writers from Ernest Newman onwards all fit in essentials the description of Schilsky given in *Maurice Guest*, apart from his nationality and his red hair. Schilsky is given Polish

²³ Ernest Llewellyn, Director of the Canberra School of Music, in a conversation.

origin, and Busoni's red hair, while Strauss's thick Bavarian dialect is replaced by a lisp. All the main accounts of Strauss emphasise his tallness, his 'lankiness', the indolence of his posture, his energy, his high spirits. The same details occur in descriptions of Schilsky. Strauss's extremely round head and high forehead on which the hair grew far back like a frizzy halo or aureole are always mentioned. The same characteristics are emphasised in Schilsky. They both have a striking moustache which grows straight across the face; Schilsky's blunt nose and slightly receding chin are said to make his face look top-heavy; photographs and particularly caricatures of Strauss give the same impression. Both men are marked by musical precocity and versatility; Strauss's compositions had already made him something of a public figure by the age of sixteen; Schilsky is not far behind. Both had an extensive knowledge of many different instruments, particularly of the violin and piano. Strauss was a protégé of the enthusiastic Hans von Bülow; this detail, however, is transferred in the novel to Heinz Krafft. Both men are described as sudden in their gestures, subject to outbursts of gaiety, 'ragamuffinry', as well as to fits of vacuity, with eyes half-asleep (e.g. Schilsky's 'sheep-like reveries'). The shrewd, calculating opportunism similar to that displayed by Schilsky was remarked on by more than one contemporary observer of Strauss, as well as the sensuality which is not incompatible with coldness. Strauss's lack of intellectual depth is mentioned more than once and there is certainly no sign of any profundity of thought in Schilsky. The combination of seeming modesty and self-assurance is remarked on by Strauss's biographers: the same feature is found in Schilsky in the *Zarathustra* scene. There are accounts of Strauss's youthful wildness and later of his perennial attractiveness for women, though biographers emphasise the stability of his marriage—to Pauline de Ahna, who played the part of Freihild in his opera *Guntram* in Weimar in 1894. Here again the circumstances are very similar. It is obvious that, however roving Schilsky's eye may be, 'Lulu is Lulu', and he takes a curious pride in boasting about the hell of a life she leads him. The same observations have been made of Strauss's domestic life. Pauline's violent quarrels with Strauss before their marriage were public knowledge.²⁴ It was during a particularly

²⁴ See Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: a critical commentary*, for a detailed discussion of these points, esp. vol. I.

stormy scene at a rehearsal of *Tannhäuser* that they became engaged. The deep romantic core in his wife held him to her permanently, in spite of her passionately shrewish temperament. Strauss's own explanation of his wife's nature as he had portrayed it in *Ein Heldenleben* and in *The Domestic Symphony* (music which is 'naturalistic' and autobiographical) could be applied easily enough to Louise. Asked whether the hero's wife was meant to be depraved or a flirt, he replied:

Neither one nor the other. She is very complex, very much a woman, a little depraved, something of a flirt, never twice alike, every minute different to that which she was before . . . the hero says 'No' to staying here . . . then she comes to him.²⁵

Pauline Strauss's rages seem to have satisfied a need in Strauss and herself. One of the worst was the one she staged when news reached Strauss of the death of his collaborator Hofmannsthal; there was apparently great jealousy between the wife and the librettist. But the tantrum helped him to bear his loss. It will be remembered that, at the end of *Maurice Guest*, Schilsky is deep in conversation with a new companion, 'a Jewish-looking stranger in a fur-lined coat', and that Louise trails adoringly after him in company with one who is presumably Krafft. It is not impossible that we have here a brief allusion to Strauss's movement from his association with Alexander Ritter, to whom he owed his knowledge of Wagner and Nietzsche and possibly his interest in the symphonic poem, towards his future operatic phase with Hofmannsthal, who was in fact of Jewish extraction.

The streak of vulgarity which Rolland noticed in Strauss—and at times in his music—is plainly present in the portrait of Schilsky; other parallels are their bored, sleepy expression, their boorish manners, their love of comfort, their touch of dandyism, their conciliatory natures. Schilsky's anxiety to avoid open breaches is an example of the last trait. Strauss's intensely German character is often referred to by Rolland, and his known adherence to the Superman doctrines, in their crude form, is possibly the source of the flippant remark made by one of the American students who goes to hear Schilsky's symphonic poem in Fürst's lodgings: 'Also schrie Zenophobia!' If such trifles as names have any worth as evidence—and

²⁵ Quoted in Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

Richardson set great store by names²⁶—Strauss had a sister Johanna, to whom he dedicated some of his music, his favourite modern opera was *Louise*, and his favourite game, which he played as enthusiastically as Richardson played tennis, was 'skat', for which the German is Schwarz, the name of Maurice's teacher. The name has other interesting connotations; and Bülow had a well-known pupil named Schwarz. (It may also be noted in passing that Richardson organised her working day as ruthlessly as Strauss, and on similar lines.) It is obvious that the dates for some of these correspondences between Schilsky and Strauss will support the inferences and others will not. But sensitive observers of a man can come to similar conclusions which throw light on one another. Rolland had written an article on Strauss in the *Revue de Paris* as early as June 1899, an article which contains much suggestive material about the man and his music. Ernest Newman, a music critic for the *Manchester Guardian* and other papers at the beginning of the century, was no doubt writing about him before his book on Strauss appeared in the same year as *Maurice Guest*; there were several studies of Strauss in German, in plenty of time for Richardson to make use of them, as well as analyses of his music in the Queen's Hall program-books by Alfred Kalisch, who had known Strauss personally. By 1903 Strauss himself was writing on music. In the Introduction to the first number of *Die Musik* he attacked the pale aesthetes who wished to divorce art from life and ranged himself, as Wagner had done, on the side of the natural, untrained receptiveness of the ordinary public, as more reliable than the response of small groups of experts. In this matter he was aligning himself with the Nietzsche of the 'Letter from Turin', and with the future Thomas Mann, in *Dr Faustus*, in seeking to free music from its 'splendid isolation' so that it could find its way back to mankind. It is only fair to say, however,

²⁶ For example, the 'Miss Lautenschläger' who appears in *Maurice Guest* was in real life listed on the program for the *Hauptprüfung* at Leipzig Conservatorium, 25 March 1892, as 'Fräulein Ella Lautenschläger aus New York'. The name means lute-player, which would have amused H.H.R. Her own name is first on the program, 'aus Melbourne', and her test piece was the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto in C major. A further example of her use of real names occurs in *Ultima Thule*. Dr Barker of 'Shortland's Bluff' was Dr Barker of Queenscliff. 'Turnham' was the name of an uncle, and 'Smith' was, in fact, Smith.

that Strauss's views about the 'people' fluctuated considerably. His political views, such as they were, leaned strongly to the right. The reception of Strauss's music and his musical ideas was much the same as that given to Schilsky's in Richardson's imagination:

that mixture of extravagant laudation and abusive derision which constitutes fame. (*M.G.*, p. 561)

There is also a strong possibility that Richardson, with her enthusiasm for Beethoven, read the first volume of Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, when it appeared in 1904. It contains a brief allusion to a musician who has a marked resemblance to Strauss and so to Schilsky. In a later volume Strauss appears under another guise. There is much in this first volume of *Jean-Christophe* which would have made a strong emotional appeal to Richardson, especially when Rolland describes Christophe's grandfather as the type of artistic temperament which can find no adequate means of expression. The whole passage is worth quoting, for its bearing on Richardson's general outlook:

'There are', says George Sand, 'unhappy geniuses who lack the power of expression and carry down to their graves the unknown region of their thoughts, as has said a member of that great family of illustrious mutes or stammerers—Geoffrey St. Hilaire.'

Old Jean-Michel belonged to that family. He was no more successful at expressing himself in music than in words, and he always deceived himself. He would so much have loved to talk, to write, to be a great musician, an eloquent orator! It was his secret sore. He told no-one of it, did not admit it to himself, tried not to think of it; but he did think of it, in spite of himself, and so there was the seed of death in his soul.

Poor old man! In nothing did he succeed in being absolutely himself. There were in him so many seeds of beauty and power, but they never put forth fruit; a profound and touching faith in the dignity of Art and the moral value of life, but it was nearly always translated in an emphatic and ridiculous fashion; so much noble pride and in life an almost servile admiration of his superiors, so lofty a desire for independence and, in fact, absolute docility; pretensions to strength of mind, and every conceivable superstition; a passion for heroism, real courage, and so much timidity!—a nature to stop by the wayside. (pp. 28-9)

Whether Richardson had read this book or not, she had seen the 'nature to stop by the wayside' with the same compassionate eyes.

What Richardson could have gained for her purposes at second hand would have been supplemented by a study of Strauss's music, for which, we are told again and again, she had a passion. She could have fallen under the spell of the songs early enough. *Allerseelen*, which Maurice's fellow-students sing as a popular song during the skating scene (p. 273) was composed by 1883, the year in which Strauss left the University of Munich. By the time Richardson was busy writing *Maurice Guest*, in 1897, Strauss had composed, among many other works *Tod und Verklärung* (depicting the life of an unhappy musician); *Don Juan*, a tone-poem based on verses by Lenau, a poet referred to in *Maurice Guest*; *Guntram*, an opera in the Wagnerian mode, but one in which the Nietzschean affirmation of the Will is extremely strong, and *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, completed in Munich in August 1896. Whether there is any record of Strauss's having given a private performance of it, it is difficult to say. It was first performed with Strauss conducting in Frankfurt-am-Main in November 1896. By this time the Robertsons had moved from Munich to Strasbourg, and were consequently much nearer to Frankfurt. Progress on the novel was slow and tentative, owing largely, according to Richardson, to bouts of ill-health. Five years before it was published Strauss had completed his *Domestic Symphony*; before 1908, the year of its publication, he had made more than one public appearance in London, and in Dresden, where Richardson's sister had gone to live.

Sometime during the first seven years of her married life, before the Robertsons moved to London, Richardson had some unspecified encounter with Strauss. In her husband's words: 'Once she had come in contact with him at Marquartstein.'²⁷ The Robertsons frequently spent their summer holidays at Marquartstein, before and after moving to London, usually with Richardson's sister and her young nephew; sometimes Robertson himself stayed behind in London. Richardson would, however, have had opportunities to observe Strauss at first hand before that. Strauss was Third Conductor (finally First Conductor) in Munich from 1894 to 1898. Richardson, when the Leipzig period was over, and after two or more unhappy years in England, went back to Munich with

²⁷ See *M.W.Y.*, p. 149.

her mother and sister, probably late in 1894, certainly by 1895. She would have had time before her marriage at the end of that year to pick up a considerable amount of information about Strauss and his associates, and possibly his future wife (the daughter of a general, as well as a singer), and also to hear his music and observe him conducting. 'The large South German town' to which Schilsky goes after leaving Leipzig is most likely to have been Munich. Richardson's sojourn in the same town as Strauss, therefore, spans a period considerably longer than the seven months or so she and her husband spent in Munich after their marriage.

One further source of information was open to her. In Munich in 1903, before joining Robertson in London, she stayed with her sister Lilian, who was awaiting the birth of her child. During this period she took lessons in harmony and counterpoint from Ludwig Thuille, a boyhood friend of Strauss's who later became a professor at the Munich Conservatorium. Strauss dedicated his tone-poem *Don Juan* (1889) to Thuille. It seems more than likely that, knowing his student's interest in Strauss's music, Thuille would have talked with her about his friend and his music from time to time. She did not gather enough courage however to show him her own tone-poem: the trio for voice, viola and violin built round Nietzsche's poem 'Autumn'.

One possible origin of Schilsky's Christian name is suggested by a deletion in *Maurice Guest*. In the passage in which Heinz Krafft praises *Niels Lyhne* to Madeleine, an admiring reference to Eugen D'Albert has been cut out of the typescript. Strauss had wished to dedicate one of his early works, a Burleske for piano and orchestra, to Bülow, hoping he would perform it. Bülow said it was unplayable and the work was dedicated to Eugen D'Albert 'who mastered it easily'. The other possible source for the name is Eugen Spitzweg, the owner of the publishing firm which brought out Strauss's early works. He was a great friend of both Strauss and Bülow and is mentioned in correspondence between them as 'Eugenius'.

Krafft may be modelled on Alexander Ritter, who introduced Strauss to Nietzsche, Wagner, and Liszt, and to whom he acknowledged his great debt. There are also touches in Krafft that remind one of the young Rilke, though Rilke was afraid of music. His passion for Jacobsen as we know matched Richardson's own: both have testified that he changed their lives. Before *Maurice Guest* was published, Richardson could have

read Rilke's *Leben und Lieder* (1894); *Traumgekrönt* (1897); *Das Buch der Bilder* (1902); *Geschichten von dem lieben Gott* (1903); *Worpswede* (1903); *Auguste Rodin* (1903); *Das Stundenbuch* (1905); *Die Weise von Leben und Tod des Cornetts Chrisoph Rilke. Neue Gedichte* (1907) probably came too late to have had any effect on the novel. It is also likely enough that Richardson came across some of Rilke's reviews in German periodicals, most probably during 1898 and 1899 those on Maeterlinck, to whom she seems to have been attracted in any case. A reference to Maeterlinck is deleted from the text of *Maurice Guest*. From the poems and the prose, if from no other evidence such as literary gossip around Munich, some indications of Rilke's temperament could have been inferred. The brief sketch of his life which Heinz Krafft gives to Maurice on pages 162-3 is not incompatible with Rilke's experience; Rilke had not studied medicine, but he had toyed with the idea of doing so; he had attempted some sort of commercial career at the instigation of an uncle; he had some connection with journalism; and he had leanings for a while towards a religious life and had written poems purporting to be by a monk. Even the reference to Vienna in the passage is a faint link: Rilke's mother had gone to live there after separating from his father.

More important, however, than this obviously circumstantial similarity is the temperamental and physical likeness. Rilke was slight, frail, elusive, with a strong streak of the feminine in his physique and his psychological make-up. His blue eyes, like Krafft's, were his most remarkable feature. Of Krafft's, Richardson says:

Girlish, too, were the limpid eyes, which, but for a trick of dropping unexpectedly, seemed always to be gazing, in thoughtful surprise, at something that was visible to them alone. (p. 32)

In both of them, moreover, there is an enormous self-consciousness which yearns for the lost naïveté of childhood: 'only the naïve souls matter', says Krafft. Above all they both defend the supremacy of art to the exclusion of all other interests, and share an obsession with death. Krafft speaks of the time spent reading Novalis after an illness as the happiest he had known. Novalis, of course, was the direct source of that mystic affirmation of death 'as life's high meed' that runs through so much Romantic poetry down to Rilke himself. It is as though, on the assumption that perfect love casteth out fear, many of these poets had decided to love death in order to cure themselves of their horror of it. Like Rilke,

however, Krafft has a tough will-to-survive in him. Death, like love, is for other people; for Rilke love and death produced raw material for his art. This is as far as the comparison can be pressed. If these are the slender hints on which Krafft was based, the finished character is a living figure, not a shadowy sketch, and is far more attractive, oddly enough, than Rilke. Whether Richardson caught a brief glimpse of him during his visit to Munich in March 1896, in a café, at a literary gathering, round the precincts of the University where her husband was then lecturing, it is not possible to tell. By the time Rilke came to Munich in September of the same year, on a longer stay, the Robertsons had left for Strasbourg. The faithful Lilian, however, who took such an interest in the progress of *Maurice Guest*, remained behind. And she was a gregarious person, very much interested in the artistic and social questions of the day. It is a pity her letters to her sister during the writing of *Maurice Guest* have not survived.

Much more important for the theme of the novel is the constant association of Krafft with Wagner's music. Wagner's writings on dramatic theory and his practice of it in his music-dramas are of paramount importance in the development of German drama of the later nineteenth century. His theory aimed at re-establishing the concept of tragedy he attributed to the Greeks, in which myth, poetry, song, dance, would form a ritual capable of expressing the profoundest truths of existence. His most ambitious effort to re-create this kind of tragedy is of course the *Ring of the Nibelungen*. In this opera the evil lust for power brings a curse which, though it causes the destruction of old values, is finally annulled by redeeming love.

Tristan und Isolde, however, is a more perfect expression of Wagner's metaphysic of the theatre since it grapples with the very essence of drama itself, and it is this opera which provides the real clue to the events of the novel. The first mention of the opera occurs on page 32 during Maurice's introduction to Krafft and it is to Maurice alone that Krafft addresses his question:

All at once, in a momentary lull, he leant towards Maurice, and, without even looking up, asked the latter if he could recall the opening bars of the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. If so, there was a certain point he would like to lay before him. 'You see, it's this way, old

fellow,' he said confidentially. 'I've come to the conclusion that if, at the end of the third bar, Wagner had . . .'

Krafft is interrupted by his comrades, and it is evident from their sarcasms that however much of an admirer of Wagner he may be, like Richardson, he is informed and critical. On page 34, in the midst of ribald jokes about Schilsky's and Louise's sleeping together, Krafft sings four lines from the love-duet of *Tristan und Isolde*, which occurs in the second act of the opera:

O sink' hernieder,
Nacht der Liebe,
gieb Vergessen,
dass ich lebe . . .

Neither of these references is haphazard, as an analysis of the 'motives' in the score will show. By the end of the fourth bar of the Prelude, Wagner has indicated his Sorrow-Desire-Magic motives, and these are closely followed by the Anguish *motiv* and the Look. The look that passes between Tristan and Isolde is described by Isolde to Brangäne in her Narration in Act I, when she is recalling the scene in her tent, before the opera begins. She tells how she was lifting her sword to kill the wounded Tristan for having slain her betrothed, when he raised his eyes to her, causing her to refrain. The association of a sword-*motiv* with Louise has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. The undeclared love between Tristan and Isolde sets up the conflict between love and duty in Tristan. Just before Krafft's meeting with Maurice a significant look between Louise and Maurice has occurred precisely after the point where in Chapter III Schwarz has demanded from Maurice what amounts to an oath of loyalty to his music. Maurice has picked up a yellow rose dropped by Louise and laid it on the piano, where ' . . it sank a shadowy gold image in the mirror-like surface'. (In Rilke's *Crowned with Dreams* (1897) there is a poem about a yellow rose, which is not irrelevant to the part the rose plays in the novel.) Then follows the passage:

As yet she had paid no heed to him, but, at this, she turned her head, and, still continuing to play, let her eyes rest absently on him.

They sank their eyes in each other's. A thrill ran through Maurice, a quick, sharp thrill, which no sensation of his later life outdid in keenness and which, on looking back, he could always feel afresh . . .

Nor would any tongue have persuaded him she did not understand . . . (p. 29)

In the opera, Tristan's conflict over his loyalty to King Mark, to the world of day, and Isolde's anger at his apparent disloyalty to her are dissolved by Brangäne's substitution of the Love-potion for the Death-potion which Isolde had intended for Tristan and herself. This is another way of saying that the gods have intervened to make the lovers bow to a divine, an occult force, the supreme force of the universe, in Schopenhauer's view. The opera demonstrates that the world of day is no place for those who respond to that force.

In the second act of the opera, the world of day recedes, and night, which means freedom from illusion, is the medium in which perfection in love finds true expression. As long as nothing breaks in from outside, the union of the lovers remains absolute. The forces of the day, the world of illusion, represented by Tristan's treacherous friend Melot, betray them and in the third act of the opera they seek the eternal night in which love, the equivalent of creation, is set free to operate once more. Night, for Wagner, as for Brennan later, means the realm of the possible, the dark primal unity pregnant with potential forms.

The placing of 'O sink' hernieder', the most passionate affirmation of these ideas, in a frivolous setting is a clue to what Richardson is doing with the *Liebestod* theme. The centring of Krafft's attention on Maurice connects him with it ironically: love, for Maurice, is to mean death in a literal sense. But Richardson's irony goes beyond that; it is suffused with an immense compassion. It is as though, brooding on the tragedy of Tristan and Isolde, she conceived a worse tragedy. Supposing only Tristan *and not Isolde* had drunk the love-potion, as too often happens in real life, what then? What worse fate than to be irrevocably, irremediably in love with a woman who is bound forever to another man? Tristan and Isolde die knowing at least that each belongs only to the other. Maurice dies, still under the spell of the love-potion, but knowing that his 'Isolde' is not for him, but belongs and desires to belong to someone else. In Wagner's version of the legend, Tristan dies in Isolde's arms, fully aware of her presence. In *Maurice Guest*, Maurice dies fully aware of Louise's complete hostility and her eternal absence. The real commentary on his situation comes from Wagner himself. Writing in a letter to Röckel about Siegfried's helplessness without Brünnhilde, Wagner re-

marked (January 1854): 'To an isolated being, not all things are possible.'

Maurice Guest in the last analysis is best understood as a *literary variation upon a theme by Wagner in the realistic mode*. Even its three-act construction follows the Tristan pattern, which is, as Fergusson argues, the basic tragic pattern. Book One is located in the world of day. It presents Maurice (like Tristan) filled with his sense of duty, to his parents ('King Mark'), to himself, to his work (his knightly task). Like Tristan he vows to model himself upon the traditional hero:

All the vague yet eager hopes that had run riot in his brain . . . seemed to have been summed up and made clear to him in one supreme phrase . . . a great phrase in C major, in the concluding movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. First sounded by the shrill sweet winds, it had suddenly been given out by the strings, in magnificent unison, and had mounted up and on, to the jubilant trilling of the little flutes. There was such a courageous sincerity in this theme, such undauntable resolve; it expressed more plainly than words what he intended his life of the next few years to be . . . What a single-minded devotion to art, he promised himself his should be! (p. 5)

Before the end of the act, his 'knightly vow' has been dissipated by the 'love-potion'; he has deserted Beethoven for Wagner. In the second act it seems that he has achieved his Isolde: the idyll at the Rochlitzer Berg away from the world is like the night of the lovers in the opera until it is invaded by the forces of the day. The movement begun in the second act towards disintegration and death continues and is consummated in the final act: this Tristan, unlike the other, had been in reality solitary all along.

In this pattern of variations on the Tristan theme, traces of Wagner's philosophy of drama can be discerned here and there, sometimes in comic guise. Madeleine's version of the necessity for imaginative aspiration, for example, is couched in utterly characteristic speech:

Think of him now, and think of him as he was when he first came here. A good fellow—wasn't he? And full to the brim of plans and projects—ridiculous enough, some of them—but the great thing is to be able to make plans. As long as a man can do that, he's on the upward grade. . . . (pp. 497-8)

Her perception is dim and limited in scope, but it is perception.

Wagner's theory of music-drama is not easily grasped, but depends

ultimately on the notion that intensity of feeling will give rise to an image which in turn will transform itself into the actual. The clearest explanation of what Wagner was about occurs in Bergson's *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion*:

When the obscure depths of the soul are agitated, what rises to the surface and reaches consciousness, there takes on, if the intensity is sufficient, the form of an image or of an emotion. The image is most often only a hallucination, just as the emotion is only futile agitation. But both indicate that the disturbance is a systematic rearrangement looking toward a higher equilibrium: the image is then symbolic of what is being prepared, and the emotion is a concentration of the soul in the expectation of a transformation.

Fergusson, who translates and quotes this passage in his *The Idea of a Theater* (p. 83), referred to above, argues that this expectation of a transformation is what distinguishes the healthy, true movement of the Romantic mind from the merely psychopathic. The exorbitant and gloomy passions of *Tristan* are in his view symbolic of what is being prepared. They are suffered in 'expectation of a transformation'. The exaltation of feeling in the final music would certainly support this view. Wagner needed myth to work on—if only because the theatre demands actors and an action—but his myth, as can be seen by comparing it with traditional versions, is dependent on his feeling, not the other way round. It is the emotion which gives rise to the form, or to put it another way imagination becomes reality through dramatic illusion. 'To obey passion as the one reality' is, as Fergusson says, the basis of Wagner's dramaturgy; and in seducing his audience into abandoning itself to pure feeling, he would have said that he was enabling it to 'know'. His use of Night symbolism is immensely important in this scheme. To quote Fergusson once more:

. . . in the opera, the symbol of Night stands, not for a transitional moment of human experience, and for one among many modes of knowledge, but for the threshold of the void of truth itself. (p. 96)
This is the void, the original cosmic unity, which Nietzsche saw as man's 'primitive home'. His use of the word 'home', Wagner's concept of truth through illusion, the symbolism of Night, all have relevance to the meaning of *Maurice Guest*, but it would be dangerous to conclude that Richardson is assenting to Wagner's views. She is, rather, questioning

them. It is his 'home', his 'harmonious whole' in the first place that Maurice Guest is attempting to find and his fatally destructive jealousy, is, as the author interpreting his feeling explains, not really jealousy, but: . . . only a craving for certainty in any guise, and the more surely Maurice felt that he would never gain it, the more tenaciously he strove. For certainty, that feeling of utter reliance in the loved one which sets the heart at rest and leaves the mind free for the affairs of life, was what Louise had never given him; he had always been obliged to fall back on supposition with regard to her, equally at the height of their passion, and in that first arid stretch of time, when it was forbidden him to touch her hand. The real truth, the last-reaching truth about her, it would not be his to know. Soul would never be absorbed in soul; not the most passionate embraces could bridge the gulf; to their last kiss, they would remain separate beings, lonely and alone. (pp. 469-70)

Maurice of course is complaining about what, with rare exceptions, is the normal human condition; the world of day is by definition the world of separatenesses and, as *Tristan* makes plain, there is no place in it for lovers who have risen beyond its limitations. Louise, of a similar temperament to his own, was the last woman capable of bringing Maurice to bear the 'joy of being two'. She resented bitterly enough the divisions between herself and Schilsky; it is made clear early in the novel that their total sexual compatibility was the sole link between them. This for Louise was enough, for Maurice it was not.

Louise, in deciding to love Maurice, has a totally Wagnerian aim, to bring about through mimesis, through the illusion of an action, an actuality. Like Duse, she lives herself into her part; the expression is used of her in the *Carmen* scene. She knows instinctively that the truth of illusion will not survive contact with the world of day and this is the reason she attempts to prolong the Rochlitz interval, and why she resists Maurice's re-entry into the life of the musical world. As long as the world is reduced to nothing but the two of them all will be well; any reminder from the outside world will shatter the image. It is passion itself she is attempting to bring to life, not love for a particular man. Rochlitz, her room in Leipzig which she never leaves if she can help it, are the equiv-

alent of the darkened stage of the second act of *Tristan*.²⁸ Her agitated replies to Maurice when he is urging her to think sensibly are the equivalent of the love-duet in the second act, sung with the wrong partner: 'Tomorrow things will look different . . . At night, things get distorted . . .'

'No, no, one only really sees in the dark,' she interrupted him.

—'but in the morning, one can smile at one's fears. Trust me, Louise, and believe in me. All our future happiness depends on how we act just now.'

'Our future happiness . . . yes,' she said slowly. 'But what of the present?'

'Isn't it worth while sacrificing a brief present to a long future?' (pp. 392-3)

The duet continues until Louise says:

'Let me make a confession. As a child I had presentiments—things I foresaw came true, and on the morning of a misfortune, I've felt such a load on my chest that I could hardly breathe. Well, today, when I came into this room again, it seemed as if two black wings shut out the sunlight; and I was afraid. The past weeks have been so unreasonably happy—such happiness mustn't be let go. Help me to hold it; I can't do it alone. Don't try to make it fast to the future; while you do that it's going—do you think one can draw out happiness like a thread? Oh, help me!—don't let anything take it from us. And I will give up everything to it . . .'

 (p. 394)

There is truth in what she says, that only the Now is real; but paramount is the fear of the intrusion of the world of 'fact', threatening to contradict the knowledge that only by sinking oneself in a role can truth be conveyed. The correlative of this fear can be discerned far back in the second

²⁸ Richardson may have seen Adolphe Appia's scenario for the staging of *Tristan und Isolde* printed as an Appendix to his *Die Musik und die Inszenierung*, published in Munich, 1899. Cf. Louise's: 'One only really sees in the dark' with Appia's: 'when she [Isolde] extinguishes the torch she destroys the barrier between [her and Tristan]'. Appia insists that 'the illusory nature of this phantom world is precisely what must be established by the stage-setting from the beginning of the second act on . . .'. The second 'act' of *Maurice Guest* fulfils this condition.

book, before they become lovers, when they take their first journey together into the dark, she in a chair, he pushing her, on skates, two solitary figures on treacherous ice. If Richardson is not a 'poetic' novelist, it is difficult to know to whom the title is appropriate.

This fear of losing hold of the role recurs again and again, as of course it must, in the final chapter. No pupil of Stanislavsky could more assiduously have practised the 'method' than Louise. Her fears are fully revealed when she is waiting and listening for Maurice to come to her: Then she listened.

He had the key of the little papered door in the wall. Between the sound of his step on the stair, and the turning of the key in the lock, there was time for her to undergo a moment of suspense that drove her hand to her throat. What if, after the tension of the afternoon, her heart, her nerves—parts of her over which she had no control—should not take their customary bound towards him? What if her pulses should not answer his? But before she could think her thought to the end, he was there; and when she saw his kind eyes alight, his eager hands outstretched, her nervous fears were vanquished. (pp. 406-7)

The whole scene which follows illustrates the intense concentration on an emotion in an effort to preserve its reality. For Louise, as for Duse, the art of the theatre is the equivalent of the 'love-potion'. The cruellest irony in this situation is that Schilsky's attitude is the same as Maurice's: he will not sacrifice a long future to a brief present and it seems particularly moving that it is two impulses of Maurice's which resemble Schilsky's that begin to undo the truth of illusion—his gift of the roses before his concert, and his request that Louise shall not go to hear him play.

How far Richardson's own talent for mimesis operated in her emotional life is an interesting speculation. She certainly understood the faculty enough to portray it in Louise from the inside, as the above quotation shows. Whether, like Louise, she willed herself to love a substitute in default of her two earlier loves, it is impertinent to inquire; and not perhaps irrelevant to point out that we are commanded to love one another, which is possible, though not to be 'in love' with one another, which is impossible. In the drafts of *Myself When Young* she says, as we have noted, that in the Mozart-Strasse in Leipzig, 'I went through one of the stormiest times of my life'. What this was she does not say: it could

have been family friction, difficulty with her engagement, or even a rude awakening, like Maurice's, to the existence of sexual aberrations.²⁹

In Leipzig, at all events, Richardson came face to face with the fact and the fiction of the *Liebestod*. Against the great erotic myth of *Tristan und Isolde* with which she was constantly confronted she must have measured the actual human experience she shared with her friend, Mrs Freund, who described it thus:

[we] had arrived at a bridge crossing the Pleisse. Two suicides, a lad and his lass, hopelessly in love with each other and with no prospect of ever making enough money to live on together, had decided to end it all while they were young rather than let Fate overtake them by inches. The boy had already been taken out of the river, and just as we arrived at that point, some men were lifting out the dead body of the girl. I still remember the pathetic sight; the head lying helplessly to one side, a limp hanging arm, the bedraggled skirt clinging to the poor inert body and hanging down in saturated folds. The dress was of a nondescript shade of brown which somehow seemed to make the pitiful scene still more pitiful . . . (P.R., p. 12)

The narrator's response to the real-life event is simple and direct: pity. Surely this is the correct response to any sudden cutting off of a young life before it has had time to flower, not the judicial weighing up of whether the life belonged to one order of talent or another. In spite of the mystical affirmation of *Tristan*, there is in the fate of the lovers a strong sense of tragic waste, which arouses a feeling of pity totally absent, for example, from the feeling which is produced by the ending of *Antony and Cleopatra*, where there is a deeply-fulfilled earthly love to make death proud to take the Warrior and the Queen. The suicide of Avery Hill and the 'bleak misery' of her funeral arouse this uncomplicated response of pity even in the unemotional witnesses at the graveside, as well as in the sensitive Maurice. For the critic to refuse it to him in turn argues a certain insensibility, and to justify this insensibility in terms of a dubious philosophical doctrine without examining the consequences of the doctrine is only possible if one ignores what Richardson is actually saying about Nietzsche and Wagner. The clearest exposition

²⁹ Louise's exasperated cry to Maurice on page 511 may have some significance here: 'Why must you alone be so innocent! Why should you alone not know that I was only jealous of a single person, and that was Krafft?'

of the consequences that defenders of the 'Nietzschean' view of 'free spirits' must face is Bertrand Russell's 'Revolt in the Abstract', a short piece in his book *Fact and Fiction*. He is talking of Ibsen, and points out that it is all very well to fly in the face of conventional morality if such behaviour is exceptional in a generally stable society:

But when it is regarded as a general rule for everybody to follow, it leads either to disaster or to the establishment of a tyranny in which only a few people at the top can . . . live their life in their own way. (p. 25)

He goes on to point out that Ibsen and Nietzsche are belated romantics who share what is true and false in the romantic attitude:

There are two extreme views as to how human life should be lived, neither of which can be accepted in its entirety. You may think of it as a minuet in which a certain ordered pattern is produced by rigid adherence to rule and spontaneous impulse has no place; or you may think of it as a witch dance in a Voodoo incantation in which excitement is stimulated until it issues in atrocious cruelty. The former suits the classicist; the latter the romantic. Neither is quite adequate. The classical outlook produces the rebel. The romantic outlook, when it is widespread, necessarily generates the tyrant.

The cruelty inherent in the romantic outlook is quite evident in Ibsen's plays . . .

Ibsen's ethic is essentially the same as Nietzsche's. He seems to think that the superman . . . is so much more splendid than the average run of human beings as to have no duties whatever towards them and to have the right to bring them to destruction in the pursuit of what is considered to be heroic passion. The outcome must inevitably be a régime of Nazi despotism and cruelty. Everyone will struggle to be the superman and will be deterred by nothing but superior force or cunning on the part of some other claimant for this exciting role. (pp. 25-6)

It seems quite likely, judging by what actually happens in *Maurice Guest*, that Richardson had seen for herself the alternatives of minuet and witch-dance pretty clearly, that she was appraising the Wagner-Nietzsche cult of passion for passion's sake, of 'truth through illusion' with an admirable impartiality. It is impossible to claim that there is anything heroic in the relationship between Schilsky and Louise; and Schilsky does

not sacrifice anything to passion: he finds a partner, suitably endowed to allow him to practise his art in comfort, very early in life. If he is in truth, as seems likely, partly modelled on Strauss, he sticks to her ever afterwards. It is not even Louise, with all her strange fire and charm, who sacrifices everything to passion: she stops short at sacrificing herself, when Schilsky leaves her. It would be futile to deny that she makes use of Maurice to relieve her boredom. It is Maurice, berated for his conventional attitudes, who defies convention and sacrifices his life. His end is tragic in so far as every needless death of a youth is tragic. Yet Richardson, while arousing tremendous pity for the waste involved, does not attempt to glamorise his action. She does no more than salute the element of the heroic that is involved in every deliberate, thought-out suicide, whatever its motive may be. The real models in this novel are Bach and Beethoven; to follow the Tristan-music is to be lost: 'seductive' is the word she uses of it. This music does not induce in Maurice the artistic awakening Krafft intends, but it works nevertheless, on the erotic level. Before the end, however, he is brought to recognise that the only defence against being swept away is the 'engrossing pursuit', the 'saving occupation'. This is what Richardson knew. She found her saving occupation during a period of despair and failure, in the monotonous discipline of translation, and transformed it later into an engrossing pursuit, into original creation. It is an approach to art from which 'Nietzschean' arrogance is conspicuously absent; if later on the wish for some sort of recognition grew on her, there is nothing surprising about that. She was human, and it is human to dislike forever talking to a void.

In her attitude to her three principal characters, Richardson shows far more sheerly human insight into the relationships between men and women than her critics. She knows, for one thing, that all the mental affinity, the mutual kindness, all the respect in the world will not hold together a relationship which is not firmly based sexually, unless both of the parties value some other interest, such as their work, more than they do human feeling. This is why Maurice cannot mate with Madeleine. She knows perfectly well that a passionate woman of Louise's type, whose life is in sex, does not love a man *because* he is a genius: she loves him because he satisfies her particular sexual need. Louise's sexual needs are complex and it is no reflection on Maurice's virility that he is unable to meet the subtler aspects of them. Paradoxically, if Maurice had had a

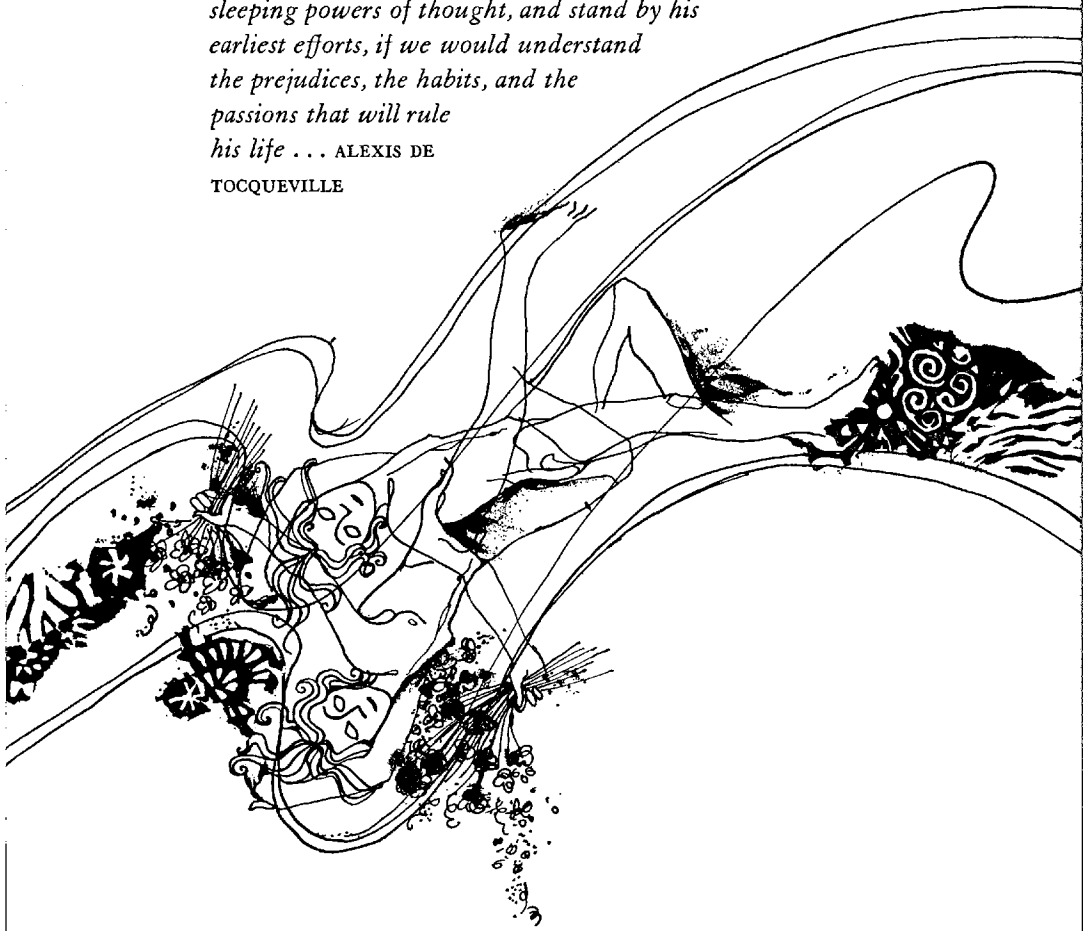
colder temperament, he would have satisfied her more. Louise exemplifies the Swedenborgian view that it is the woman, and not the man, who is the initiator in love.

It is quite true that Maurice is not a 'hero' in the Aristotelian sense, but neither is he the contemptible figure that Hope makes him out to be. As Russell makes clear, it is inevitable that natures greedy for the same thing will bring out the worst in one another, and this is what the novel clearly demonstrates. Maurice is not a hero, primarily because he is not intended to be. Richardson is not, like Wagner, writing myth, but a novel of everyday life. But common life, as the Gospels show, can have its mythic aspects. And even Siegfried was a hero only by favour of the gods, which is one of the most important things this novel is saying. There is no moral virtue in being endowed with genius rather than talent: it is a gift of the gods, or the luck of the genes. But the novel is also saying that even the most obscure life, the most maimed life, when it is touched by something outside itself, when it remains faithful to the yearning for what is more than itself, faithful to the brief glimpse of perfection it has been granted, has some share in the heroic.

To take it upon oneself to decide who is 'a born failure' without rigorously examining the meaning of the word 'failure' as it is used by the novelist, is a dangerous kind of arrogance. All Richardson's books warn us against such a proceeding. 'Some there be who have no memorial . . .' is the epigraph of *Ultima Thule*, but the sentence does not imply that those who have none do not deserve any at all. Like Christina Stead, like Joyce Cary, the most compassionate of modern novelists, Richardson notices the faint gleam of heroism that works in obscurity. Her article on Jacobsen at the beginning of her career, and the heading to that article, indicate the true direction of her thinking about art, just as the first title she chose for her first novel indicates her maturer conception of love.

Chapter 5

... or must hear the first words which awaken the sleeping powers of thought, and stand by his earliest efforts, if we would understand the prejudices, the habits, and the passions that will rule his life ... ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE



'An Engrossing Pursuit'

MAURICE GUEST tells a story that might have been Richardson's own, if she had not had the luck to find a suitable mate and the wisdom to persist in an alternative occupation when the first of her options failed her. In depicting the fate of an outsider who when human love eluded him gave way to despair because he had 'no saving occupation', 'no engrossing pursuit', she is uttering perhaps a silent comment on the destructive element in her own nature and turning her back resolutely on self-abandonment in personal relationships.

The Getting of Wisdom is also the story of an outsider, at an earlier stage of existence, an outsider who is a schoolgirl, Laura Rambotham.¹ Laura has all the characteristics given to Maurice Guest: the same aspiration after what is always out of reach, the same inability to get on to the right wave-length with other people, to form facile friendships, the same obsessiveness once a love-object has been found. Richardson surveys this more youthful version of herself with the detachment she accorded to Maurice, but it is an amused detachment; the relief that Laura's destiny is not to be tragic is allowed to express itself more freely in a style more relaxed than that of *Maurice Guest* and in a greater candour about the

¹ The name is mis-spelt in both editions of Vincent Buckley's monograph. Professor Robertson, oddly enough, also mis-spells it, or else it remained uncorrected on his proof, see *M.W.Y.*, p. 164. Ramsbotham, with an 's', was the name of an obstetrician mentioned in a copy of the *Medical and Surgical Review* among the W. L. Richardson papers. Richardson found the names of a number of her characters in these remains.

less sympathetic aspects of the central figure. From her vantage-point as Laura's 'creator', she can see where her earlier self's path had been leading her, though to her 'Laura-self' at the time it appeared to be leading nowhere in particular.

According to Richardson's *Some Notes on My Books* (*Virginia Quarterly*, Summer 1940), she began the story of her adolescence while she was still at work on *Maurice Guest*, 'partly as a relief from that book's growing gloom, partly to fill in the hours of a wet summer in the Bavarian mountains'. The book draws on experience a stage further back than *Maurice Guest* and its *staffage* was her memories of her schooldays spent at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, in the 1880s.² Although it was finally published two years later than *Maurice Guest*, there is evidence to suggest that its publication was delayed. An undated letter from Richardson's sister, Lilian Neustatter, opens with the question: Dear Sister,

Why is Laura postponed? Why did Hitchins mix in about the title? Had he read Laura when he proposed it? And did you tell Heinemann he disapproved, or did he write H. himself?³ The letter seems to have been written after the publication of *Maurice Guest*, during the time when Lilian's husband, Dr Otto Neustatter, was translating it into German. There is a reference to his sending the parts of the early novel to be typed. The main topic of the letter is the sisters' forthcoming summer holiday at Marquartstein. Since there is in the National Library, Canberra, a printer's copy of *The Getting of Wisdom* under its original title *The Education of Laura*, it is reasonable to assume that the 'Laura' in the letter refers to this title and not to one of the other alternative titles, *The Enlightenment of Laura*. Disapproval of the title is partly explained by a remark of Arnold Gyde's, a member of Heine-

² The name of the school is altered from 'The Girls' High School' to 'The Ladies' College' in the final typescript, a rather surprising alteration if she wished to conceal its identity. But high schools are not boarding schools, even if the element of snobbishness is discounted. Some of the teachers' names are also altered and one of the girls becomes Kate Horner, instead of Kate Spooner.

³ See the W. L. Richardson papers, 1854-96, in the National Library. 'Hitchins' is probably a mis-spelling of the name of Robert Hichens, novelist, a friend of William Heinemann's and afterwards of Richardson's.

mann's publishing house and a friend and literary adviser of Richardson's. After her death he spoke of the risk of libel she and the firm had incurred in publishing the book and in the light of one at least of the portraits in the novel it is clear that he had some grounds for his statement.⁴

It is possible that the publishers thought the suppression of the word 'education' in the title would draw the attention of Anglo-Saxon minds, at least, away from formal educational institutions, especially the attention of those looking for school stories in publishers' catalogues. Professor Kramer in her study of the novel in *Myself When Laura* regards the original title as:

a much narrower one than any of the others; it directs attention only to the actual education that Laura received at school. Each of the other titles introduces the notion of a kind of knowledge which is different from that gained through formal education . . . (p. 14)

This opinion overlooks Richardson's familiarity with the German concept of the *Bildungsroman*, in which the word 'Bildung' may have the sense of 'character formation', as well as its more restricted sense; it overlooks, too, the sense in which Flaubert used the word in his *L'Education Sentimentale*. Moreover, it disregards the loss of irony involved in the suppression of the original title; Richardson had a fondness for ironic titles. Three alternative titles are suggested on the additional title-pages and the fact that the word 'enlightenment' occurs in two of them suggests that the idea was important to her. Enlightenment can come in a flash, or it may come as the result of slow, painful experience. It comes to Laura in both these ways.

The change of title to *The Getting of Wisdom* was not entirely successful as a protective device. In England, the book was attacked for its anachronisms and as a 'coarse and sordid libel on girlhood'. In Australia, it was still causing strong resentment among associates of P.L.C., Melbourne, as late as 1931. According to Mrs Kernot, a review of it was refused by the College magazine in 1931 because it would have offended old Collegians. There is some doubt, however, whether, as Richardson claimed, and as is commonly believed, she was in fact refused admission to her old school when she revisited Australia in 1912. It is difficult to

⁴ See P.R., p. 34. Mrs Kernot's brother, Hume Robertson, was told that he ought to collect every copy of *G.W.* and burn them all. See Kernot letters.

reconcile this claim with the statement that the identity of 'Henry Handel Richardson' was discovered only with the publication of *Ultima Thule* in 1929—unless Mrs Kernot had betrayed her confidence in 1911-12, which seems unlikely. The book was known to and execrated by old Collegians early in its life, but whether the authorship was known, or when it became known, is not certain.⁵ Moreover, in a letter to A. G. Stephens in 1932, the then principal, William Gray, who was apparently at the school in 1912, said that Richardson did not apply to him, nor as far as he knew to any member of the school council for permission to visit the school. He remarked that 'she could have come up without asking permission as other girls invariably do'.⁶

The indignation the novel aroused in certain members of the school staff has usually struck modern readers as out of proportion to the degree of offence its content seemed capable of generating. It has also seemed reasonable to accept at face value Richardson's argument that the school and its staff were seen through the eyes of a little girl and, one might add, of a little girl presented as not particularly charitable and at times downright unpleasant. But a letter that has recently come to light suggests that the pain felt by some of the victims seen through Laura's 'sharp, unkind eyes' was inflicted with gratuitous injustice. The letter may go far to explain not only the resentment of those who knew the facts, but also Richardson's apparent and very curious lapse of memory about her schoolgirl musical triumphs in *Myself When Young*. Professor Kramer has pointed out how considerable these were and finds it strange that she denied them to Laura in the novel. One cannot agree that it is odd that Richardson, whose school career in sport, scholarship, and music was

⁵ Dr Noel McLachlan, in an article in *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 4, 1962, pointed out that in 1961 there were still English critics who did not know the author. He writes:

When last year *The Getting of Wisdom* was republished as a book for children, Lesbian touches and all, most English reviewers tempered their enthusiasm by implying that naturally they were already *au fait* with this fifty-year old master-piece. Not so the honest critic of the *Birmingham Post*: 'Despite the fact that it was written fifty years ago by a male author this is quite one of the best school-girl stories I have read . . .' Still, even the British Museum catalogue had not accurately penetrated the pseudonym as late as 1939.

⁶ See H.H.R. papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

highly successful should have refrained from attributing the same kinds of success to a fictional character: if one is writing an autobiographical novel, there are grave artistic risks involved in puffing oneself up. But to suppress, when writing of her real 'self', the public success of her performance as a pianist, of her cantata, given at the final speech night celebrations of her school life, and praised highly in the Melbourne press, to declare that she could not remember whether she won a music scholarship or not when such a scholarship would have been of great financial assistance to her mother: all these *lacunae* are certainly strange. They become rather more explicable in the light of the following letter from the Lady Superintendent of the College, Mrs Catherine Boys (the 'Mrs Gurley' of the novel) to Richardson's mother: she wrote to Mrs Richardson in July 1884, explaining that she had been so busy since she left off work at the College that she could not avail herself of the invitation to visit the country (i.e. Maldon).⁷ The letter implies that she and Mrs Richardson were on friendly terms; she speaks warmly of Ethel, and indeed Ethel's welfare is the main topic of the letter:

Etta has of course told you that both Mr Plumpton and Mr Remenyi expressed themselves as highly satisfied with her playing and said: 'If she continues as she is now doing she will be *cleverer* than *any of them*,' meaning those who had competed. Had I had the pleasure of seeing you I had intended to urge you to allow her to devote more time to music. She has both talent and capacity for it and I would consider it almost a sin for her not to cultivate it. Besides, should she ever be compelled to help herself she would do far better with music than with anything else. I should strongly advise that she should leave off some subject or subjects in which she takes little interest and devote the time to music. In a few years we shall have matriculation students as thick as thorns on rose-trees, but musicians will always be few and far between, because talent is absolutely necessary for them to become proficient. You will not I trust think that I am interfering in any way but will give me credit for the interest that I take in Etta's music. Remember me kindly to Etta and with kindest regards to yourself,

Believe me, yours sincerely,
Catherine Boys

⁷ See W. L. Richardson papers.

In the novel, the Lady Superintendent, Mrs Gurley, is one of the least sympathetic of the characters, stern, unbending and highly critical of Laura and her music. The letter from her prototype, Mrs Boys, however, reveals its writer as a wise, kindly, disinterested woman, with considerable feeling for art as distinct from scholarship. It suggests strongly that it was she who originated the notion that the girl should adopt a musical career, not the mother. It is not clear whether Mrs Richardson allowed her daughter to drop one or two subjects in order to give more time to music. Six subjects were compulsory for matriculation; Ethel took one more. In the novel, Laura takes two more, and we are told that the cleverest girls took nine. But Mrs Richardson certainly acted on Mrs Boys's advice after Ethel left school. Of particular interest is Mrs Boys's remark: 'Besides, should she ever be compelled to help herself . . .', a remark which may be merely tactful; on the other hand, it may suggest that Mrs Boys felt it unlikely that Ethel should have to earn her own living, in which case the constant references to poverty in the novel are another piece of embroidery upon the facts. It may be noticed here that the financial resources of the actual Walter Lindesay Richardson were not as exiguous as those of his counterpart Richard Mahony. He did not die penniless, but left an estate whose net value was £1,850, the equivalent of \$37,000 in present-day money.⁸

The point at issue here is the obvious disparity between the real Lady Superintendent and the fictional one; if the same disparity was evident in the characterisations of other members of the staff—most of whom are drawn as less than admirable, and in a manner which is spiteful rather than humorous—then their annoyance is easier to understand. It is evident that Mrs Boys's kindly and intelligent interest, which it is hard to believe Ethel Richardson was unaware of, was ill-repaid. As to the motives, perhaps the best comment on these is the question asked by 'Evelyn' in the novel, about Laura's misrepresentation of the curate and his family:

'Whyever did you do it?' one of them asked Laura curiously; it was a very pretty girl, called Evelyn, with twinkling brown eyes.

'I don't know,' said Laura abjectly; and this was almost true.

⁸ See Chapter 9 for further details.

'But I say! . . . nasty tarradiddles about people who'd been so nice to you? What made you tell them?'

'I don't *know*. They just came.'

The girl's eyes smiled. 'Well, I never! Poor little Kiddy,' she said as she turned away. (pp. 189-90)

It is obvious that the writer of thirty or so, faced with the compulsion to make a thorough-going Gorgon out of a woman, who, even if she seemed stern, was known to have had kindly intentions, would have understood better than the child exactly what she was doing. Her masculine pen-name no doubt served as some protection, but it was still plainly necessary to disguise the central character, Laura. It may be, of course, that she believed that Mrs Gurley was so obviously different from Mrs Boys that it would occur to no one to identify them and so no offence would be taken—if so, the belief was rather naïve. What distinguished Ethel Richardson most from her school companions was apparently her musical ability. To play this down, to refer to it briefly and ambiguously, would help to conceal Laura's identity. But why she considered it necessary to continue the evasion more than thirty-six years later in her autobiography is more difficult to explain. She was more than seventy when she sat down to write it and though it is possible that she might actually have forgotten her outstanding triumphs, it is more likely that she had some obscure intention of making facts square with fiction. Her forgetfulness is certainly not compatible with the constant references to her exact memory which occur in the biographical material, nor with her remark in a letter to Mrs Kernot in 1934 that she remembered her childhood only too clearly. 'Those early years of my life were bitten in as with acid and nothing will have compared with them for vividness and vitality.'

School prize-lists, of course, scholarship awards and public examinations are not always indications of real merit, and it may be that when she measured her provincial successes against those of the Leipzig musical world, she deliberately preferred to banish them from her memory. There might have been a trace of shame at having failed to live up to Mrs Boys's predictions and the school's expectations, which could be eliminated by pretending they had never existed. The novel supports the contention: 'See, I was a writer after all, not a musician', even though the Laura of the novel does not think of herself as either.

Whatever the mixture of fact and fiction in the book, it is clear that the

centre of interest is the inner world of the child, rather than the external world of school life, and that the emotional emphases are exactly the same as those of *Maurice Guest*. They also square with the emotional life depicted in the autobiography and in such other personal records as are available. Like Maurice and Louise, Laura has the same urge to flee from any situation which might become fixed, co-existing with the same urge to arrest the flux; the same brooding on the relativity of truth and on the riddle presented by fact and fantasy, the same possessiveness in human relations, the same overwhelming desire to belong, the same inability to do so. The novel also exhibits in uninhibited fashion much of the 'sibling rivalry' for which the evidence crops up from time to time in the autobiographical material.⁹ The changing relationships with the young sister Pin, especially during the seaside holiday so vividly described in Chapter XIX;¹⁰ Laura's insistence at the beginning of the book on being called 'Wondrous Fair' by her sister and brothers, her astonishment at the end of it to find that it is her sister who is regarded as a beauty: these are matters dealt with in a detached spirit, but their presence indicates that the writer felt the need to cultivate such a spirit, and she is not always entirely successful in doing so. Sentences like 'Pin slept warm and cosy at mother's side' are perhaps more revealing than the straightout confessions of jealousy of Pin and the quarrels between the sisters which develop later in the book, for instance, on page 202.

In the early stages of both *Maurice Guest* and *The Getting of Wisdom* the central character is depicted as an inveterate dreamer; Laura's reverie in the train on the way to school reveals the craving to belong to a group,

⁹ See *M.W.Y.*, pp. 81-2. As in the novel (pp. 197, 198, 202-6) there is a strong streak of spitefulness as well as selfrighteousness in such passages as 'Wit and brilliance were not demanded of her: enough for them if she sat still to be looked at'. Some of the earlier drafts about her sister are even more barbed; after alluding to the appealing innocence of Lilian's expression as a young woman, she continues that in later years: 'the taking naiveté became a trifle stereotyped'. Her sister's inseparability from the mother seems also to have rankled.

¹⁰ Sorrento, or more accurately, Blairgowrie Beach, where the Richardsons used to spend holidays with Dr Graham's family. The cottage described still exists, the nucleus of a house owned by Mr J. Doyle, whose grandfather bought it from Dr George Graham. Holidays at Queenscliff are associated with the Cuthbert family.

the need for acceptance and praise, the longing to stand out from the herd, the desire for one exclusive friendship, which are all a part of Maurice's daydreams too, though he has suppressed childish vanity and is self-conscious and self-critical about his propensity to indulge in daydreams:

As the train swung into motion again, she fell into a pleasanter line of thought. She painted to herself, for the hundredth time, the new life towards which she was journeying, and, as always, in the brightest colours.

She had arrived at school, and in a spacious apartment, which was a kind of glorified Mother's drawing-room, was being introduced to a bevy of girls. They clustered round, urgent to make the acquaintance of the new-comer, who gave her hand to each with an easy grace and an appropriate word. They were too well-bred to cast a glance at her clothes, which, however she might embellish them in fancy, Laura knew were not what they ought to be: her ulster was some years old, and so short that it did not cover the flounce of her dress, and this dress, and her hat with it, were Mother's taste, and consequently, Laura felt sure, nobody else's. But her new companions saw that she wore these clothes with an elegance that made up for their shortcomings; and she heard them whisper: 'Isn't she pretty? What black eyes! What lovely curls!' But she was not proud, and her lady-like manners soon made them feel at home with her, even though they stood agape at her cleverness: none of *them* could claim to have absorbed the knowledge of a whole house. With one of her admirers she had soon formed a friendship that was the wonder of all who saw it: in deep respect the others drew back, forming a kind of allée, down which, with linked arms, the two friends sauntered, blind to everything but themselves.—And having embarked thus upon her sea of dreams, Laura set sail and was speedily borne away.

'Next station you'll be there, little girl.' (p. 29)

Here again we have the same rhythm of experience as in Maurice: the delight of expectation, the harshness of its realisation. As with Maurice, the process of Laura's disenchantment begins almost as soon as she arrives at her desired destination, though she exhibits, throughout all her childish tribulations, a greater will to survive, a greater ebullience than he. If

Freudian terminology has any relevance to Richardson's personality, Maurice represents the death-wish in her, and Laura the desire to live.

Meeting her godmother and her cousin curbs Laura's vanity; when she arrives at school, the waiting-room into which the party is shown provides a further contrast with her fantasy in the train. It produces an impression as premonitory of disaster as Maurice's sensation when confronted with the streets of Leipzig:

But what impressed Laura most was the stillness. No street noises pierced the massy walls, but neither did the faintest echo of all that might be taking place in the great building itself reach their ears: they sat aloof, shut off, as it were, from the living world. And this feeling soon grew downright oppressive: it must be like this to be dead, thought Laura to herself. (p. 35)

Her cousin Grace has already referred to the building from the outside as a 'prison', and the initial impression of being confined in a tomb, though it is overlaid, is never completely eradicated. We are confronted at the outset with the same situation as in *Maurice Guest*: the figure fleeing from constriction at home, only to be confronted with it when it reaches its goal. In comparison with Maurice's, naturally, Laura's flights are trivial, comic, but the pattern is similar. Her first free week-end comes and 'her heart beats high with expectation'. But the escape to her godmother's house as a respite from school ends in *ennui*. Suffocated by the torpor of a suburban Sunday 'she counted on her fingers the hours that had still to crawl by before she could get back to school' (p. 85).

Each of her little forays ends in disillusion; the pressures towards conformity turn out to be more threatening to freedom of thought than the constriction of home and her only real prospect of liberty is represented by the world of imagination:

She went out from school with the uncomfortable sense of being a square peg, which fitted into none of the round holes of her world; the wisdom she had got, the experience she was richer by, had, in the process of equipping her for life, merely seemed to disclose her unfitness. She could not then know that, even for the squarest peg, the right hole may ultimately be found; seeming unfitness prove to be only another aspect of a peculiar and special fitness . . . It is enough to say: many a day came and went before she grasped that, oftentimes, just those mortals who feel cramped and unsure in the conduct of

everyday life, will find themselves to rights, with astounding ease, in that freer, more spacious world where no practical considerations hamper, and where the creatures that inhabit dance to their tune: the world where are stored up men's best thoughts, and hopes, and fancies; where the shadow is the substance and the multitude of business pales before the dream. (pp. 271-2)

The implications of this passage are numerous and apply to all Richardson's central figures: if the struggle to find a place for the self to be 'at home in' is unsuccessful, the solution is not to re-model the self, but to re-structure the medium. If this cannot be done through art, through love, or through work, then death or madness are the only alternatives left. Laura represents the adolescent version of the eternal misfit, as Maurice Guest represents its further development and as Richard Mahony represents it in maturity. Our final glimpse of Laura occurs when, escaped from school at last, she puts down the symbolic burden of school-bag, hat and gloves, and, watched by the timorous Pin, runs for her life down the central avenue of the Fitzroy Gardens. Here is the comic example of Richardson's recurring images of the running figure escaping from bondage; the source of them is indicated in *Myself When Young*. In *The Getting of Wisdom*, the war between what is and what might be, the world and the dream, is scaled down to fit the experience of a young school-girl. Laura learns in the end that wherever her true sympathies lie, however different her feelings may be from those of the majority, she must refrain from revealing them or acting on them if she wishes to keep her precarious footing in the herd. And it is this above all that she longs to do. The need to feel at home somewhere is the original driving force of all her actions at school; and it is only when she realises that she cannot change her inmost thoughts, stop feeling her inmost feelings in order to do this, that she turns to a milieu which she can shape as she wants it, the world of fantasy. Appropriately enough, after her great disaster at school, as a result of which she is ostracised, it is beside the sea that she finds healing, the sea which is the reconciling symbol of the 'nomad' and the 'settler':

Thus she lay, all day long, her hands clasped under her neck, a small white speck on the great wave-lapped beach. She watched the surf break, watched the waves creep up and hide the reef, watched the gulls vanish in the sun-saturated blue overhead. Sometimes she rose to

her elbow to follow a ship just inside the horizon; and it pleased her to think that this great boat was sailing off, with a load of lucky mortals, to some unknown, fairer world, while she, a poor Cinderella, had to stop behind—even though she knew it was only the English mail going on to Sydney . . . and since she *had* to think of something, she fell into the habit of making up might-have-beens, of narrating to herself how things would have fallen out had her fictions been fact, her ascetic hero the impetuous lover she had made of him. In other words, lying prostrate on the sand, Laura went on with her story.

When, towards the end of the third week, she and Pin were summoned to spend some days with Godmother, she had acquired such a gusto for this occupation, that she preferred to shirk reality, and let Pin pay the visit alone. (p. 207)

Here again is Flaubert's notion of art as a refuge from unhappiness, though as yet the escape into fantasy lacks discipline and purpose.

This passage is linked also with the second preoccupation of the book: the nature of truth, fact, and imagination. The arguments are those of schoolgirls, not of a Heinz Krafft, but the subject-matter is the same. Whether or not a reading of Pater influenced the writer of *The Getting of Wisdom*, the book reflects a mind exploring similar ideas and coming to similar conclusions. Laura's literary efforts fall into Pater's categories: her first one exhibits too great a 'curiosity', too great a desire for the strange, and so produces the grotesque; the second one exhibits too little and produces insipidity, dullness; the third, which is successful, has the right proportions. The literary experiments follow a general discussion on truth, which is the outcome of Laura's earlier fatal excursion into romance, the tale told about herself and a young curate, made up partly to entertain her companions, and partly to disguise her 'disillusionment with him. After punishing Laura for deceiving them¹¹ by cruelly excluding her, her companions gradually relent and the following conversation ensues; in their clumsy way, the children are trying to grapple with the notions of absolute and relative truth:

'But I say, [said Laura] . . . if everybody told stories, and everybody

¹¹ 'What they could not forgive, or get over, was the extraordinary circumstantiality of the fictions with which she had gulled them' (p. 189).

knew everybody else was telling them, then truth wouldn't be any good any more at all, would it? If nobody used it?'

'What rubbish you do talk!' said Mary, serenely, as she shook her toothbrush on to a towel and rubbed it dry.

'As if truth were a soap!' remarked Cupid, who was already in bed reading *Nana*, and trying to smoke a cigarette under the blankets.

'You can't do away with truth, child.'

'But why not? Who says so? It isn't a law.'

'Don't try to be so sharp, Laura.'

'I don't mean to, M.P.—But what *is* truth, anyhow?' asked Laura.

(p. 215)

From the explanation given, Laura concludes: 'Then truth's a useful thing.—Oh, and that's probably what it means, too, when you say: Honesty is the best Policy', a conclusion which shocks her companions more than anything else. In passing, the light irony of the scene should be mentioned. Laura is being castigated for dishonesty by one who is reading *Nana* under the bed-clothes and smoking a cigarette; the choice of the book is interesting not only for its subject, but because it is the work of the great apostle of naturalism, of truth as facts.

The net result of this conversation is that Laura becomes more unpopular than ever: '. . . a growing pedantry in trifles warped both her imagination and her sympathies' (p. 218). It is at this point that she picks up, while she is practising the piano, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and is repelled by its petty 'rendering of petty things', at the same time as she is baffled by the fact that: 'all these people seemed eternally to be meaning something different from what they said; something that was forever eluding her' (p. 221). The mind's first encounter with the distinction between a fact and 'the author's sense of the fact' leaves her in confusion, and she rejects Ibsen for Longfellow's romantic *Hyperion*: she seeks in literature, as Richardson says, like all young people, 'not truth, but the miracle' (p. 221).

Laura's literary wisdom, which she acquires by painful effort in the following scenes, is limited to the discovery that: '. . . as soon as you put pen to paper, provided you kept one foot planted on probability, you might lie as hard as you liked' (p. 227). Ibsen's greater wisdom, his grasp of what facts can be made to do, Pater's doctrine that 'as, in all science, the functions of literature reduce themselves eventually to the transcribing of fact', these are truths left to her creator to put into practice much later,

when her notion of what constituted a fact had immeasurably widened.

One more episode must be mentioned again which has a bearing on Richardson's own practice, and which recalls what Pater has to say about the artist's scholarly conscience being the 'masculine conscience', as well as his general remarks in *Plato and Platonism* about the male element in art. This is the episode in the classroom in which a teacher loses her temper with a gifted girl who is making no effort:

'I'll tell you what it is, Inez', she said, 'you're blessed with a real woman's brain: vague, slippery, inexact, interested only in the personal aspect of a thing. You can't concentrate your thoughts, and, worst of all, you've no curiosity—about anything that really matters. You take all the great facts of existence on trust—just as a hen does—and I've no doubt you'll go on contentedly till the end of your days, without ever knowing why the ocean has tides, and what causes the seasons.—It makes me ashamed to belong to the same sex.'

Inez's classmates tittered furiously, let the sarcasm glide over them, unhit by its truth. Inez herself, indeed, was inclined to consider the governess's taunt a compliment, as proving that she was incapable of a vulgar inquisitiveness. But Laura, though she laughed docilely with the rest, could not forget the incident—words in any case had a way of sticking to her memory—and what Miss Hicks had said often came back to her, in the days that followed. And then, all of a sudden, just as if an invisible hand had opened the door to an inner chamber, a light broke on her . . . Had Miss Hicks set out to describe *her*, in particular, she could not have done it more accurately. It was but too true: until now, she, Laura, had been satisfied to know things in a slip-slop, razzle-dazzle way, to know them anyhow, as it best suited herself. She had never set to work to master a subject, to make it her own in every detail. Bits of it, picturesque scraps, striking features—what Miss Hicks no doubt meant by the personal—were all that had attracted her.—Oh, and she, too, had no intellectual curiosity . . . (p. 89)

The incident strikes home and Laura acknowledges the truth it contains. But her intuition resists accepting it as the whole truth. The need for exactness, precision is incontrovertible: her creator will go on to agree with Pater that 'all beauty is in the long run only fineness of truth, or what we call expression, the finer accommodation of speech to that vision

within'. Meanwhile, recognising the need for facts, Laura is asking the unspoken questions: Which facts? What sort of facts? Are the facts a scientist needs enough? Are they the same facts as those an artist needs? It is no use to the child Laura, struggling to give what school requires of her, 'to have seen the snowy top of Mount Kosciusko stand out against a dark blue evening sky and to know its shape to a tittlekin'. To the matriculation candidate, the fact needed is its exact height—but of what use to the imaginative Laura is the information that it is 7,308 feet high and not 7,309? When Henry Handel Richardson is criticised for too great an adherence to facts, more attention needs to be paid to the many passages of this kind which occur throughout the novels. In *Richard Mahony*, it is enough to say here, she found the triumphant answer to Laura's conflicting questions.

The third preoccupation of the book is the hunger for love and its expression in an obsessional attachment, though Laura's attitude to love and marriage is ambivalent, coloured by her two basic conflicting desires for change and permanence. While her companions are speculating about the Great Event which awaits them, Laura has nothing to say:

And here again Laura was a heretic. For she could not contemplate the future that was to be hers when she had finished her education, but with a feeling of awe: it was still so distant as to be one dense blue haze: it was so vast, that thinking of it took your breath away . . . it might contain anything—from golden slippers to a Jacob's ladder, by means of which you would scale the skies; and with these marvellous perhapses awaiting you, it was impossible to limit your hopes to one single event, which, though it saved you from derision, would put an end, for ever, to all possible, exciting contingencies. (p. 153)

In itself, her hunger for love is an aspect of the need of the wanderer to find a resting-place; what it entails of recognition of 'the other' has no meaning for her. Laura's efforts to attach herself have a comic pathos, but the total effect of them is far from comic. Her first approach is to Mrs Gurley, the Lady Superintendent, when they are unpacking after her arrival at school:

And her promptness was rewarded; the stern face seemed to relax. At the mere hint of this, Laura grew warm through and through; and as she could neither control her feelings nor keep them to herself, she rushed to an extreme and overshot the mark.

'I've got an apron like that, I think they're so pretty,' she said cordially, pointing to the one Mrs Gurley wore. (p. 40)

She is cruelly snubbed, of course, and the pattern is set for most of her social intercourse, with boys as well as girls. Her attempts to make conversation with the boy at the cricket match in Chapter XV evoke a strong impression of a traveller in unknown territory:

'You can speak to him, Laura,' whispered Miss Snodgrass.—She evidently thought Laura waited only for permission, to burst in.

Laura had already fancied that the boy looked at her with interest. This was not improbable; for she had her best hat on, which made her eyes seem very dark—'like sloes,' Chinky said, though neither of them had any clear idea what a sloe was.

Still, a prompting to speech invariably tied her tongue. She half-turned, and stole an uneasy peep at the lad. He might be a year older than herself; he had a frank, sunburnt face, blue eyes, and almost white flaxen hair. She took heart of grace.

'I s'pose you often come here?' she ventured at last.

'You bet!' said the boy; but kept his eyes where they were—on the pitch.

'Cricket's a lovely game . . . don't you think so?'

Now he looked at her; but doubtfully, from the height of his fourteen male years; and did not reply.

'Do you play?'

This was a false move, she felt it at once. Her question seemed to offend him. 'Should rather think I did!' he answered with a haughty air.

Weakly she hastened to retract her words. 'Oh, I meant much—if you played much?'

'Comes to the same thing I guess,' said the boy—he had not yet reached the age of obligatory politeness.

'It must be splendid'—here she faltered—'fun.'

But the boy's thoughts had wandered: he was making signs to a friend down in the front of the Stand.—Miss Snodgrass seemed to repress a smile.

Here, however, the little girl at Laura's side chimed in. 'I think cricket's awful rot,' she announced, in a cheepy voice.

Now what was it, Laura asked herself, in these words, or in the tone in which they were said, that at once riveted the boy's attention. For he laughed quite briskly as he asked, 'What's a kid like you know about it?'

'Jus' as much as I want to. An' my sister says so 's well.'

'Get along with you! Who's your sister?'

'Ooo!—wouldn't you like to know? You've never seen her in Scots' Church on Sundays, I s'pose—oh, no!'

'By jingo!—I should say I have! An' you, too. You're the little sister of that daisy with the simply ripping hair.'

The little girl actually made a grimace at him, screwing up her nose. 'Yes, you can be civil now, can't you?'

'My aunt, but she's a tip-topper, your sister!'

'You go to Scots' Church then, do you?' hazarded Laura, in an attempt to re-enter the conversation.

'Think I could have seen her if I didn't?' retorted the boy, in the tone of: 'What a fool question!' He also seemed to have been on the point of adding: 'Goose,' or 'Sillybones.'

The little girl giggled. 'She's church'—by which she meant episcopalian.

'Yes, but I don't care a bit which I go to,' Laura hastened to explain, fearful lest she should be accounted a snob by this dissenter. The boy, however, was so faintly interested in her theological wobbings that, even as she spoke, he had risen from his seat; and the next moment without another word he went away.—This time Miss Snodgrass laughed outright.

Laura stared, with blurred eyes, at the white-clad forms that began to dot the green again . . . (pp. 154-7)

The whole scene is one of the most sharply-etched pictures in modern fiction of the child 'outsider', made all the more painful by the presence of the adult onlooker, and more painful still by the episode which immediately follows the boy's exit: the offer of unwanted devotion from a younger schoolgirl admirer of Laura's.

In the area of relationships between the sexes she is a failure from the start: 'when it came to holding a boy's attention for five brief minutes, she could be put in the shade by a child of eight years old' (p. 158). Again, imagination comes to her rescue where facts fail: she finds an

object and succeeds in persuading herself that she is in love. From her disastrous pretence about the curate come all the troubles which lead to her ostracism, but so, out of its misery, does an unexpected consequence, her first real friendship, unsought, unhopd for.

Richardson, looking back on the child she was, analyses Laura's difficulties as follows:

Apart however from the brusque manner she had contracted, in her search after truth, it must be admitted that Laura had but a small talent for friendship; she did not grasp the constant give-and-take intimacy implies; the liking of others had to be brought to her, unsought, she, on the other hand being free to stand back and consider whether or not the feeling was worth returning. (pp. 231-2)

The same characteristics keep Maurice and Louise on the periphery of social life, while Richardson late in life described her real self in much the same terms in a letter to a fellow-novelist, 'Oliver Stonor' (Morchard Bishop), when she said that those who want friendship from her have to be prepared for 'all give and no take'.

In the novel, Evelyn Souttar (Constance Cochran, later Constance Bulteel)¹² ignores Laura's attitude and Laura returns the liking 'after the manner of a lonely bottled-up child'. Warm and good-humoured, Evelyn accepts Laura just as she is without wanting to alter her. The inevitable result is Laura's complete abandonment of self to an emotion, coupled with the demand that its object abandon itself too: a comic, childish parallel with the Maurice-Louise, Louise-Schilsky situation. Her discovery that Evelyn has a life of her own, interests of her own, the knowledge that she is leaving school, probably to marry, destroy the child's ability to work, at the same time as her emotional education is making painful progress:

It was bitter to reflect that her present dear friendship had no more

¹² In the draft versions of *M.W.Y.*, Richardson made it clear that she did not feel at ease in the circle in which Constance moved after school; she was wealthy and finally married a rich man in London, where the two women continued on occasions to meet: 'At our meetings, we never went back on the past'. A great deal is made in the draft versions of the mutuality of the feeling between them, and Richardson praises without reserve the beauty and generosity of her friend's character.

strength to endure than the thin pretences of friendship she had hitherto played at . . .

A further effect of the approaching separation was to bring home to her a sense of the fleetingness of things; she began to grasp that, everywhere and always, even while you revelled in them, things were perpetually rushing to a close; and the fact of them being things you loved, or enjoyed, was powerless to diminish the speed at which they escaped you . . . (pp. 248-9)

This is the principal piece of 'wisdom' which Laura acquires at school: the recognition of the eternal flux, *panta rei*. She also acquires some dim apprehension of its necessary rightness. Like Maurice, she learns the destructive power of the passion for permanence:

Now Laura knew that it was possible to kill animal-pets by surfeiting them; and, towards the end, a suspicion dawned on her that you might perhaps damage feelings in the same way. (p. 249)

But the child is incapable at the time of acting upon the wisdom seeding itself in her subconscious, and gives herself over to morbid grief with a certain amount of relish, even while she is aware in Evelyn of 'a dash of relief . . . at the prospect of deliverance' (p. 250). The parallel with the final stages of the relationship between Louise and Maurice is clear.

Bereft of Evelyn, Laura gives herself over to God with the same unbridled enthusiasm: like Maurice and Louise she can, as her school-fellows perceive, do nothing by halves. Her affair with God opens up a moral abyss under her feet. Faced with the knowledge that failure in her examinations will bring pain to her mother, who has sacrificed so much for her, Laura prays desperately and, granted the opportunity for cheating, completes her history paper by means that are not strictly honest. The realisation that out of evil good may come is a shock to her and she is indignant with God for having arranged matters in such a way. Once the shock is over she settles down 'to practise religion after the glib and shallow mode of her friends' (p. 266).

Learning, social intercourse, culture, crime, sex, marriage, love, and religion, all these great problems present themselves in order, in the modes in which they might appear to a child in sheltered surroundings. At the centre of them is the problem of right and wrong and the need for understanding of the motives behind them. This problem is dramatised in the scene in which Annie Johns is publicly expelled from the school for

petty theft and it is in this scene that the fascination of understanding and the terrors of possessing it are brought home to Laura:

But then, she herself knew what it was to be poor—as Annie Johns had been. She understood what it would mean to lack your tram-fare on a rainy morning . . . because a lolly-shop had stretched out its octopus arms after you . . . Well, she had had no business to understand . . . nice-minded girls found such a thing impossible, and turned incuriously away . . . For them, the gap was not very wide between understanding and doing likewise. And they were certainly right . . . (pp. 121, 126)

The residue of the experience in Laura's mind is fear—'fear of stony faces, drooped lids, and stretched, pointing fingers' (p. 127). But the fear does not rule out a lively interest in observing human behaviour, her own and other people's. There is no pity for Annie Johns, but a vague feeling that all the facts have not been taken into account, as she, Laura, would have taken them. For her, the scene was a dramatic spectacle, watched with pleasureable excitement. Here is revealed something of the ruthlessness of the artist, the disinterested curiosity that distinguishes his point of view from that of the layman. It is paralleled in the scene reported in *Myself When Young*, when the young Richardson participated in the lighting of a picnic fire round a frog 'to see how it would behave'. However miserable Laura is, she observes herself being miserable, stores up responses to impressions for later use and is unable to come face to face with a situation without the artist's mediating eye. For her a naked emotion without consciousness of self will be almost impossible, and this is one of the reasons for the artist's temptation at times to abandon self to an infatuation: it provides an escape from the burden of consciousness of self, an alternative to drink or drugs or lust. In this expulsion-scene, at the centre of the book, a scene which only luck prevents Laura later from re-enacting with herself as the culprit, Richardson further defines the meaning of the epigraph to the book. It is a scene far more crucial to the growth of the artist than the adolescent gropings of the literary society after tricks of technique: 'Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding'. The first requisite of a novelist is empathy: the ability to stand in another's shoes. Laura's response to the expulsion of Annie Johns is the first hint that she possesses it. Her childish attempt to bring to her mind all the hidden motives and circumstances of Annie's crime is a crude effort

towards understanding; the pleasure of understanding is the pleasure of creation, but its terror is the narrowing of the gap between thought and deed and the consequent relinquishing of the right to judge. Here in embryo is that distinguishing mark of Richardson's later work, the search for understanding, the refusal to pass sentence.

From a technical point of view, the skill of the passages leading into the scene of Annie Johns's expulsion has not been sufficiently praised. We are made to feel the suffocating boredom of classroom routine, relieved by furtive sexuality expressed in the schoolgirls' timid interest in the master's shapely legs; then their sudden relief at being able to discharge their sense of guilt on to a scapegoat. The whole transition is managed with a deceptive simplicity.

In later years Richardson described the novel as 'the portrait of the artist as a young child'. There is something in this description, but it is a label that bears some marks of being applied after the fact. Like *Maurice Guest*, it is far more the portrait of a particular kind of person, who might or might not turn out to be an artist, rather than of one who was born to that destiny. However serviceable Laura's growth towards wisdom might be to her as yet unknown career as a writer, it is equally serviceable to her growth as a woman who must learn to live within a family and within society without much talent for doing so.

Not the least interesting aspect of the novel is the fluctuating nature of Laura's relationship with her mother, with whom she is obviously deeply emotionally involved. It is interesting to note that in the book Richardson gives to Laura's dead father, not the profession of her own dead father, but that of her mother's father: the law. She exaggerates her family's poverty and over-emphasises the 'disgrace' of having a mother who works for a living, a circumstance which in no way prevented the real Lady Superintendent from being on friendly visiting terms with Mrs Richardson. The uneasy relationship with the mother, which swings between shame, hatred, and a kind of flirtatious love, the jealousy of the sister's constant proximity to the mother, figure again in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* in the attitudes of the young Cuffy. The possible origins of these feelings will be discussed in Chapter 9. The dominant impression produced by *The Getting of Wisdom* as far as Laura's relations with her mother are concerned is one of irritation and resentment. In *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, the same irritation and resentment are

displayed towards the father and on some occasions towards the mother. In real life what evidence exists tends to show that Walter and Mary Richardson were passionately devoted to one another and that this devotion had priority over that felt for the children who arrived so late in their married life, great though it was.¹³ In such a situation a sensitive child might well have felt excluded in some sense; it is possible at least that in this feeling lies the source of Richardson's preoccupation with herself and her characters as outsiders. The course of her father's illness and death and her mother's decision to work rather than to live on capital no doubt would reinforce any tendency to such a preoccupation.

The Getting of Wisdom is an amusing book in many ways, but it is not the merry tale its author claimed it to be and the quotations from Nietzsche which she hoped would help her readers to think it so have rather the reverse effect. They conjure up too effectively the figure of Nietzsche himself, the tone of his voice and the desperation of his gaiety. But whether one sees the book as comedy, or tragi-comedy or as a light and amusing tale, one cannot fail to be impressed by the invention displayed in the handling of material which is basically a parallel. On the surface level *Maurice Guest* and *The Getting of Wisdom* are as different as it is possible for two books to be. It is only when one gets right below the surface and calls to mind the autobiographical material provided by the author herself so many years later, that it is possible to see that the psychic processes are the same in both.

¹³ See W. L. Richardson papers. The refusal of former school fellows, as old women, to allow Nettie Palmer to publish their names under photographs, is also of interest here. See Kernot-Palmer correspondence.

Chapter 6



'A Saving Occupation'?

*But wisdom still remains a star
just hung within my aching ken,
and common prudence dwells afar
among contented homes of men.* CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN

THE FORTUNES OF RICHARD MAHONY has usually been thought of as a chronicle novel of the rise of Victoria during the gold-rushes, with its psychological interest centred on the figure of Mahony, a proud, restless, impractical Anglo-Irish doctor, whose mind and heart are forever divided between the country of his origin and his adopted country. 'The last and greatest in the line of emigrant novels', one critic has called it.¹ To call it the last is over-bold: there are still emigrant novels to be written, but it is certainly the greatest we have had so far. Yet though these conventional descriptions are true as far as they go, they have done much to obscure the other levels of meaning in the novel. There has been a failure to grasp the full scope of the emigrant image, which works not only on the literal and psychological level, the social and national, but on the moral and anagogical level as well. Whatever else it is, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* is the first of our philosophical novels, though the philosophy behind it is traditional and need not have resulted from the trained study of primary sources. To call it a philosophical novel is not to imply that its purpose is to illustrate or inculcate a system of beliefs, simply to suggest that such a system provides a firm foundation for the superstructure. Its object is exploratory: it aims to understand a life at once independent of the author's and yet closely linked with her own, which represented for her a mystery; it aims at the same time at self-enlightenment and it pursues these aims with such powerful intensity that understanding and enlightenment come to have an application that

¹ Leonie Kramer, in *The Literature of Australia*, p. 324.

is more than merely personal. This most 'naturalistic' of novels, in fact, is a great parable, rooted in its own time and place, yet forever transcending them.

Whatever was the source of the philosophic views that can be detected below the surface of the novel, they are views which the novelist made entirely her own, no doubt because they squared with her experience of life and her knowledge of herself, and they are fully dramatised, not discussed, in situation, characterisation and dialogue, as well as conveyed in patterns of imagery and symbol now more clearly and carefully integrated with the thematic material. As in the other novels, we have the fleeing figure escaping from some form of constriction, from 'burial alive'. This time it is a figure perpetually on the run, ostensibly from the suffocating demands of colonial materialist society, the killing routines of medical practice, in reality from the fear not so much of death in itself, as of dying before a sense of wholeness, of interior harmony, of some revelation of the relation between the self and the universe, has been achieved.

It is not surprising that *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* received no great attention until the publication of *Ultima Thule*. Both the earlier volumes leave the reader with the impression that much remains to be said, and their peculiar beauty and their psychological density are not wholly apparent until the final movement. At the end of *Australia Felix*, we have the sensation that the real conflict between the husband and wife and the values they represent is only just beginning; the picture of Richard in *The Way Home* relies for its full impact too much on a previous knowledge of his character and the new reader would find it hard not to feel cheated at the end: the book stops, rather than finishes. By comparison, *Ultima Thule* is far more self-contained. As in *Oedipus Rex*, the whole interest is centred on the man's undoing and the reader accepts the 'exposition' given him uncritically, brought quickly under the spell of the spectacle unfolding.

The structure of each book and of the whole of which they are parts is dictated by three material facts Richardson had as given, in the life of her model. The central material fact was her father's insanity and the problem of translating it into fiction. Whatever the origins of Mahony's disease, it belongs, like Walter Richardson's, in the category of brain disorders—irreversible organic pathological conditions—resulting in im-

paired cognitive and emotional functioning and in gradual physical incapacity.² But as in most brain disorders, the pre-morbid personality is related to the pathological state. The novel carefully illustrates this relationship: *Australia Felix*, much the longest of the three, concentrates on the pre-morbid personality, singling out for emphasis just those traits which are to be emphasised later in the pathological state. To give only one instance out of a great number, Mahony's pride, particularly his professional pride, which emerges early in the book in a perfectly justifiable form, is present at the end in his pathetic recital of his name, degrees and qualifications, a recital which is almost the last vestige of his sense of identity.³ The first book, as it should, sets the personality against its background of social relationships, revealing how pride contributes to the faulty management of these and how together with the anxieties attending on the keeping of a place 'in the world' it forms a dominant thread in the pattern of disintegration. Before the book ends, we are given a premonition of the organic character of his disorder in Richard's first major illness in Ballarat, which itself has been carefully prepared for by earlier physical references at widely-spaced intervals: sleeplessness, giddiness, nausea, rising pulse-rate.

In *The Way Home*, the idiosyncrasies become more marked, the restlessness more feverish, the impatience and irritability more uncontrollable, the wild swings between depression and elation more numerous, the craving for solitude and the oppression of loneliness are more emphasised, the inward turning, the egocentrism, given freer play. The physical degeneration is kept before us: premature ageing, an impression of 'losing height', nervousness, vertigo, sleeplessness, nightmares, irrational action. The picture is one of a man who has not yet lost touch with reality, but who is losing his grip on it, of a pattern of behaviour, which in the past could have been attributed to perfectly acceptable causes and capable of alteration, but which is now beginning to be impossible to explain in

² See Alan Stoller and R. H. Emmerson, 'The Fortunes of Walter Lindsay Richardson' in *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 1, 1970, pp. 21-33. For an alternative diagnosis, which is not sufficiently compatible with all the internal evidence, see Cecil Hadgraft's article, 'Diagnosis of Mahony', in *Australian Quarterly*, June 1955.

³ *R.M.*, p. 978. If Dr Stoller's diagnosis is correct, the phrase 'Specialist for the Diseases of Women' gains added poignancy.

terms of personality disorder, or of the stresses of social relationships and of the vicissitudes of ordinary living.

Ultima Thule completes the transition from the pre-morbid to the morbid state, yet though it is an accurate account of a progress to dementia and of the dementia itself, it never loses touch with humanity: we are given the picture of a person, not a patient. One of the most poignant means by which this is achieved is through the account given of the collapse of Richard's moral sense: we are wrung with pity by the suggestion of his cringing proposal to set himself right in his practice at Barambogie by ingratiating himself with the townspeople; by his indifference to the news that the patient who might have received faulty treatment at his hands will recover; by his willingness to recommend the Barambogie practice to a possible purchaser; by his salacious conversation with Purdy in front of his children.⁴ In recounting these matters, however, Richardson reminds us as usual of the ambiguities of right and wrong. For example, though Mary is disturbed by Richard's recommendation of the Barambogie practice, she excuses it thus:

And yet . . . Another man might get on quite well here; someone who understood better how to deal with the people. (p. 891)

The theme of the inextricability of right and wrong can be traced back to Richard's unease about the winning of his case against Bolliver over the absconding drayman early in the book: his sudden realisation that to be just to a man one must take the whole man into account in one's feelings as well as one's mind, that his legal right was not an absolute right and yet that if the case had gone against him (Mahony), it would have meant unjustified suffering for his own dependants. One is reminded in such episodes of the young Laura Rambotham, bewildered at the method by which God had allowed her to pass her examination in order not to hurt her mother.

The second material fact, which had to be brought into relationship with the first in determining the novel's shape, is the circumstance of being an emigrant. The fusion is brought about so naturally that one hardly recognises that a problem existed. A proud, sensitive, restless man finds a land of promise unsatisfying; he tries the land of his birth again and finds it even more unsatisfying; he tries the land of his adoption once more and comes to destruction. The answer to the migrant's

⁴ *R.M.*, pp. 757, 890, 891, 908.

question, 'Where is my home?', is that he has none; the finding of the answer follows the path from the pre-morbid to the morbid. Migration to Australia was the ideal image in the mid-nineteenth century for psychic division, for alienation.

The third material fact to be accommodated to the other two is gold. When Professor Robertson called the novel a book about money he spoke no more than the truth. Richard's last conscious thought before his collapse is: 'If only he could hold on to the fact that *it had to do with money*'. His last conscious act is to burn the contents of his deed-box containing the evidence of the little he possesses. Here too the relationship is firm: gold is an ancient symbol of psychic wholeness. The first time Mahony comes to *Australia Felix* he is seeking his fortune and he finds a modest competence mainly by working hard for it; the second time he comes, he finds his fortune has already been made for him while he was absent; ironically, material wealth comes to him through luck, not by his own effort; the third time he comes, he has lost his fortune, mainly by ill-luck, but he accomplishes his inner destiny, he experiences, if only momentarily, psychic wholeness. This bald summary recalls the passage about Fortune in the early part of Dante's *Inferno*, and the image of Fortune's wheel, moved by the hand of Providence, is never out of sight. Seen as a whole, then, the book has its proper rhythm and outline. It is in a very real sense 'a miner's story' and its shape describes a great circle: it opens with a nameless miner being buried alive, cut off before he has succeeded in making the earth give up its treasure; it ends with the burial of Mahony, the eternal seeker, who, in the world's eyes at least, failed to find the treasure he sought, and for whom the forces of the earth were equally overwhelming.

The mere skeleton of the story compels us to look again at the three material facts and ask if that is all the meaning they are able to yield. To take the last first, the miner's story, the seeker for gold. In 1912, during a brief visit to Australia to verify her childhood impressions, Richardson stood outside the little post office at Koroit, where her father had died. 'Why do I feel so strongly about him?' she wrote in her notebook afterwards:⁵

An early Victorian man, with all the prejudices and limitations of his time. But I see him as a seeker, with all the higher needs in him

⁵ The 1912 notebook; see p. 70.

crushed physically, dissipated mentally, dazed and confused by the ultimate demands of life. He was never once equal to it. [And further down the page]: Died of a broken heart.

For reasons which will be made clear later on, the temptation to see the novel as a biography, instead of as a work of fiction, should be resisted at all costs. But for the moment it is clear that Mahony, like his begetters, father and daughter, was a 'seeker'. On the surface, to those he lived amongst, he seemed to be seeking, or it was felt he ought to be seeking, what all men seek, the means of subsistence, wealth and comfort. He was also seeking a place to feel at home in; and a feeling of fellowship with other men, a sense that others were making the journey he was making. He was, on a deeper level, seeking a reconciliation of the divisions in his nature, a cessation of the craving for flight and security. On the deepest level of all, he was seeking, 'not to deny God, but to find him anew' (p. 191); he was seeking, like Richardson's father, for the 'Bull's-eye flash of light that was some day to break in upon him solving the riddle and illuminating the meaning of existence'.⁶ His was the soul which Plato describes, struggling to remember the world of perfections from which it had come and longing to reach it, if possible, in the flesh, if not, then when the garment of flesh should be put off. This longing, which Richardson saw first as her father's, then as common to a certain human type, is figured in the miner's search for fine gold.⁷

The emigrant image can assimilate the 'miner' image easily enough, especially in the particular setting given it—the early gold-rush period of a colony struggling to be born. But the fortune this particular emigrant was seeking is not of this world: hence he will wander in it, always with empty hands, a soul in exile. And this is how Mahony saw the human situation in general, as well as his own:

For he went on to say that any country here, wonderful though it might be, was but the land of our temporary adoption; the true 'glorious country' was the one for which we were bound hereafter . . . (pp. 864-5)

The point of view is consistent with Mahony's attitude in his pre-morbid

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For parallels to the metaphysical sense of the image, see Plato's *Republic*, cited by Pater in *Plato and Platonism*, p. 222. See also Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, ch. 5.

state, even though he sums it up during the period when his mind is beginning to deteriorate. And that, too, is appropriate, for both these images are linked with the notion of insanity.

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato, discoursing of insanity, human and divine, defines a fourth species of madness as the philosopher's. Inspired by earthly beauty, he has a reminiscence of true beauty and strives to reach it; 'heedless of things below, he is charged with unsoundness of mind'. Some version of the last sentence is always in Mary Mahony's mind when Richard is absorbed in his philosophical studies. Whether Plato himself contributed to the portraiture, or whether Richardson read Pater's account of the *Phaedrus*, there is no means of knowing, but the affinities are clear, and the imagery part of a long tradition.

Furthermore, as in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, the pagan morality which underlies the philosopher's search is linked with the Christian. The true gold of the philosopher and the treasure of heaven are contrasted with the dirt sought by the earthly miner in *Australia Felix*; the contrast is applicable also to the mother country. The materialism of the colonies has its parallels, indeed its origins, in England and both countries are arraigned. The real choice between two opposing ways of life on earth is clearly formulated in Christian as well as pre-Christian terms: first when John Turnham is distracted by the death of his wife and Richard comments: 'He loved her like a pagan . . . It is written: Thou shalt have no other gods but me', and secondly, when he is taking stock of himself, towards the end of *Australia Felix*, before making his decision to leave Ballarat:

But the bitterest grudge he bore the life was for the shipwreck it had made of his early ideals . . . Like a fool he had believed it possible to serve mammon with impunity, and for as long as it suited him. He knew better now. At this moment he was undergoing the sensations of one who, having taken shelter in what he thinks a light and flimsy structure, finds that it is built of the solidest stone. Worse still: that he has been walled up inside. (p. 377)

Behind this passage is the Greco-Christian view of materialism as the prison of the soul; the Gospel origins are obvious, but there are overtones which suggest the dramatic imagery associated with *Everyman*, as well as the Socratic images of the Dialogues. The conclusion which Richard Mahony comes to in the passage has been foreshadowed in the Proem to

Australia Felix, in terms which reach beyond the personal to the general, and the whole novel illustrates the truth that it is not possible either for individuals or societies to 'serve mammon with impunity'.

The opening pages, which form the Proem to Mahony's story, work out in great detail, on the personal, social, national and universal levels, the image on which the book is founded and which expresses the simple sombre truth that the body of man is dust and his home on earth is dust. The image is first hinted at in *Maurice Guest*, when Maurice becomes sharply conscious of the beauty of the spring day just before he shoots himself, so that ideas of origin and end are linked together:

Over it all would run this light, swift wind, bending the buds, and even, towards afternoon, throwing up a fine, white dust.—And it was to the thought of the dust that his mind clung most tenaciously, as to some homely and familiar thing which he would never see again.

(*M.G.*, pp. 559-60)

For Richardson, the irreducible fact of life is dust,⁸ and the trilogy is a meditation on that fact, worked out in great detail from the opening words:

In a shaft on the Gravel Pits, a man had been buried alive. At work in a deep wet hole, he had recklessly omitted to slab the walls of a drive; uprights and tailors yielded under the lateral pressure, and the rotten earth collapsed, bringing down the roof in its train. The digger fell forward on his face, his ribs jammed across his pick, his arms pinned to his sides, nose and mouth pressed into the sticky mud as into a mask; and over his defenceless body, with a roar that burst his ear-drums, broke stupendous masses of earth. (p. 3)

The paragraph is at once an epitome of Richardson's moral view and of her artistic methods. The miner dies because he has neglected to build firm supports for his tunnel into the earth and its pressures overwhelm him in consequence. The analogies with Mahony's situation are obvious enough: one might cite among other details the phrase about his failure to insure his life that occurs like a warning note of music at certain crisis-points throughout the book. One remembers how at different stages of

⁸ As for Maudsley. See the discussion in *Body and Mind*, p. 151, on the indestructibility of matter: 'Out of dust man is formed by an upward transformation of matter and to dust he returns by the retrograde metamorphosis thereof'.

his illness he falls face downwards on the earth, overwhelmed by the pressures of existence. But there are more significant implications than the mundane or clinical. If, as I believe, Richardson's constant theme is the psychic war between nomad and settler, which sets up a desire to forget self and a desire to assert it, then the opening passage is related to what she has to say in general about the means of coming to terms with these conflicts. These resolve themselves into love (both *Agape* and *Eros*), work and art, the means of 'slabbing the walls of a drive'. Maurice Guest lacks 'an engrossing pursuit'; Richard Mahony lets go his hold of 'a saving occupation'. Fulfilment in love, which enables Mary and Louise to survive after a fashion, is denied them, and since they have no other enabling resources, the life of matter has no use for them.

From a technical point of view the paragraph is representative. What one first notices is the meticulous attention to details, the careful, orderly statement of events. Nothing, seemingly, could be more 'realistic', more matter-of-fact. But it should be clear by now that far from needing 'the support of facts' as has been claimed, Richardson, like Ibsen, made facts the servant of her interior vision. She felt no need to resort to what is commonly understood as poetic symbolism, since for her, as for Swedenborg, the whole visible world and everything in it were a set of symbols. The burial of the improvident miner is the key to a world of meanings. Her contemplation of the phenomenal is so intense that it passes over insensibly into the noumenal. In her work, as in her religion, to adapt an observation of an American critic, Philip Rahv, 'the visible and the invisible . . . stand to each other in an ironic relation of inner dependence and of mutual scepticism, mixed with solicitude'. Rahv was not writing of Richardson and it is doubtful if he had even heard of her, but there could hardly be a more exact description of her attitude to her material.

The image with which the book opens, though couched in impersonal terms, 'a man had been buried alive', arises from and is incorporated into a personal and historical situation; the miner is Long Jim's mate and they are part of a community in which a man cannot survive without a mate. But the image becomes increasingly complex, for in it is embedded the reminder of what man's relation to the earth has become since the development of his unique equipment for interfering with it rather than living *with* it:

Under a sky so pure and luminous that it seemed like a thinly drawn

veil of blueness, which ought to have been transparent, stretched what, from a short way off, resembled a desert of pale clay. No patch of green offered rest to the eye; not a tree, hardly a stunted bush had been left standing, either on the bottom of the vast shallow basin itself, or on the several hillocks that dotted it and formed its sides. Even the most prominent of these, the Black Hill, which jutted out on the Flat like a gigantic tumulus, had been stripped of its dense timber, feverishly disembowelled, and was now become a bald protuberance strewn with gravel and clay. The whole scene had that strange, repellent ugliness that goes with breaking up and throwing into disorder what has been sanctified as final, and belongs, in particular, to the wanton disturbing of earth's gracious, green-spread crust. In the pre-golden era this wide valley, lying open to sun and wind, had been a lovely grassland, ringed by a circlet of wooded hills; beyond these, by a belt of virgin forest. A limpid river and more than one creek had meandered across its face; water was to be found there even in the driest summer. She-oaks and peppermints had given shade to the flocks of the early settlers; wattles had bloomed their brief delirious yellow passion against the grey-green foliage of the gums. Now, all that was left of the original 'pleasant resting-place' and its pristine beauty were the ancient volcanic cones of Warrenheip and Buninyong. These, too far off to supply wood for firing or slabbing, still stood green and timbered, and looked down upon the havoc that had been made of the fair, pastoral lands. (pp. 7-8)

'Disembowelled', 'bald', 'breaking up', 'throwing into disorder', 'sanctified as final', 'wanton disturbing', 'virgin forest', 'havoc'—all these terms convey the notion of civilised man as the destroyer, making an enemy of his own sacred origins, turning himself, out of greed, into an exile from the earth which is his bodily home. The particular situation—the search for gold in Australia—is simply an illustration of the general deterioration in man's relationship to the soil, and the account of it contains the solemn warning that rape will bring its fitting punishment. However much man uses the earth, she will in the end use him, as though in compensation for what he has stolen. The solitary fossicking miner himself is to his industry what Mahony is to the civilisation which has grown from man's questing spirit: the Ballarat digger, resisting the introduction of mach-

inery, remains the dreamer, the individualist; 'he hovered forever on the brink of a stupendous discovery' (p. 10).

Finally, the digger, like Mahony, becomes the prey of what he seeks: It was like a form of revenge taken on them, for their loveless schemes of robbing and fleeing; a revenge contrived by the ancient, barbaric country they had so lightly invaded. Now, she held them captive—without chains; ensorcelled—without witchcraft; and, lying stretched like some primeval monster in the sun, her breasts freely bared, she watched, with a malignant eye, the efforts made by these puny mortals to tear their lips away. (p. 11)

The passage is crucial to an understanding of the book; it is also prophetic, entirely relevant to our own contemporary situation, on a national and a world level, as we become more than ever enslaved by what we have set out to possess.

In the Proem, then, are laid down all the clues we need for reading the book, clues to the nature of the man Mahony, for unravelling the meaning of his life and the life of the civilisation of which he is a part. Mahony's history, the history of the immigrant gold-digger, and the history of man himself are fused together by means we can only describe as poetical. Indeed, if, as has been said often enough, imagery is the life of poetry, then the trilogy has the structure and organisation of a great poem, and as in a great poem, this organisation is designed to convey a general truth. That such was the intention is suggested by the epigraph to the book as a whole.

After the general reflection which ends the Proem, *Australia Felix* plunges immediately into the details of life on the diggings, a life expressive of the feverish energies of a growing colony, expended for the sake of material gain, on the rape of the earth, heedless of consequences. Set against this striving background is Mahony, unworldly, reflective, moody, who has neither taste nor talent for the rape that is called economic progress, but who is represented, so unobtrusively that one hardly notices it, as living in harmony with the natural, non-human world. His attitude to scenery, to animals, is one that is to become incomprehensible to his wife and her brother John Turnham. The function of Mary, Richard's wife, a magnificently drawn figure, is to bind him to the 'real' world, the validity of whose claims he acknowledges, while his soul resists them. John Turnham, a thorough-going materialist, is the type of the

successful colonist, whose fortunes are bound up with those of the colony and who believes 'nature exists to be coerced and improved'.

In this book we see the beginnings of the clash between two opposing principles, both right, with which the trilogy is concerned, dramatised in the marriage between Mary and Mahony, who have little in common but, as Mahony later admits, 'innate sobriety and honesty of purpose'. Each begins by idealising the other; by the end of the first book, each is moving towards the awareness that the other represents a threat to his essential being. Though Richardson does not draw attention to her philosophic premiss except in one brief reference in *The Way Home*, the process of their relationship makes it clear: the doctrine of motion, the doctrine of rest; the argument between Heraclitus and Parmenides, between the nomad and the settler—this is the debate that goes on from the beginning between husband and wife, from the early days of their marriage when Mahony wishes to return to practise in England and Mary prevails on him to stay and practise in Ballarat.

Mary is the feminine conserving principle, the earth, the flesh, the settler: life in the visible world; Mahony is the masculine, destructive principle, the pilgrim spirit, the nomad, the death of the visible world. Yet the tie that binds them is unbreakable, the 'principle of their love' endures, they are necessary to one another; for the soul cannot function without the body just as the body is meaningless without the spirit. Like life and death, one is inconceivable except by reference to the other. The gulf between Mahony and his wife is symbolised in the description of their departure from Port Phillip at the end of *Australia Felix*. Mahony is restored to harmony, Mary retires to her cabin, defeated by seasickness. Water, the mutable, is his element; earth, the immutable, is hers. The sea, for a nature like Mahony's, is a reconciling symbol, in the same way as music, 'that world of sound in which he felt wholly at ease'. Both the sea and music, of course, satisfy him because they combine movement within fixed laws, the laws of harmony, the rhythms of the tides.

The most remarkable feature of the trilogy is the skill with which every item in its vast web of detail is related to its ruling ideas. After the Proem, which concerns 'burial alive', the novel opens with a description of a famous licence-hunt, a run from Authority. We have met Long Jim, the crudest of the parodies of Mahony, on the first page of the Proem,

weeping 'not for the dead man, but for himself'; the loss of his mate is 'the last link in a chain of ill-luck'. In the first chapter we see him in action, escaping from the police who are coming to check his licence. The description of his flight is painfully reminiscent of the account of Mahony's declining years:

Now it was that it suddenly entered Long Jim's head to cut and run. Up till now he had stood declaring himself a freeborn Briton, who might be drawn and quartered if he ever again paid the blasted tax. But, as the police came closer, a spear of fright pierced his befuddled brain, and inside a breath he was off and away. Had the abruptness of his start not given him a slight advantage, he would have been caught at once. As it was, the chase would not be a long one; the clumsy, stiff-jointed man slithered here and stuck fast there, dodging obstacles with an awkwardness that was painful to see. He could be heard sobbing and cursing as he ran. (p. 13)

His pursuers are diverted by Purdy, who is also without a licence, and Long Jim vanishes 'underground'. Purdy's flight ends at Mahony's store, with the policeman on top of him, upsetting a pile of tin dishes with a crash that ends Mahony's peace, and introducing the reader dramatically to the central Wanderer, the man whose soul is always on the run. These ominous notes are taken up, varied, and developed until they culminate in Mahony's self-examination in his deep despair at Barambogic, which states his dilemma openly:

What *was* that in him, over which he had no power, which proved incapable of adhesion to any soil or fixed abode? . . . He had always been in flight.—But from what? Who were his pursuers? From what shadows did he run?—And in these endless nights, when he lay and searched his heart as never before, he thought he read the answer to the riddle. Himself he was the hunter and the hunted: the merciless in pursuit and the panting prey. Within him, it would seem, lodged fears . . . strange fears. And at a given moment one of these, hitherto dormant and unsuspected, would suddenly begin to brew and go on growing till he was all one senseless panic, blind flight the only catholicon . . . He believed that the instinct of self-preservation had, in his case, always been the primary one . . . If this were so, then what he fled must needs be the reverse of the security he ran to seek: in other words, annihilation. The plain truth was: the life-

instinct had been too strong for him. Rather than face death, and the death-fear, in an attempt to flee the unfleecable he had thrown every other consideration to the winds, and ridden tantivy into the unknown. (pp. 826-7)

The final unfleecable Authority in man's life is Death. To begin the novel with a burial followed by a run from Authority is the initiating stroke of an imaginative mind wholly concentrated on its theme.

Long Jim continues to wander in and out of Mahony's story in the first book, a comic echo of his employer's discontent. His letter telling how, back in England, 'he couldn't seem to get on with people at all' foreshadows Mahony's experience in *The Way Home*. Purdy Smith plays a similar tune on a different instrument; he represents a far more complex and intimate parallel with Mahony, figuring in his dreams and echoing in his vocabulary:

He was of a nature to ride tantivy into anything that promised excitement or adventure. (p. 26)

The one link with Mahony's childhood, he is related to him as a kind of *alter ego*, a representation of the gross side of his temperament, of the restlessness, the discontent from which the divine is missing. It is Purdy, for instance, who is given to 'debauchery' on the goldfields and in Melbourne; it is he who brings the sexual side of Mahony's nature to the surface at their final meeting. It is difficult to refrain from reading Purdy as a projection, made by the author on behalf of Mahony's prototype. He fulfils something of the function of an evil genius, turning up from time to time to exacerbate Richard's restlessness, to provoke him or to tempt him. It is he who persuades him to his connection with the lawyer Ocock, which leads to his good fortune; it is he, ironically enough in response to Mary's meddling, who sows the doubt in Mahony's mind which leads to the loss of it; it is he who arrives out of the blue at the end of the story and hastens Mahony's final collapse. Purdy introduces him to Mary and puts it into his head to marry her, yoking two seeming incompatibles together. It is Purdy's behaviour which leads to the Mahonys' first quarrel, the quarrel which marks a subtle change in Mary's attitude to her husband, the change from the wifely to the motherly. But no final judgment is possible on this or on any other event. If in a worldly sense Mary and Mahony are at opposite poles, they are deeply at one in their 'interiors'. And if, at the end of the book, Purdy hastens Mahony's loss of

control, his presence is the means of bringing a new source of comfort to his bewildered children. Purdy introduces them to the family at the Shortland's Bluff Post Office, and in so doing establishes an association which is the means of making it possible for Mary to support her family after Richard becomes helpless. In the world of the novel, as in the real world, good and evil are inextricably intertwined.

The oscillations of Purdy's fortunes and Mahony's keep before us the image of Fortune's wheel:

. . . a single lucky chance, one spin of fate's wheel, all that had become his which half a lifetime's toil had failed to give him . . . (p. 503)

Mahony returning from England to unexpected affluence is greeted after a long estrangement by Purdy, growing bald, stout, and wearing 'a cheap and flashy style of dress'. Richard's prosperity increases until Purdy's overtakes it, and the wheel turns once more. Purdy evades marriage and its ties as long as he can, then marries for money, and refuses its responsibilities. Richard chafes inwardly against its burdens, but accepts them; both bring great unhappiness to the women who love them, Richard involuntarily, Purdy through emotional superficiality. Purdy belongs to the 'world of semblance', Mahony to the 'world of dream' and it is symbolically right that he fades out of Mahony's life as Mahony's ties with the earthly reality are severed.

The restlessness whose nature is subtly distinguished in the characters of Mahony and Purdy is not seen as an isolated psychological characteristic. It characterises the social medium in which the characters move. Mahony attributes it now to 'the spirit of vagrancy that lurks in every Briton's blood' (p. 166), now to Irish shiftlessness, now to the nature of the colony itself:

The life one led out here was not calculated to tone down any innate restlessness of temperament: on the contrary, it directly hindered one from becoming fixed and settled. It was on a par with the houses you lived in—these flimsy tents and draught-riddled cabins you put up with, 'for the time being'—was just as much of a makeshift affair as they. Its keynote was change . . . And so, whether you would or not, your whole outlook became attuned to the general unrest; you lived in a constant anticipation of what was coming next. (p. 27)

In such a passage Richardson fuses a historical truth, a psychological characteristic of Mahony's nature, and an autobiographical reference to

her own early sense of fear of what might happen next. In similar vein is the passage on page 232, which occurs in the comparative security of Ballarat, when the Mahonys are discussing building with old Mr Ocock. Ocock objects to spending money on a house which might be sold over his head in land resumptions:

Mahony winced at this. Then laughed, with an exaggerated carelessness. If, in a country like this, you waited for all to be fixed and sure, you would wait till Domesday. None the less, the thrust rankled. It was a fact that he himself had not spent a sou on his premises since they finished building. The thought at the back of *his* mind, too, was, why waste his hard-earned income on improvements that might benefit only the next-comer? The yard they sat in, for instance! Polly had her hens and a ramshackle hen-house; but not a spadeful of earth had been turned towards the wished-for garden.

The passage is personal, and character-revealing, referring back to the time when they first moved into the house: 'Mahony dreamed of a garden, Polly of keeping hens' (p. 180). But it is also historically illuminating, and at the same time metaphysically significant: Australia is the perfect image of earthly existence, the most uncertain place in an uncertain universe.

Out of this ferment of restlessness, certain attitudes solidify. Those characters whose natures have a greater proportion of the settler in them, combined with a large measure of independence, move towards permanence in the new setting: such are John Turnham and Mary, Ocock, Tilly, Jerry Turnham (who ends up as a bank manager), the Devines, and various other minor figures. Those whose bias is towards the nomad make temporary efforts to settle in accordance with their sense of duty and the firmness of the ties which bind them; Richard, for the sake of Mary and a possible family, does his best, unwillingly, to conform: 'Marriage would postpone the day of his departure' (p. 68); Purdy, as we have seen, refuses to be tied down, either before or after marriage; Mary's brother Ned becomes a permanent drifter; Long Jim and Sarah shuttle backwards and forwards, while Turnham's young son Johnny leaves Australia—'this dead-and-alive old country'—and flees to America!

Chapter V of Part Four of *Australia Felix* shows Richard arrived at some degree of insight into his own nature and illustrates his method of controlling it. He has been thinking over the reasons for his popularity

as a doctor, of his dislike of the colony, of his fear of succumbing to worldly ambition. Then follows this passage:

Did he dig into himself, he saw that his uncongenial surroundings were not alone to blame for his restless state of mind. There was in him a gnawing desire for change as change; a distinct fear of being pinned for too long to the same spot; or, to put it another way, a conviction that to live on without change meant decay . . . Of course, it was absurd to yield to feelings of this kind; at his age, in his position, with a wife dependent on him . . . For this was the year in which, casting the question of expense to the winds, he pulled down and rebuilt his house . . . For the new house was of brick, the first brick house to be built on Ballarat (and oh, the joy! said Richard, of walls so thick that you could not hear through them) . . . (pp. 325-6)

Twenty pages further on, we find his efforts to 'slab the walls of a drive' have failed him; his restlessness has broken out afresh and it is Mary who is trying to pin down the cause. Richard again tinkers with his house: this time he tears down the protecting verandah and creeper and tries to give himself more room by adding a top storey. The only result is fresh cause for irritability, further restlessness, depression, and 'a bottomless ennui'.

His mental stock-taking leads him through conventional arguments which might explain his condition, until he acknowledges at last his spiritual unease and the yearning stifled for so long, to free his soul from bondage. He asks himself:

'Can this be all? . . . *this*? For this the pother of growth, the struggles, and the sufferings?' . . . There could be no question of him [*sic*] resigning himself: deep down in him, he knew, was an enormous residue of vitality, of untouched mental energy that only waited to be drawn on. It was like a buried treasure, jealously kept for the event of his one day catching up with life: not the bare scramble for a living that here went by that name, but . . . a tourney of spiritual adventuring, of intellectual excitement, in which the prize striven for was not money or anything to do with money. (pp. 373-4)

But:

One was bound . . . bound . . . and by just those silken threads which, in premarital days, had seemed sheerly desirable. He wondered now what it would be like to stand free as the wind, answerable only to himself. The bare thought of it filled him as with the rushing of wings.

Once he had been within an ace of cutting and running. That was in the early days, soon after his marriage . . . (p. 375)

Having acknowledged the impossibility of serving two masters, he sets compromise aside; at the mere possibility:

. . . another side of him—what he thought of as spirit, in contradistinction to soul—cried out in alarm, fearful lest it was again to be betrayed. Thus far, though by rights coequal in the house of the body, it had been rigidly kept down. Nevertheless it had persisted, like a bright cold little spark at dead of night: his restlessness, the spiritual malaise that encumbered him had been its mute form of protest . . .

Now he saw that he dared delay no longer in setting free the imprisoned elements in him, was he ever to grow to that complete whole which each mortal aspires to be. (p. 378)

In these passages we are given the real core of the man and they compel the reader's assent to the claims of his spirit. But in the sentence that follows it becomes clear that to define the true nature of his quest is not enough and that he is still persuading himself that a more favourable environment will miraculously bring peace to his divided self. His recollection of the quotation from Horace at this point is therefore the more deeply ironical: *Coelum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt*.

In accordance with Richardson's usual method, the inner debate is also externalised as a dialogue between Mahony and Mary, and as is frequently the case in such dialogues, the reader's sympathies are detached from Richard and enlisted on Mary's behalf. She, her friend Tilly, her brother John, express the world's arguments in turn, and these arguments, when put beside Richard's exaggerations and capriciousness, are impressive. 'Her words were like so many lassos thrown out over his vagrant soul; and this was out of reach'—only by chance phrases of this kind: 'You'll bury me here if I don't get away soon', are we kept in touch with the claims of Mahony's spirit.

The account of the sale of their household goods⁹ which follows the

⁹ According to the *Ballarat Star*, Richardson's household goods were offered for sale on 6 December 1866, the day after the house and land were offered. The house apparently was not sold, as it was advertised 'To Let' from 7 to 12 January 1867. Richardson was still Medical Officer at the Ballarat District Hospital on 17 January, but left for England before the end of the month on the *Red Jacket*. Among his papers is an illustrated verse narrative of the voyage in his hand.

debate points up a further difference in their attitudes to the things of the world and throws light on one of the author's rare comments about Mary much later, which is somewhat puzzling. In *The Way Home*, describing the child Cuffy's possessive streak, she writes:

To Mary, bound by but gossamer threads to all things material, her little son's attitude was something of a mystery; (p. 601)

But his attitude is, of course, the same as his father's, as the account of the auction makes clear. Richard, like Maurice Guest and Laura, is slow to take hold, slower still to let go. He values things, not as things but as signs; his view is Platonic, Augustinian; Mary values them as things, for their own sake:

. . . as long as she could replace them by other articles of the same kind, she was content. But to him each familiar object was bound by a thousand memories. And it was the loss of these which could never be replaced that cut him to the quick. (p. 395)

Yet while a part of Richard Mahony has conformed itself to the world, though chafing under restraint, another part of him has been making some progress to the desired wholeness. His intellectual advance is in keeping with the predominantly materialistic atmosphere of the first book, and the manner of it establishes him as very much a man of his time. The world of *Australia Felix* indeed is a more spacious, less claustrophobic world than that of either of the other two books. The pressure of events, both in the local scene and in the great outside world is felt through Mahony's apprehension of these events, it is true, but at least they serve to place him in a country and an epoch, to emphasise, not his separateness from, but his connections with his kind. Mahony is a part of the intellectual history of his adopted country, as he and his country are part of the intellectual life of nineteenth-century Europe.

The ferment of the gold-diggings, the political principles involved in the Eureka episode, Victoria's struggle for independence and economic prosperity, the ambivalent attitude of the young colony towards the motherland, its anxieties about threats from abroad, the presence of the Irish, the Americans,¹⁰ and the Germans on the goldfields, with the shadow of the Great Famine, the Californian gold-rush and the 1848 revolution be-

¹⁰ Walter Lindesay Richardson's own account of the early Ballarat goldfield speaks of the superiority of American imported goods to those of English or Irish origin: Papers 1854-96 in the National Library.

hind them; the dogged persistence of the Chinese (reflected also in Dyson's short stories): all these establish the reality of the milieu and give a sense of living history, not of a painted backdrop. The Eureka affair, for instance, is presented, not to squeeze in a picturesque event in a chronicle of gold-mining, but because it is part and parcel of the hero's story; it rouses in Mahony the first stirrings of real regret that he had abandoned his profession (p. 103). When, in secret, he is treating Purdy, who has been accidentally wounded, and hears his friend describe his attitude to the Eureka affair as 'tradesman-like', he is moved by the gibe to hurry home and take down a volume of his neglected medical books, and becomes so deeply engrossed that 'the store-bell rang twice without his hearing it' (p. 104). The revolt and the events leading up to it also reveal facets of his character that could not be otherwise displayed. They allow his political opinions to be demonstrated naturally, as well as the common sense and reliance upon reason that are as much a part of his character as his impulsiveness and other-worldliness:

Mahony watched the thin procession through narrowed lids. In theory he condemned equally the blind obstinacy of the authorities, who went on tightening the screw, and the fool-hardiness of the men. But —well, he could not get his eye to shirk one of the screaming banners and placards: 'Down with Despotism!' 'Who so base as be a Slave!' by means of which the diggers sought to inflame popular indignation.

'If only honest rebels could get on without melodramatic exaggeration! As it is, those good fellows yonder are rendering a just cause ridiculous.' (pp. 97-8)

Mahony's trouble is not that he has no pertinent grasp of public issues, but that he is unable to communicate his rational views to ordinary people. His difficulty is illustrated by the difference between his speech and Purdy's to the miners' meeting.

When he has the authority of his profession behind him, it is characteristic of him to bring light and common sense into an atmosphere of emotion and superstition, as he does for instance, when John Turnham loses his wife in childbirth. Turnham has been sitting in a darkened room for days, cursing God, and staring at pictures of his wife. Mahony demands entrance to the room:

. . . drew up a blind and opened a window. Instantly the level sun-rays flooded the room; and the air that came in with them smacked

of the sea. Just outside the window a quince-tree in full blossom reared extravagant masses of pink snow against the blue overhead; beyond it a covered walk of vines shone golden-green. There was not a cloud in the sky. To turn back to the musty room from all this lush and lovely life was like stepping down into a vault. (p. 140)

Light, the sea and the natural world: these are the images associated always with the uncontaminated core of Mahony's being. The morbid side, the eccentricities have been too often stressed, the *mens sana* too often ignored. It has been forgotten that if he is in the end a fallen man, he has had an eminence to fall from; that all his life he has stood to his wife, for instance, as the fountainhead of truth. Her contempt for the doctors who try to soften the blow of his final illness reminds us of the fact:

Her own husband . . . and she could not even be told frankly what was the matter with him. For twenty-five years and more she had had him at her side, to give her the truth if she asked for it. She had never known till now how much this meant to her. (p. 934)

The thread between this point and his life on the goldfields is unbroken. There, his rootlessness prompted the natural question: 'What am I doing here?', a personal variation of the great questions agitating men's minds in Europe under the influence of the new rationalism, the spread of evolutionary theory, the movements towards political reform. In Chapter II of Part Three, we find him putting the same question in a more abstract sense and making an intellectual effort to find answers. During his enforced idleness at the beginning of his return to medical practice, he occupies himself with annotating the Bible in the light of the newer criticism, one of the first paths he takes in his 'journeyings after the truth'. Though the questions he asks are characteristic of nineteenth-century intellectual earnestness, they are also Mahony's own basic questions, as they were Richardson's and her father's:

What am I? Whence have I come? Whither am I going? What meaning has the pain I suffer, the evil that men do? Can evil be included in God's scheme? (p. 192)

Mahony's inquiries, it should be noticed, are aimed at emotional as well as intellectual satisfaction: his goal, like Brennan's, was 'wholeness'. His quest for truth follows the Socratic pattern: concern with physical inquiry into material things, self-examination in order to obtain direct knowledge

of man, mystic intellectualism. Mahony's early annotations of the Bible have the brash scepticism of nineteenth-century literalism about them, but his more characteristic attitude comes through:

nor did he fear lest his own faith should become undermined by his studies. For he had that in him which told him that God was; and this instinctive certainty would persist, he believed, though he had ultimately to admit the whole fabric of Christianity to be based on the Arimathean's dream. (p. 191)

Like Maurice Guest's, Mahony's imagination shapes its own reality, though it is not to be condemned on that account. His certainty that God exists becomes stripped down towards the end of the book to the bare affirmation that the pain in the world somehow makes sense. But before he reaches that point, his first effort is to separate substance from mere forms or trappings, keeping his own counsel, outwardly conforming unless irritated into protest, and convinced all the time that an explanation lies just beyond his grasp. In throwing off a too rigid orthodoxy, a biblical fundamentalism, he is helped by journals and books dealing with the Darwinian development theories, and by studies like Strauss's *Leben Jesu* (not long before translated by George Eliot):

A savagely unimaginative piece of work this, thought Mahony, and one that laid all too little weight on the deeps of poetry, the mysteries of symbols, and the power the human mind drew from these to pierce to an ideal truth. (p. 191)

(Critics who complain of Richardson's adherence to scientific facts might ponder the implications of the sentence.)

The duties of everyday life are a hindrance to his inquiries, and a searching, uncomfortable light is thrown on his beliefs and attitudes by a chance meeting with an unsuccessful Ballarat apothecary. They are, indeed, thrown into confusion, and the seed sown by Tangye germinates unseen. The placing of this meeting reinforces the contrast between the bent of Mahony's mind and that of Mary. Mary has just given a successful evening party in the typical Victorian family tradition, the distilled essence of bourgeois 'togetherness', which is of all things alien to his solitary nature. The account of the party and the conversation between the two men which follows it illustrate a point made by Pater in his review of *Robert Elsmere*, that women are always the centre of groups,

men the genii of isolation and division.¹¹ After the guests have gone Mahony walks out to refresh himself in the cool moonlight and is accosted by Tangye, who, like Long Jim, sounds a variation on the Mahony theme. Tangye is another epitome of the unsuccessful, unassimilated migrant, educated, whereas Long Jim is ignorant; but one has to be on one's guard against taking him for a simple parallel to Mahony. As he paints himself, he is one who would have been happy left where he was; he is a plant that dies if uprooted, temperamentally a settler, who has become a nomad by mistake. As his bitter complaints pour out about the opportunism which is necessary for success in the colony. Mahony finds himself forced into the opposite camp. This is one of several occasions when he finds himself in the role of the devil's advocate. We are reminded of Pater's comment:

Well! in that long and complex dialogue of the mind with itself, many persons, . . . will necessarily take part; so many persons as there are possible contrasts or shades in the apprehension of some complex subject. The *advocatus diaboli* will be heard from time to time. (*P.P.*, p. 164)

Confronted with his own views, Mahony falls back on Mary's and attempts to reason Tangye out of his resentment. In response to his peroration that life is an affair of the will, is what we make it under God's providence (a direct contradiction of his earlier view), Tangye delivers the one piece of wisdom his experience has taught him:

'Ah, there's a lot of bunkum talked about life . . . And as a man gets near the end of it, he sees just *what* bunkum it is. Life's only got one meanin', doctor; seen plain, there's only one object in everything we do; and that's to keep a sound roof over our heads and a bite in our mouths—and in those of the helpless creatures who depend on us. The rest has no more sense or significance than a nigger's hammerin' on the tam-tam. The lucky ones o' this world don't grasp it; but we others do; and after all p'raps, it's worth while havin' gone through it to have got at *one* bit of the truth, however small.' (p. 309)

Mahony rejects this conclusion at the time, but is forced to consider it seriously later when his life is in ruins, before he becomes aware of the reason why his instinct refused its partial truth. It is of course a materialist argument, a variation of which Mary expresses out of grief at the end of *The Way Home*:

¹¹ In his *Essays from the Guardian*.

But more and more . . . did a single thought take possession of her—and, in this thought, Mary came as near as she ever would, to a conscious reflection on the aim and end of existence . . . it came over her like a flash that, amid life's ups and downs, to be able to keep one's little flock about one, to know one's dearest human relationships safe and unharmed, was, in good truth, all that signified . . . (pp. 695-6)

Tangye, in fact, is affected by Australia as Mary is affected by her return to England. They are both 'rooted' characters. The full significance of the encounter is apparent only when considered in relation to the design as a whole, but its immediate effect on Mahony is to reveal to him the unsuspected streak of insensitivity in his own nature:

'God bless my soul! What he wanted was not argument or reason but a little human sympathy.' (p. 309)

It also casts doubt on intellectual pretensions, his own and those of men in general, while giving us a glimpse of the direction in which his inquiries will lead him:

a pile of books on the new marvel, Spiritualism . . . the big black volumes of the *Arcana Coelestia*: Locke on Miracles . . . (p. 308)

The whole chapter is a mirror held up to Mahony's own life, and though the image he beholds in it is not a reflection of his essential self, it returns later to mock his own despair. The dramatic function of the meeting as far as the action is concerned is to reawaken his sense of 'Time's winged chariot', to spur him on to renew his quest, forgotten amid the comforts, duties, and distractions of ordinary life.

These 'silken threads' are personified for Mahony in the figures of Mary and John Turnham. Richard is a solitary figure and most of the secondary characters in the book group themselves about Mary: even Purdy, Mahony's friend from boyhood days in Dublin, is involved in her circle before Mahony meets her. When he marries her, he has to come to terms with the whole web of her life: her relatives, friends, her innumerable acquaintances and dependants, 'pensioners for [her] *caritas*'; in marrying him, Mary has no one but her husband to adjust to.

But though Mary and Turnham between them symbolise the things of the world, there is a subtle distinction between them. Mary is the world redeemed by love; Turnham is acquisitiveness unredeemed. His meanness with money, his coldness to his children are constantly emphasised; even his passion for his first wife Emma is an obsession with a possessed

object. He believes in the flesh; indeed, in his own flesh and whatever is an extension of it, in the tangible, and refuses to entertain the notion that the flesh is transitory. The subtle difference between the characteristics shared by the brother and sister is brought out in the episode in *The Way Home* when Mary goes to inspect John's neglected home and finds his first wife's clothes mouldering in trunks, his second wife's finest shawl crumbling to dust from moth. The injunction 'Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth' is implicit in such scenes. We remember it when shortly afterwards Richard and John between them provide Mary with a splendid shawl:

'Well, I must remember poor Jinny and not hoard it up for the moths to get at.'

Mahony's reply is equally characteristic:

'Wear it or not as you please, love. It has served its end . . . stamped itself on a moment of time . . .' (p. 545)

In such a sequence the whole personality of the three is illuminated. If, in this first book, the author is depicting rampant materialism, and identifying in John and Mary the ideal colonists with the colony, she is at the same time, in the portrait of Mary, drawing attention to the spiritual possibilities that lie hidden within materialism. Mary's *caritas* is limited only by her capacity for perception; when she perceives, it is without bounds and instinctive, and Mahony, when his own perception is not clouded, sees her loving-kindness as an aspect of the divine. He comes to acknowledge the fact most fully when his understanding is illuminated during his return 'home' to England, where he sees his wife's generous spirit contrasted with the niggardliness of her English neighbours. This understanding is later deepened by the coming of his children.

Just as Purdy is a kind of grotesque *alter ego* of Mahony's, so Tilly is a coarse caricature of Mary. Loyalty, practical generosity, and a charitable tolerance very like Mary's own, distinguish her as they do her friend. Her attitude to her old husband's shiftless sons is characteristic of both women: 'But 'e didn't make 'imself, did 'e?' (p. 355). And this, for Richardson, is an ultimate argument: 'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves'.¹²

As with the minor characters in *Maurice Guest*, the histories of those

¹² See the passage on p. 118 of *M.W.Y.* about the responsibility of parents for their children.

who people Mahony's world have much in common with his own and the lines of these histories are clearly indicated in *Australia Felix*. All of them, as we shall see, have their secret dream, and to all their dream brings pain. The issues raised here are developed in *The Way Home*, where some of them are brought to a conclusion, leaving the final book to concentrate on the central drama. The premonition in the words that open the description of Polly's wedding-journey: 'And then the bush, and the loneliness of the bush, closed round them . . .' (p. 90), seems to be belied in the bustling, thickly-populated pages of *Australia Felix*, and the shadow that it casts over the beauty of the passage that follows is not perceived until the tale is almost ended, when the fact that it is emblematic of the process of the Mahonys' married life is fully revealed. Throughout the book, and not only in *Ultima Thule*, as has been claimed, natural description, or some detail of it, is fully integrated with the characterisation, the events and the theme; even an unemphasised metaphor like 'the pincers of the Heads' has its bearing on Mahony's feeling about his return to Australia from his voyage to England. It is not, indeed, until we come to Patrick White's *Voss* that we find another Australian novel of such a closely-woven texture in which each stitch is an indispensable part of the design.

Chapter 7

*—No roof-tree join'd the unfinish'd walls;
no lamp might shine, nor hearth-fire burn:
only the wind—the wind that calls—
may sing me welcome . . . who return.* CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN



Casting Off

IN THE WAY HOME, Richard Mahony goes twice 'home' and back: once as an intending settler, once as a rich man, who returns to Melbourne ruined. As the first book described his efforts to conform to Mary and the world she stands for, so the second describes his struggles to free himself, struggles whose outcome forms the matter of the third book.

The Way Home is divided into three parts. The first deals with Mahony's unsuccessful attempt to settle down to a practice in England; the second with his brief years of wealth in Australia, when he becomes a striking and handsome figure in Melbourne society, years which encompass the births of his children; the third with the illness and death of John Turnham, the effect of which, like the Tangye episode, is to remind him of time running out, and set him on the move again. His whirlwind tour of Europe ends with the cable announcing the collapse of his 'fortunes' and he comes back to begin the struggle once more.

The Proem to *Australia Felix* concerns the earth—the Mary element; the Proem to *The Way Home* concerns the sea—the Richard element. Just as the first book strives towards stability, so the second strives towards instability, to a breaking up of painfully established ways of life. In the first Proem, men were busily engaged in seeking their fortunes; in the second, they have either made them, or given up the effort to do so; only one of the successful travellers on the ship returning to England is grateful to the land which has given him his opportunity and is determined to identify himself with it. Mahony's reactions to the opinions of the dis-

grunted migrants illustrate his habitual dislike of seeing his own attitudes in others:

They chafed him in ways they did not dream of. The Midases of the party—it was ruled sharply off into those who had amassed a fortune and those who patently had not; none went ‘home’ but for one or other reason; he himself was the only half tint on the palette—these lucky specimens were for ever trumpeting the opinion that the colonies were a good enough place in which to fill your money-bags; but to empty them, you repaired to more civilised climes. And to hear his case—or at least what had once been his intention—put thus crudely made Mahony wince. The speakers reminded him of underbred guests, who start belittling their entertainment before they are fairly over their host’s door-sill . . . Even less to his taste was the group of lean kine. With nothing to show for themselves but broken health and shattered illusions, these men saw the land of their exile through the smoked glasses of hate, and had not a single good word to say for it. Which of course was nonsense. (pp. 411-12)

As in the conversation with the chemist Tangye, we find him playing the devil’s advocate once more:

And so it came about that Mary was sometimes agreeably surprised to hear Richard, if not exactly standing up for the colony, at least not helping to swell the choir of its detractors. This was unending, went round and round like a catch. People outdid one another in discovering fresh grounds for their aversion. Besides the common grievances—the droughts and floods, the dust winds and hot winds, the bare, ugly landscape, the seven plagues of winged and creeping things—many a small private grudge was owned to, and by the most unlikely lips. Here was a burly tanner who had missed the glimmer of twilight, been vexed at the sudden onrush of the dark. Another grumbler bemoaned the fact that, just when you looked for snow and holly-berries: ‘Hanged if there ain’t the pitches and appricots ripe and ready to tumble into your mouth!’

‘An onnatcheral country, and that’s the truth.’

‘The wrong side of the world, say I—the under side.’ (p. 412)

Yet Mahony is equally unable to identify himself with the ‘white raven’ who intends to go back to Australia, and who defends it on the same

rational grounds as Patrick White's Harry Robarts was to do in *Voss* so much later:

Once only, in a conversation engineered by Mahony out of curiosity, did he speak up. And then it was with a disagreeable overbearing. 'I left England, sir, six years since, because man isn't a sprite to live on air alone. My father went half-starved all his days—he was a farm-hand and reared a family o' nine on eleven bob a week. He didn't taste meat from one year's end to another. Out yon'—and he pointed with his cutty-pipe over his shoulder—I've ate meat three times a day. I've a snug little crib of me own and a few acres o' land and I've come home to fetch out me old mother and the young fry. They shall know what it is to eat their fill every day of the seven, and she'll drive to chapel of a Sabbath in her own trap and a black silk gown.—Nay, be sure I haven't loafed around, nor sat with me hands before me. There's not much anyone can learn me in the way of work. But the old country wouldn't either gimme anything to do, nor yet keep me free, gratis and for nothing'. And so on, in a strain dear to the tongues of the lower orders. (p. 413)

Such passages catch up with remarkable accuracy the attitudes and motives of the colonists of the day. Complaints about the topsy-turvy seasons are common enough in our history, but the poetic touch about the tanner, wistful for the twilight, leavens the commonplace; so does the unconscious irony of the grumbling about nature's bounty: fresh peaches and apricots were still luxuries even for the moderately well-off in England sixty years after Mahony's day. Not only are the passages true to history at the same time as they remain firmly part of the fictional pattern, but, refracted as they are through Mahony's vision, they give further insight into his character as well as into his social and political attitudes, while setting the course his experience 'at home' is to take.

Mahony's response to the last stretch of dividing sea, before the ship is taken in tow by the pilot, is equally characteristic and returns us from the man as a social being to the man as an individual, returns us, that is, to his essential self:

Before him lay an aquarelle of softest colouring, all pale light and misty shadow; and these lyric tints, these shades and half-shades, gripped his heart as the vivid hues of the south never had. *Their very fleetingness charmed . . .* [Italics mine] (p. 413)

The shadows give way to a storm, the storm to a 'leaden sea, which the rain had beaten flat, reduced to a kind of surly acquiescence'. The atmosphere of the natural world, 'the cold and stony aspect of things', foreshadows the atmosphere of the human world they are to inhabit during their stay in England: their one gleam of warmth and understanding from the outside will be found at the fireside of Mary's mother. England, in fact, *drives them in* upon themselves, in contradistinction to the centrifugal pressures of Australia.

Meanwhile, the first sight of his homeland awakens in Mahony a shock of surprise at its controlled beauty and its smallness, and it is again characteristic of him that he seeks a rational justification of the smallness. He concludes that his race is great because of it, not in spite of it, and he sees himself as part of the navigator tradition which has added to the world's store of experience. The 'navigator' image opens out to embrace the image of the 'pilgrim soul', of man the exile, on the way to his eternal home (p. 417).

The Proem to *The Way Home* is one of Richardson's rare *bravura* passages and captures faithfully an aspect of the 'empire-building' doctrine of the day mediated through a discriminating intelligence.¹ The unusual richness of its orchestration is all the more effective by contrast with the muted passage that follows in Chapter I.

Immediately after Mahony's meditations on vast horizons, we are brought up, with insidious irony, against present fact. We find Richard in a minute English village, in a very solid, very old stone house, shut off from prying eyes behind a walled garden, at breakfast, reading *The Times* 'of the day before' (p. 421). The note struck by this apparently casual phrase is the keynote of his English experience. All the backwardness, the provincialism, the opportunism, the petty dishonesty, the insolence that had irked him so much in the colony are now presented in English terms and he begins to learn the real force of Mary's exclamation: 'But people are the same everywhere!' Snobbery of caste is commoner in England than

¹ The religious zeal bound up with imperialism and the gold-fever is brought out in Asa Briggs's quotation from Ashley's diary in his *Victorian People*, p. 30: '*Auri sacra fames*. What no motive, human or divine, could effect, springs into life at the display of a few pellets of gold in the hands of a wanderer. This may be God's chosen way to fulfil his commandment and "replenish the earth" '.

snobbery of riches, though both are present, and a policy of exclusiveness is served as much by the one as by the other. Mahony learns quickly, as Lawson's Mitchell learned in other circumstances,² that the mother country has no room for the nomad son: 'his place has long been filled'. He also comes to see that he and Mary have taken on some of the spaciousness of their adopted country: they have become citizens of the world in contrast to the home-keeping islanders:

'What we need, you and I, Mary, is a society that would take the best from both sides. The warm-heartedness of our colonial friends, their generosity and hospitality; while we could do without the promiscuity, the worship of money, the general loudness and want of refinement.

—You wonder if I shall be happy here? I like the place, love; it's an ideal spot. I like this solid old house, too: and so far the climate has suited me. I seem to be getting on fairly well with the people; and though the practice is still nothing extraordinary, it has possibilities.'

'Yes; but . . .'

'But? Well, I undoubtedly miss the income I used to have; there's little money to be made—compared with Ballarat, it's the merest niggling. And besides that, there was a certain breadth of view—that we'd got used to, you and I. Here, things sometimes seem atrociously cramped and small. But we must remember good exists everywhere and in everyone, wife, if we only take the trouble to look for it. And since the fates have pitched us here, here we must stay and work our vein until we've laid the gold bare. We've got each other, love, and that's the chief thing.' (p. 470)

Such a passage raises a number of interesting points. First, it exemplifies the continual interchange of attitudes that characterises both husband and wife: 'good exists everywhere and in everyone' is a concept usually associated with Mary, and though it is to some extent a remark made to rationalise Mahony's own immediate, preferred situation, it is evidence that circumstances are forcing him round to a point of view typical of his wife. The sentence that follows about the 'fates' is also Richard's expression of Mary's normal tendency to make the best of whatever circumstances she finds herself in. Her private, somewhat tart reflection on his use of the word as a synonym for his own 'caprices' must not be read as a general judgment: it has to be assessed against the other references to

² See 'On the Edge of a Plain' in *While the Billy Boils* (Sydney, 1896).

Fate that accumulate throughout the whole novel. The reappearance of the 'gold' image needs no comment.

The phrase 'breadth of view' stimulates a number of speculations. It is spoken about a colony still in a state of ferment after the early gold-rushes when people of all sorts from all over the world were pouring into it: 'breadth of view' would be a natural consequence of such a situation, and it seems to be a fact that an uprush of vitality in Australian mental life has tended to coincide roughly with high peaks of immigration. But, it may also be that the very acute sense of isolation felt by the early colonists and their immense anxiety to keep in touch with European civilisation (manifested in such organisations, for instance, as Acclimatisation Societies) made them far less insular and provincial in their attitudes than their home-keeping brethren who took it for granted that they were at the centre of things. In present-day Australia, we can see the reverse of this situation. Modern communications have brought us into instant touch with the outside world, but there is little evidence of any *mass* awareness of what is going on there, and 'breadth of view' is not what one would single out as a leading characteristic of the great majority of Australians.³

Mahony's words, in the paragraph just quoted, are an attempt to comfort his wife after the disastrous social *gaffe* of her supper party in Chapter V. This is designed, of course, as a contrast to the supper party in Ballarat, the token of her complete social success. The Buddlecombe party dramatises in simple domestic imagery Richard's observation that Mary's nature is too big for the people she has come to live amongst. Her first mistake is to mix together members of local society not normally on visiting terms with one another; her second is the lavish scale of her hospitality:

Not until the party was squeezed into the little dining-room, round a lengthened dinner-table on which jellies twinkled, cold fowls lay trussed, sandwiches were piled loaf-high—not till then and till he saw the amazed glances flying between the ladies, did he grasp how wrong Mary had gone. A laden supper-table was an innovation: and who were these newcomers, hailing from God knew where, to attempt to improve on the customs of Buddlecombe? It was also a trap for the gouty—and all were gouty, more or less. Thirdly, such profusion constituted a cutting criticism on the meagre refreshments that were

³ 'Breadth of view' is, perhaps, in short supply in any society.

here the rule. He grew stiff with embarrassment; felt, if possible, even more uncomfortable than did poor Mary, at the refusals and head-shakings that went down one side of the table and up the other. For none broke more than the customary Abernethy, or crumbled a sandwich. Liver-wings and slices of breast, ham-patties and sausage-rolls made the round, in vain. Mrs Challoner gave the cue; and even the vicar, a hearty eater, followed her lead, the only person to indulge being the worthy gentleman who had caused half the trouble—and *him* Mahony caught being kicked by his wife under the table.

(pp. 466-7)

In the discussion afterwards, no comment is made on the ill-breeding shown by the *guests* in failing to set their hosts at ease; indeed the only possible comment on the niggling distinctions of social behaviour is Mary's:

'Oh, Richard, it all seems to me such *fudge!* How grown-up people can spend their lives being so silly, I don't know!' (p. 468)

Richard's remark on the religious narrow-mindedness of the community is equally vehement:

'... objects to my going to hear a well-known preacher, just because he belongs to another sect? Preposterous!' (p. 468)

Their differences are resolved, their fundamental unity affirmed, but there is a significant reversal thenceforward of the outward roles of husband and wife in confronting English society. In Australia, it was Mary who was always pouring oil on waters that Richard's tactlessness had troubled; in England, it is Richard who tries to curb Mary's directness and outspokenness, 'though at heart his whole sympathy was with Mary and Mary's ineradicable generosity'. What is revealed in the presentation of this small section of English society is that provincialism is a habit of mind, not an effect of geography—the same conclusion as George Eliot had reached by a different route in *Middlemarch*, over half a century earlier.

Their visits to their own homes provide a commentary on the origins of their characters and their relationships with others. The welcome given to both by Mary's mother is warm and genuine; but Mary's sister, kindly as she seems, takes advantage of her presence to carry out her own aims. Like her brothers and sisters in Australia, she makes use of Mary; there is no real feeling of depth or permanence about the encounter, in spite of

the understanding between Mary and her mother and between the mother and Richard. In Richard's home setting the atmosphere is even more arid. There is no attempt to *present* his mother and sisters; the home-coming episode is reported rather than dramatised, a fact which contributes to the air of lifelessness evoked. Richard's 'journey into the past' is an action foreign to his nature; he has an aversion from looking on the selves which he has discarded. The episode shows clearly the sources of his pride, his sensitivity, his emotional austerity, his spirituality, but it shows also that the springs of his life are dried up, beyond all renewal; Mary's connections hold, because the base of them is love, not pride. Nevertheless, even this hold is tenuous.

But the difficulties each encounters in attempting to settle 'at home', in spite of their surface resemblances, have little in common. Mary in emigrating to Australia had found the soil in which she could flourish: she needed more room than England could have afforded her, and her return from Australia has, like Tangye's migration to it, all the shock of an uprooting. Richard's roots do not take kindly to any earthly soil and it is Mary's mother, who has known him so briefly, who perceives the truth about him. She tells Mary to be glad of his faults and failings: 'even if you can't understand 'em. They help to bind him. For his roots in this world don't go deep . . .' (p. 444)

Her insight into him, indicating the true sense in which he is an emigrant, prevents our seeing the theme of the book, if other clues have been missed, as the stock dilemma of being an Anglo-Australian, and reveals the mythic aspect of the story of the unassimilated migrant. Mahony's situation is independent of time and circumstance. He lives in the world, as the Proem has hinted (p. 417), like an exile from beyond it and his insatiable hunger for what this world cannot give him is a nostalgia for the source from which he feels he springs. Unlike Maurice Guest, he has no abiding interest in any earthly thing, in none of the structures which men use to defend themselves against annihilation; not love, nor art, nor a saving occupation, though he understands them all. It is in this book that the last defence of men against unhappiness, 'the saving occupation' collapses. In *Australia Felix* we find him cursing:

for the hundredth time the folly he had been guilty of in throwing up medicine. It was a vocation that had fitted him as coursing fits a hound, or housewifery a woman. (p. 166)

In *The Way Home*, after he has acquired his fortune, he abandons it again, justifying himself thus:

One cannot love one's work, the handle one grinds by—the notion that such a thing is possible belongs to a man's green and salad days.

Though perhaps if one climbed to the top of the tree . . . But for the majority of us, the fact that we labour to earn our bread by a certain handiwork wears all liking for it threadbare. It becomes a habit—like the meals one eats . . . the clothes one puts on of a morning . . .

(pp. 515-16)

The abandonment of the habit proves to be his earthly undoing: an unstructured existence, or a self-structured existence, is possible only to the rarest of souls. Before this point, however, when his attempts to set up practice in England have failed and Mary promptly suggests they go 'home', his unspoken response is:

'Only do not call it home' . . . Short of a miracle, that name would never, he believed, cross his lips again. No place could now be 'home' to him as long as he lived. (p. 496)

The English experience ends on a note of irony. Mary who, unlike Richard, has no aversion from retracing her steps, and who maintains the continuity of her life unbroken, hopes he will take up practice at Ballarat once more:

And nursing these schemes, Mary set her lips and frowned with determination. Never again in the years to come, should he be able to say he repented not having taken her advice. This time she would set her will through, cost what it might. (p. 500)

This of course is precisely what she does not do, as we see in Part II; and the results of her failure to carry out her resolution are as might have been expected. In Chapter II, feeling financially secure, Mahony announces his intention to give up practice; and she replies with the logic of common sense, 'But, Richard, you'd soon get tired of having nothing to do'. The argument follows its characteristic pattern, but afterwards: for the first time, Mary hesitated. The difference was, what he now proposed made a subtle appeal to her. For, to be nothing, to have neither trade nor profession, to fold one's hands and live on one's income—that was the *ne plus ultra* of colonial society, the ideal tirelessly to be striven after. (p. 519)

Mary's instinct fails her because the poison of the acquisitive society

has worked on her unobserved: the prophecy uttered at the end of the first Proem exempts no one. In fact, an early passage shows her already disposed to its influence; when, in *Australia Felix*, she is attempting to persuade Richard to take up medical practice once more, he remarks jokingly:

'Pussy, I believe she has ambitions for her husband,' . . .

'Of course I have. You say you hate Ballarat, and all that, but have you ever thought, Richard, what a difference it would make if you were in a better position?' (p. 174)

The second passage is the logical outcome of the first and the spirit of both is that of the parent-society from which they flee for the second time. That too, like its daughter-colony, set its highest value on affluent idleness.

Settled in luxurious surroundings in Melbourne, Mahony and Mary are able to give free rein to their dominant characteristics. The absence of a solid supporting routine, and Mary's 'rampageous hospitality' which fills the new house with friends who are uncongenial to her husband, throw Mahony back on the solitary habit which has been growing on him. While she is absorbed in people, in 'the pensioners for her *caritas*', he retires into the world of ideas. He now sets to work to re-read systematically 'the great moderns: those world-famous scientists and their philosophic spokesmen who dominated the intellectual life of the day'. After a time he becomes troubled by their attitude:

Riding on the crest of the highest wave of materialism that had ever broken over the world, they themselves were satisfied that life and its properties could be explained to the last iota, in terms of matter; and, dogmatically pronouncing *their* interpretation of the universe to be the only valid one, they laid a crushing veto on any suggestion of a possible spiritual agency. Here it was, he parted company with them. (p. 556)

The pages that follow are of central importance, first because they are a brief chronicle of the spiritual quest which the book dramatises, secondly because the ideas themselves are part of the renewal of a non-Christian metaphysical tradition which is a major element in nineteenth-century Romanticism, the expression of which has been overlooked in Richardson; thirdly because Mahony's personal adaptation of the tradition has much in common with Brennan's. It is of course part and parcel of Richardson's own belief, as the biographical material so far available makes

clear. The reader of the novel, however, without access to the material, has to rely on the tone and style of the passages to assess the seriousness attached to them, and above all to assess the quality of the arguments themselves. What chiefly characterises Mahony's view is a healthy humility and it is impossible not to sympathise with his rejection of Huxley's definition of science as 'trained and organised commonsense', with his distrust of those 'who declared that one should decide beforehand what was possible and what was not'.⁴

Nor can we hope to evade his question why so much laborious research should be devoted to the *origins* of life, while problems of its *direction* are left untouched:

Strange, indeed, was it to watch these masters toiling to interpret human life, yet denying it all hope of a further development, any issue but that of eternal nothingness. (p. 557)

He comes to view the rationalist position as religious orthodoxy stood on its head:

On the one hand, for all answer to the burning needs and questionings of the hour, the tale of Creation as told in Genesis, the Thirty-nine Articles, the intolerable Athanasian Creed; on the other, as bitterly stubborn an agnosticism—each surely, in the same degree, stones for bread. (p. 557)

He turns from both to occult studies, alchemy, astrology, Paracelsus and Apollonius of Tyana:

Thence he dived into mysticism; studied the biographies of St Theresa, Joseph Glanvill, Giordano Bruno; and pondered anew the trance history of Swedenborg. (p. 557)

It should be noticed here that this is not, on the part of the author, a random choice of names. Paracelsus (Theophrastus von Hohenheim) was a sixteenth-century student of alchemy and chemistry, and a practising physician, a neo-Platonist and a devotee of empirical methods in pharmacy and therapeutics. Apollonius of Tyana was a first-century rival

⁴ Possibly an allusion to Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, p. 123: 'While keeping its inquiries *within the limits of the knowable*, it may examine critically and use all available means of testing the claims and credentials of any professed revelation of the mystery' (my italics). More likely, however, it is an allusion to the Archbishop of York's argument, which Maudsley was answering. See note 22, Ch. 2.

to Christ, a teacher of neo-Pythagorean doctrines and advocate of a pure and reformed religion. His fame spread, as he travelled, through Asia Minor and India.

St Teresa of Avila, a sixteenth-century mystic with a gift for practical organisation, found her true vocation in middle age, after a purposeless and fluctuating mental existence, in reorganising and revitalising the Carmelite Order.

Joseph Glanvill was a seventeenth-century cleric who became a member of the Royal Society and was remarkable for his freedom from religious and scientific dogmatism. *The Vanity of Dogmatising* (1661) was a noble appeal for free thought and experimental science.

Giordano Bruno, seventeenth-century heretic and metaphysician, has been described as excitable, full of enthusiasm, 'mental unrest and scepticism, but guided by an unsatisfied yearning for truth'. He held that the universe was a manifestation of God and therefore itself divine. 'God was in the most literal and physical sense, all *in all*.'

Swedenborg as we have already seen was an eighteenth-century scientist-turned-theologian, who attempted a gigantic synthesis of ancient tradition, Christian theology, and science.

It will be noticed at once that there is in each of these figures one or more elements that would strike an answering chord in Mahony's own nature, apart from the appeal of their intellectual interests. The compound of scepticism and imagination characteristic of his mind is reflected in the books his creator describes him as studying. The same compound can be traced in Walter Lindesay Richardson's *Commonplace Book*, which contains extracts from these writers.

Mahony's reading leads him to the tentative conclusion that:⁵ there were mysteries at once too deep and too simple for learned brains to fathom. Actually, the unlettered man who said: 'God is, and I am of God!' came nearest to reading the riddle of the universe. (pp. 557-8)

Then follows the passage, open to that charge of teleology and wishful thinking which is particularly repellent to the modern mechanistic thinker, in which the notion of a Hereafter is linked with a possible explanation of pain and evil:

How cold and comfortless, too, the tenet that this one brief span of

⁵ This is nearer Maudsley's own attitude.

being ended all. Without faith in a life to come, how endure, stoically, the ills that here confronted us? . . . the injustices of human existence, the evil men did, the cruelty of man to his brothers, of God to man? Postulate a Hereafter, and the hope arose that, some day, the ultimate meaning of all these apparent contradictions would be made plain: the endless groping, struggling, suffering prove but rungs in the ladder of humanity's upward climb. (p. 558)

This reflection is characteristic of men of the period who relinquished their Christian views with difficulty in the face of the rising tide of Darwinism and strove at all costs to accommodate the development theory to the life of the spirit. But it is important to notice that the passage takes the form of a postulate, a question, and that it is not Mahony's final answer, which is to come later, during his own experience of pain. For the moment, his position is as follows:

Himself he held this present life to be but a portal, an antechamber, where dwelt an imperfect but wholly vital creation, which, growing more and more passionately aware with the passing of the ages of its self-contained divinity, would end by achieving, by being reabsorbed in, the absolute consciousness of the Eternal. (p. 558)

Here is the core of Mahony's belief—and, one should add, of the author's—and it is also the core of Brennan's. It is one from which Mahony does not waver; what he is looking for is not the belief, but some confirmation of it. Of both Mahony and Brennan it could have been written, as Pater wrote in discussing *Robert Elsmere*:⁶

[Robert Elsmere was a type of a large class of minds which cannot be sure that the sacred story is true.] But there is also a large class of minds which cannot be sure it is false—minds of various degrees of conscientiousness and intellectual power, up to the highest. For their part they make allowance in their scheme of life for a great possibility . . . such persons are the nucleus of a church . . . they knit themselves to believers, in various degrees, of all ages.

In search of some confirmation of what he cannot cast aside as false, Mahony turns to Spiritualism. If its claims are true, and some of the testimony cannot be lightly dismissed, he admits:

then it meant that a new crisis had arisen in man's relation to the

⁶ See his review in *Essays from the Guardian*.

Unseen, with which both science and religion would eventually have to reckon. (p. 558)

He argues that both conventional Christianity and Spiritualism depend on very frail human channels to convey their message and cannot see why one should be any more deterred by table-rapping than by the supercilious drawl of a parson, from considering the doctrine as distinct from its exponent. One can have no quarrel so far with the reasoning, and only understanding for the question with which the section ends: was it possible to draw from this new movement proofs of the knowledge one's soul craved—the continuity of existence; the nearness, the interwovenness, of the spiritual world to the material; the eternal and omnipotent presence of the Creator? (p. 559)

The arguments are conveyed through Mahony's mind, but there is nothing in the manner in which they are conveyed which suggests that the author views them ironically. Within the framework of his beliefs and set against the state of intellectual shock in which many of the minds of his time found themselves, his ideas deserve to be taken seriously. But most writers on *Richard Mahony* have paid as little attention to them as Mary Mahony is shown to have done, and their relationship to the philosophical content of nineteenth-century post-Darwinian fiction has been overlooked. Richard Mahony stands beside Brennan's Wanderer and traces back through *Marius the Epicurean*, *Niels Lyhne*, and a whole line of nineteenth-century novels which are the vehicle of a religious quest. The fact that Mahony's passion for truth exceeds his capacity to pursue it single-mindedly is beside the point. Or rather, that *is* the point: the philosopher-genius, wholly dedicated to his calling, is, like the artist-genius, in no need of compassion; he is fulfilling his being and so is not 'tragic'. Richardson, like Pater, recognises 'minds of various degrees of conscientiousness and intellectual power, up to the highest'. It is the degrees less than the highest that interest her, for their plight, like that of the unsuccessful colonist, or the second-rate artist, is more pitiable.

It is in this book that the philosophical scaffolding on which the novel rests becomes most clear. The exchange of letters between husband and wife that follows the account of Richard's studies defines their separate beings once more (pp. 561-2). Mary's letters show Richardson using that controlled ambiguity which was one of Tolstoy's favourite devices, deliberately cultivated. Throughout the book we are meant to see Mary as a pagan

soul, *naturaliter Christiana* by reason of her unfailing love. Mahony has just referred to 'the simple unlettered man' as coming nearest to reading the riddle of the universe. In the account of Mary's dealings with the problem of Henry Ocock's alcoholic wife, we are meant to see just such a soul, by-passing the scruples and delicacies which would have hindered Mahony from comforting Ocock. But there is something in the tone in which Mary describes the incident that repels: a faint trace of smugness, of the kind of vanity to which teachers who succeed in becoming the confidants of children are sometimes prone. The pedagogic tone of the last sentence confirms the impression: 'I hope the silk vests are a great success and that you remember the days for changing them'. This kind of edge to Mary's voice is one of the subtle ways of indicating the growing complacency of the world for which she stands and which Turnham's death enables Richard to recognise and thrust aside once more. It is plain from what follows that his restlessness has been curbed temporarily by access to music: 'the world built wholly of sound where he moved light-footedly and at ease' (p. 565). Now at the centre of the book come two important conversations—one with Mary, a quarrel about his apparent disloyalty to his old friend, Purdy, one with a woman friend with whom he seems to have something in common and who shares his interests in music and Spiritualism.

In the first he gives direct expression to the Heraclitean doctrine, by which he explains his own changeable nature: '*Panta rei* is the eternal truth: *semper idem* the lie we long to see confirmed' (p. 581). The rest of the debate as usual puts the reader on Mary's side; Richard hardly escapes Mary's charge of callous snobbishness, though his thrust—'and I know doing good to you is the temptation strong drink is to others' . . . warns us, like the tone of the letters, of the complexities of Mary's altruism.

In the second conversation, with Mrs Marriner, he assents to her diagnosis of his trouble: 'I think it is with you [she tells him] as the German poet sings: "There, where thou art not, there alone is bliss!"' He replies:

Indeed and that hits my nail squarely on the head. For I can assure you it's no mere spirit of discontent—as some suppose. It's more a kind of . . . well, it's like reaching out after—say, a dream that one

has had and half forgotten, and struggles to recapture. That's boldly put. But perhaps you will understand.'

A lengthy silence followed. The clock ticked; the dog sighed gustily. Then, feeling the moment come, the lady rose and swept her skirts to the piano. 'Let me play to you', said she.

Mahony gratefully accepted.

Once the music had begun, however, he fell back on his own reflections; they were quickened rather than hampered by the delicate tinkling of the piano. He felt strangely elated . . . (pp. 613-14)

The whole scene is handled with a mixture of serious statement and delicate irony. The irony is necessary to indicate the fact that Richard is not really drawn towards Mrs Marriner. We remember his habit of unburdening himself to strangers; and he is quick enough to perceive that her passion for knowledge is a sexual weapon. But the episode contains a sober truth: that only 'an innate sobriety and honesty of purpose' are what he has in common with Mary; she has no grasp of his non-material needs, 'his studies, his inclinations—down to his very dreams and hopes of a hereafter' (p. 615). Its central importance, of course, lies in Richard's fumbling statement of the Pythagorean doctrine of reminiscence in an ambience of music.

The scene occurs between a birth and a death: the birth of Mahony's son after fifteen years of marriage, the death of Mary's brother John. The response of husband and wife to the prospect of children fits into the general symbolic pattern:

His chief sensation was one of fear: he shrank from the responsibility that was being thrust upon him. A new soul to guide, and shield, and make fit for life! . . . when he himself was so unsure. How establish the links that should bind it to the world around it?—as to the world unseen. How explain evil? . . . and sin? . . . the doctrine of reward and punishment?—and reconcile these with the idea of a tender, all-powerful Creator? (pp. 590-1)

Then:

'Radiant' was the only word that described Mary. No irksome thoughts of responsibility bore her down . . . But then, there never was less of a doubter than Mary: no hypercritical brooding over man's relation to God, or God's to the world, had ever robbed her of an hour's sleep . . . Or was it perhaps just the reverse—the absence of any religious

spirit? Sometimes he half believed it—believed there existed in Mary more than a dash of the pagan . . . (p. 591)

When the children are born Mahony's love and understanding are fully engaged, but the fear remains and the children, 'dimly conscious of his perpetual uneasiness, were rendered uneasy by it in their turn'. It is the mother who is the source of their sense of warmth and security, though the little boy learns early to be apprehensive of the possible loss of it. It is in the handling of Cuffy's fit of jealousy that Mahony:

For almost the first time in his knowledge of her . . . seemed to sense a streak of hardness in Mary; for the first time she did not excuse a wrong doer with a loving word. And this her own child! (p. 599)

For Mary the child of course is a scapegoat for Richard, just as for Cuffy the rocking-horse he beats in anger is a scapegoat for his mother. And in Cuffy the mother fails to recognise her own stubbornness, though she is aware of the father's. Mahony leaves their religious training to her: The question whether Cuffy and his sisters should be taught to pray or not to pray . . . never entered her head. As soon as they could lisp their first syllables, they knelt night and morning at her knee to repeat their 'Gentle Jesus!' and 'Jesus, tender Shepherd!'. And as long as the great First Cause was set forth in this loving and protective guise, Mahony saw no reason to interfere. (p. 600)

The attitude of each parent to the children reflects, as all their behaviour does, their basic philosophic stance: to Mary the children are possessions, extensions of her own ego; to Richard they are separate souls, wearing the temporary garment of flesh for a journey in time, souls on whom he has no right to impose himself.

The illness and death of John Turnham sharpen his sense of his own predicament as a pilgrim soul, awakened into life by the coming of children and by his associations with Mrs Marriner and the Spiritualist movement. John's death is the final step in the process of uprooting him once more.

Turnham's appeal to Richard comes when his life is already forfeit; his body eaten away by cancer. It is tempting to wonder whether Richardson's reading of the *Inferno* has left a trace on her handling of John's story. His particular fate is certainly appropriate to the life of a man who has dedicated himself to the body and its preservation. But though the nature of his illness is perhaps a grim comment on his life, the manner of his

death expresses not only one of Richardson's moral imperatives, but her belief that there is a point at which matter becomes spirit and the dualism of soul and body is resolved. Turnham is a fool who persists in his folly, a man 'who does not turn round at the last moment'. As Mahony reflects:

There had been no whining for pity or pardon: on his own responsibility he had lived, and he died by the same rule . . . (p. 649)

The description of his dying face indicates a restoration of harmony: Slowly the lids rolled back once more, and for the fraction of a second the broken eyes met Mahony's. In this, their last, living look, not a trace was left of the man who had been. They were now those of one who was about to be—fined and refined; rich in an experience that transcended all mortal happenings; wise with an ageless wisdom. And as they closed forever to this world, there came an answer to Mahony's words in ever so faint a flattening of the lips, an almost imperceptible intake at the corners of the mouth, which, on the sleeping face, had the effect of a smile: that lurking smile, remote with peace, and yet touched with the lightest suspicion of amused wonder, that sometimes makes the faces of the dead so good to see. (p. 648)

This is a passage not refracted through Mahony's mind, but through the author's: we are face to face with her own view of death, which Mahony has expressed earlier, when reflecting on what John was about to face. It is not Mahony's studies alone nor the brief intellectual companionship he has enjoyed, which bring him the deepest insight, but the fact of John Turnham's pain and of his wife's response to it. While he is waiting for Mary on the verandah of his brother-in-law's house, where she has gone to comfort him after the news that he is to die, he takes stock of his few real convictions: of the centrality of pain 'that bites so much deeper than pleasure', of the poverty of a life like Turnham's, whose pride and concern had been the material things of this world while 'his soul . . . had gone needy and untended . . .', 'of the abyss beside which all men walk':

. . . take all you can get while there is still time! A little while and it may be too late. Even in himself, who had won through to the belief that life was a kind of semi-sleep, death the great awakening, it called up the old nervous fear of being snatched away before he was ready to go. One lived on . . . *he* lived on . . . inactive as a vegetable

. . . and at any moment the blow might fall, and his chance be gone forever—of doing what he meant to do, of seeing what he had meant to see. And now, sitting there under the multitudinous stars, Mahony let the smothered ache for movement, the acute longing for change of scene that was smouldering in him, come to full consciousness . . . Now was the time to make the break . . . cut his bonds . . . front Mary's grief and displeasure. (p. 623)

It is plain from passages such as this that what Mahony fears is not, as has been alleged, the fact of death itself, *but of a death for which he is not ready.*⁷ What he longs for, in theological terms, is to be in a state of grace, to bring body and soul into a unity. Fear of Mary's grief and displeasure is the body's knowledge that the search for grace will involve it once more in discomfort.

With the possibility of escape again a live issue, Mahony is disposed as usual to concede the virtues of the opposition. His vision of Mary at this moment reminds us of his sudden insight into Tangye's situation when he wanted 'not argument but human sympathy'. Now he reflects that:

There was nobody like Mary in a crisis: happy the mortal who, when his end came, had her great heart to lean on. That was worth all else. For of what use, in one's last hour, would be the mental affinity, the ties of intellect he had lately so pitied himself for having missed? . . . A child faced with the horrors of the dark does not ask for his fears to be shared, or to have their origin explained to him . . . (p. 624)

What Mahony says at this point will become true for him in a sense, though by then the horrors of the dark will be long behind him and he will have faced them alone. It is his mortal body that is left to Mary to comfort.

Before the end of *The Way Home* Mahony has one of the black dreams that are to crowd upon him thick and fast in the final book. This one, resulting from worries about the supervision of his investments, is one of the early signs of the transition from the pre-morbid to the morbid state of his mind, and it has disastrous consequences. He spends most of

⁷ Here, perhaps, is a real link with Tolstoy, who, like Mahony, could never feel himself free of the claims of the world to concentrate on his soul. See, particularly, *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*. The craving for more time to set things right is expressed in Richardson's last short story 'The Coat'.

the night sleepless, filled with thoughts of Purdy and of the manner in which money has restored his self-respect. The reflection gives way to pangs of envy and fear: Purdy's rise means his fall; fear begets doubt, doubt of himself and his wisdom; he should not have left his affairs in the hands of another. He falls into a semi-sleep in which he hunts down and unmask his man of business and then into a feverish doze, in which not Simmonds but himself was the fugitive, hunted by two monstrous shadow policemen who believed him criminal before the law. (p. 663)

The dream contains as usual the recurrent image of the fugitive, but what is most interesting about it is the association of money and guilt. In *Australia Felix* the two alternatives of the material and the spiritual are acknowledged and presented. In *The Way Home*, the material gains the upper hand. Mahony has been freely given the things of the world, deludes himself into thinking that they will allow him freedom to invite his soul, and finds in the end that he has not escaped their corruption. But acceptance of riches has been attended with a growing unease, a developing sense of guilt, which Turnham's death makes plain to him. The mismanagement of his business affairs that occurs before his departure for England indicates an unconscious compulsion to divest himself of his money. The phrase 'criminal before the law' is double-edged: he is guilty of serving mammon instead of God; he is also 'guilty' fundamentally of the loss of his fortune. Not Mary's meddling intervention with Purdy, nor Purdy's careless recommendation, nor the absconding of his broker can absolve him from this responsibility. The motive behind his action is to rid himself of his guilt towards his soul by making sure before he leaves that 'fate' will strip him of his fortune, just as 'fate' had formerly endowed him with it. The compulsion is paralleled in the last volume by his burning of his bonds and scrip.

In the account of the frenzied tour of Europe Richardson makes brilliant use of the device of parallelism in preparing us for the gradual spiritual casting-off of Mary. Tilly's crude behaviour at a séance in Melbourne is echoed in London by Mary's robust, dignified, common-sense procedure on a similar occasion. The reader's sympathies are engaged on her side, as they were not on Tilly's; the ensuing argument between husband and wife is as usual a skilfully managed debate between the flesh and the spirit on a domestic level (pp. 683-4):

'There you have it! Your mulish obstinacy . . . your intolerable lack of imagination . . . your narrow, preconceived notions of what can and cannot happen!' Till Mary, too, lost her temper, and blurted out the plain facts of the case. 'I knew her by her figure. What's more, I distinctly felt the big wart she has on the side of her chin.'

Unable to counter his arguments about correspondences between things terrestrial and celestial, she falls back unconsciously upon the main objection to the static perfection of celestial bliss:

'Oh, I'm not clever enough to argue about these things. But I know this: if *I* go to heaven, I hope at least to find there'll be something—something really useful—*to do*.'

Yet the sympathy with Mary which the whole scene has aroused is tempered by Richard's expression of scepticism, and of intellectual humility, which are as characteristic of him as his imaginative adventurousness:

But when the light was out and they lay composing themselves for sleep, she heard Richard mutter to himself: 'There may be . . . there probably *is* . . . fraud. And why not? . . . do not rogues oftentimes preach the gospel? But that there's truth in it—a truth greater than any yet dreamed of—on that I would stake my soul. Ours the spadework . . . God alone knows what the end will be . . .'

The incident however marks a division between them:

The result of this affair was that Mary no longer frequented séances. On such nights Richard went out alone, and she sat comfortably by the fire, her feet on the fender, her needlework or the children at hand.

There follows the account of Richard's manic tour of Europe, filled with the signs of his approaching physical degeneration, which yet appear to Mary as manifestations of temperament. It would be difficult to praise too highly the constructive skill and psychological penetration of the climactic scenes, in which the child Cuffy and his father receive at the same time paralysing blows, and the child has to witness, not for the first time, nor the last, the mother deny him her attention in order to bestow it on the father.

The remorseless description of the puppy drowned in the canal in Venice (p. 690) is Cuffy's first real initiation into the knowledge of the senseless cruelty of men towards weak and helpless creatures. Beside

himself with horror and grief, he is still sobbing hysterically when Richard comes in. 'One glance at his face was enough to make her forget Cuffy and spring to her feet' (p. 691).

Richard has brought the news of his possible financial ruin and his defences collapse, like those of the child: 'From under his hands tears were dripping on the table'. It is Cuffy who is sent away, for the sake of his father's dignity:

'Go to Ann, Cuffy. She shall take you out or give you your tea. Run away, dear . . . quickly!' (p. 691)

Cuffy's agony is forgotten during the discussion of the financial calamity and the pressing need to nerve Richard to the necessary action to meet it. When his son screams in a nightmare later that evening, it is Richard, 'hastily informed what had happened', who enables the boy to face the horror:

. . . forgetting himself over a trouble even more pressing than his own, he lifted Cuffy out of bed and set him on his knee. There he talked to him as, thought Mary, only Richard could talk. He went through the scene of the afternoon, made the child, amid tears and frantic sobs, live through it afresh; then fell to work to dispel the brooding horror that lay over it . . . (p. 693)

He gives the child an explanation in terms which he can understand and ends by providing him with a practical course of action:⁸

And he must make up for their want of love by being doubly kind himself to all dumb creatures. (p. 693)

The wisdom of such 'psychotherapy' is obvious enough; whether or not she learned it from her father, Richardson certainly followed it in *Ultima Thule*, living through the horrors of her childhood afresh, and so perhaps dispelling them.

The incident of the drowning puppy not only throws light on the complex relationship of the child with its parents, but is also an image of the fate of a man without defences left to the mercy of fellow-creatures, faced by a world of unreflecting and remorseless power.

The third part of *The Way Home* gains immeasurably indeed from the introduction of the children as observers. Whereas previously our impressions of the two central characters have depended on our balancing

⁸ Richardson certainly had an almost over-intense love of cats and dogs in adult life, indulged as soon as she married.

their views of one another, their delineation gains an added dimension made possible by the presence in particular of Cuffy, the 'observer' of his own psychological history. The introduction of the children, besides providing a fresh way of seeing Mahony and his wife, also injects a new element of suspense and tension, needed at this point in a long narrative. Without children, the conflict, the fate of the man and the wife remain private, self-contained, and their difficulties will die with them. But the tragedy is immensely heightened by the realisation that it will have consequences⁹ and the implications of Tilly's words in *Australia Felix* about old Ocock's children force themselves at this point into the foreground of the novel:

But 'e didn't make 'imself, did 'e?—and my opinion is parents should look to themselves a bit more than they do.

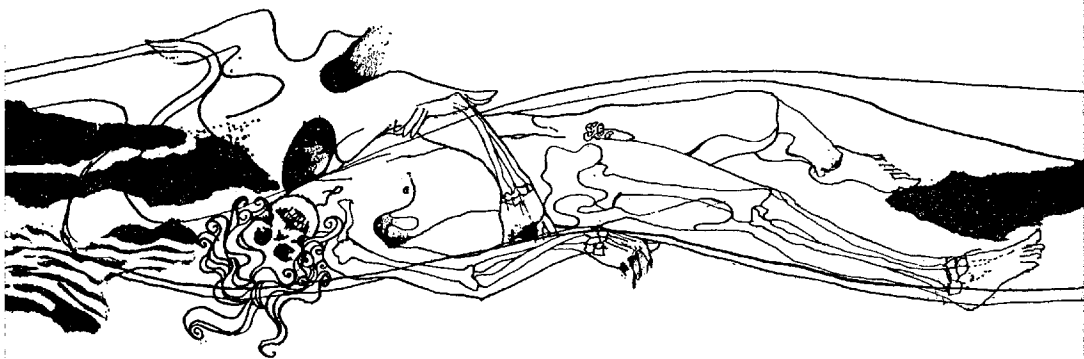
'The tyranny of organisation', the inextricable linking of physiological, psychological and metaphysical, are as omnipresent in Richardson's work as in Jacobsen's.

⁹ *The Way Home* is among other things a study of the workings of national and personal heredity.

Chapter 8

*Beauty, with waiting years
that bind the fount of tears
well-won if once her light
shine, before night . . .*

*O natural ecstasy!
O highest grace, to be,
in every pulse to know
the Sungod's glow!* CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN



The Vision Achieved

THERE ARE SOME who have found *Ultima Thule* too painful to read, others more numerous who have found it too painful to re-read; others again, who, no matter how often they may re-read it, can still be moved to tears. It is difficult to see how a book which produces such effects on educated and well-balanced readers could be dismissed as a clinical record, a case history. It is too often forgotten that, when we sit in judgment upon books, those books are at the same time sitting in judgment upon us.

Ultima Thule represents the last revolution of Fortune's wheel, the arrival 'home' to which *The Way Home* pointed. It is a commonplace of criticism to draw attention to the ironic titles of the novel, but the sense in which they mean what they actually say is not perhaps sufficiently stressed. The title of the novel as a whole, with its reference to 'fortunes', is ironical only in respect of worldly fortune, as the last book makes plain. *Australia Felix* represents the life of a *striving* colony and its central characters struggle to a *moderate* comfort; in the struggle itself lies most of their happiness, as Mahony realises when he is selling up his Ballarat home. The lucky shares, ironically entitled 'Australia felices', which represent Mahony's sudden rise to riches, are also part of the pattern of events which lead to his downfall and which again illustrates Richardson's concept of tragic rhythm as desire, fulfilment and disillusion. The concept applies to all the main characters. Tilly is far happier with the compromise marriage to old Ocock than she is later when she achieves her heart's desire of marrying Purdy. Mahony and Mary are far happier in their Ballarat days than in the days of affluence in Melbourne; Henry

Ocock is far happier without Agnes than with her; John Turnham's expectations of marriage end in final disenchantment. The moral that 'it is no mean happiness to be seated in the mean' is clear enough, and it is in a very real sense that Australia is 'felix' while it is struggling, a psychological truth with a firm physiological foundation in the history of human evolution.

The Way Home is a title which mocks the colonists' dream of England as home, but at the same time makes it plain that in neither hemisphere is there any abiding city. To look for a home in the world, to strive to be 'conformed' to the world is to identify oneself with the transient and perishable. The name 'Ultima Thule' which Mahony gives to his Melbourne house during his wealthy days is patently ironic, but also literally true. It is his last earthly 'home'; after he leaves it, there is no other domicile in the world to which he becomes attached.

The third book, *Ultima Thule*, finds him driven by force in his true direction, near the end of his journey. Both body and soul find their 'ultima thule': his body in the earth of which it is compounded, his soul, before the death of the body, in the fleeting experience of wholeness for which he had longed. If one sees the story of Mahony's last years only as the decline of a man unable to cope with the demands of life, in the grip of an incurable illness, the final volume is one of unrelieved tragedy. There is no Proem to this part, for none is needed; the end follows with inexorable logic upon his financial ruin. The story of his journey towards death is one of the most terrible in modern fiction and in telling it Richardson reaches a pitch of intensity that no other Australian novelist has achieved. In the face of such an achievement, to complain of faults of language, as one is sometimes tempted to do in the earlier books, is an act of pure pedantry. The attention is wholly engaged in what is being said, not by the manner of saying it, which means only that the problem of style has been resolved. But the book is not only the story of Mahony's journey towards death; it is also an affirmation of the point of view that there is no good out of which evil may not come, and no evil from which good may not come. Of Mahony one may use Nietzsche's words: *Aus deinen Giften brauest du dir deinen Balsam*. The pride which is his destruction is also his salvation.

Like the previous book, *Ultima Thule* is divided into three parts, which mark the final stages of his pilgrimage. The first ends with the

death of his little daughter, Lallie; the second traces his increasingly rapid deterioration to the point of suicide; the third his retreat to the sea, his collapse into madness and death.

The early part of the first section shows Mahony retreating further and further into himself, a withdrawal into isolation that was becoming manifest towards the end of *The Way Home*. At the time of his confusion about his investments, his friendless state was apparent to both husband and wife and his fatal acceptance of Purdy's advice was partly a desperate attempt to deny it. When he returns to Melbourne, a ruined man, he turns his back on society completely, as, he feels, society has turned its back on him. Detecting what seems to him an atmosphere of reserve and coolness among his friends in his old club, he takes refuge in a second-class boarding-house in Victoria Parade. The isolation of the man, the contrast between the security of wealth and the loneliness of poverty are reflected in the external social scene; the golden hey-day is over:

Here, there was no earthly chance of meeting anyone he knew. Or, for that matter, of meeting anyone at all! For these outlying streets, planned originally for a traffic without compare—the seething mob of men, horses, vehicles that had once flowed, like a living river, to the goldfields—now lay as bare as they had then been thronged. By day an occasional spindly buggy might amble along their vast width, or a solitary bullock-wagon take its tortoise way; but after dark, feebly-lit by ill-trimmed lamps set at enormous distances one from another, they turned into mere desolate, windswept spaces. On which no creature moved but himself. (p. 702)

His ill-advised decision to spend a third of his remaining capital on building a fine, solid house, arises partly from his customary urge to anchor himself against escape, partly from a desire to wall himself off from people, partly from defiance of them, as a defence against possible insult. His progressive alienation from Mary is part of the general pattern of withdrawal, revealed first in his decision to conceal the fact that he has borrowed money to buy the house, secondly in the meeting with her on board ship after six months' separation. The argument about the unripe strawberries he has bought for the children symbolises their differences and casts a faint premonition of the ending of the first section: his little daughter's death is caused by dysentery, resulting from the eating of

unripe almonds. His elation at meeting his family is dissipated by their argument, and:

The result was, the account he finally gave her of the state of his finances, and their future prospects, was not the rose-coloured one he had intended and prepared. What she now got to hear bore more relation to sober fact. (p. 709)

The scene also reveals the increasing dependence of the children on the mother:

And with his arm round her shoulders he made to draw Mary with him . . . followed by the extreme silent wonder of three pairs of eyes, whose owners were not used any more to seeing Mamma taken away like this without asking. Or anybody's arm put round her either. When she belonged to them. (p. 708)

With Cuffy, the possessiveness is ambivalent; he feels it towards his father also, and resents the intrusion of his mother and sisters on his feeling, as the 'recognition game' on the previous page suggests. For this reason he is compelled to align himself with his father over the affair of the strawberries ('I'll eat them, Mamma, I'd *like* to!').

The practice Mahony now sets up in Hawthorn is slow to move and the want of money becomes an *idée fixe* in his mind:

Out and away his sorest regret was that, in the good old days now gone forever, he had failed to insure his life. Thanks to his habitual dilatoriness he had put it off from year to year, always nursing the intention, shirking the effort. Now, the premium demanded would be sheerly unpayable. (p. 712)

His unsociableness, his 'deliberate turning in on himself', is, as Mary feels, a state of mind fatal for a doctor with his way to make, and she herself becomes more absorbed with the problem of making ends meet, thus creating a barrier between herself and her husband, and herself and the children. Her links with her own friends hold, a fact which stands her in good stead towards the end of Mahony's life, when she needs them. But the preservation of these friendships drives husband and wife further and further apart, as quarrels over Mahony's abhorrence of visitors become more frequent. Yet though he makes it impossible for Tilly to come to the house when she is alarmed about the possibility of losing her child, it should be pointed out that it is the combination of Mary's love and Richard's understanding that saves the life of the child:

'Starving?' said Mahony on hearing the tale. 'I shouldn't wonder if starving itself was not nearer the mark.'

'But Richard, such a *young* child . . . do you really think . . . Though I must say when I heard that *exasperated* sort of cry . . .'

'Exactly. Who's to say where consciousness begins? . . . or ends. For all we know, the child in the womb may have its own dim sentience. Now I don't need to give *you* my opinion of the wet-nurse system. None the less, if the case were mine, I should urge the mother to leave no stone unturned to find the person who first had it at the breast. A woman of her class will still be nursing.' (p. 723)

Mahony's speculations about the beginnings of consciousness sound less strange to modern ears than to Mary's; those about its end perhaps more.

At this period his only intimate contact is with his niece Emmy, while his wife begins to take on in his mind the image of his mother, especially when he thinks of confessing his debt:

At the mere thought of it he might have been a boy once more, standing before his mother and shaking in his shoes over the confession of some youthful peccadillo. A still further incentive to silence was the queer way his gall rose at the idea of interference. And it went beyond him to imagine Mary *not* interfering. If he knew her, she would at once want to take the reins: to manage him and his affairs as she managed house and children. And to what was left of his freedom he clung as if his life depended on it. (p. 736)

The reasonably understandable resentment of the male towards maternal interference swings inevitably towards the solution of flight, but this time there is no mistaking the pathological colouring taken on by a temperamental predisposition:

He began to toy with the idea of flight. And over the mere imagining of a possible escape from his torments, he seemed to wake to life again, to throw off the deadly lethargy that paralysed him. Change . . . movement . . . action: this it was he panted after! It was the sitting inactive, harried by murderous thoughts over which he had lost the mastery, that was killing him . . . And now insidious fancies stole upon him: fancies which, disregarding such accidents of the day as money and the lack of money, went straight to the heart of his most urgent need. To go away—go far away—from everything and everyone he had known; so that what happened should happen to him

only—be nobody's business but his own! Away from the crowd of familiar faces, these cunning, spying faces, *which knew all*, and which Mary could yet not persuade herself to forbid the house. Somewhere where she would be out of reach of the temptations that here beset her, and he free to exist in the decent poverty that was now his true walk in life. Oh, for privacy!—privacy and seclusion . . . and freedom from tongues. To be once more a stranger among strangers, and never see a face he knew again! (p. 738)¹

The morbid nature of the need for flight and solitude is emphasised by the reference a little later to

those phantom fears, and insidious evasions, which he had so far managed to keep in the twilight where they belonged . . . (p. 741)

The upshot, in spite of all Mary's protestations, is the flight to Barambogie where there is 'a flourishing practice to be had for the asking' in the Ovens district. The series of letters in Chapter V charts the fluctuating course of his expectations before the decision is finally taken, illuminating the state of mind of both Richard and Mary as no other method could have done. As the dimensions of his home have shrunk, so does the range of his human contacts. He tells Mary when she joins him:

'You're absolutely all I've got, you know . . . you and the children.'

Which was quite literally true: so true that, at times, Mary would find herself haunted by the unpleasant vision of a funeral at which

¹ The continual sense of guilt which is characteristic of Mahony's symptoms may have had a factual basis in the life of his model, as well as in the novelist's own sense of guilt about wishing his model dead. The real man could have felt guilt about his sexual lapse, if indeed it did occur, or about the charge of neglect levelled at him during his practice in Kent (see Ch. 9). Even if he were not guilty of negligence (a fault quite uncharacteristic of him), the mere accusation could have haunted his subconscious mind to reappear in such form as this passage indicates. On the vexed question whether Richardson was unlucky or promiscuous before marriage—the novel suggests an unusual fastidiousness—the only evidence, for what it is worth, is references in early undated letters to student frivolities and to the uplifting effect of reciprocated love on men's morals. It is in the highest degree unlikely that the Walter Richardson revealed in the letters would have married if he had not given himself, in Turnham's words in the novel, a 'clean bill of health'. If he deceived himself about this, he, in his day, had plenty of good company, Tolstoy for instance.

it was not possible to fill a single coach with mourners. Richard—to be followed to his grave by the doctor who had attended him, the parson who was to bury him . . . and not a soul besides. Her heart contracted at the disgrace of the thing: the shame of letting the world know how little he had cared for anyone, or been cared for in return. (p. 758)

Her foreboding comes true, though the friendlessness is a consequence of his irrational behaviour since his return from Europe rather than an inevitable progress from the Mahony of Webster Street or St Kilda. The temperamental difficulties are now intensified by physical illness.

Mahony's failure at Barambogie at first, it is clear, is due as much to the misrepresentation of the town's prosperity as to his inability to adapt himself to an uncongenial life. His deterioration is slow, and there are still situations which he handles with greater wisdom and tact than his wife: the episode of Emmy's unfortunate suitor, for instance, and above all the proposal of Baron von Krause that Cuffy should be given specialised musical training. The Baron's description of the music that lies in the new strange continent, waiting to be revealed, reminds one of the 'stubborn music' spoken of in *Voss* and also suggests the kind of artistic effect Richardson was aiming at in this vast, complex and melancholy novel:

In answer to Cuffy's: 'I will say music, too, when I am big', he replies: 'Ja ja! but so easy is it not to shake the music out of the sleeve . . . It belongs a whole life-time thereto . . . and much, much courage. But this I will tell you, my little ambitious one! Here is lying'—and the Baron waved his arm all around him—'a great, new music hid. He who makes it, he will put into it the thousand feelings awoken in him by this emptiness and space, this desolation; with always the serene blue heaven above, and these pale, sad, so grotesque trees that weep and rave. He puts the golden wattle in it when it blooms and reeks, and this melancholy bush, oh, so old, so old, and this silence as of death that nothing stirs. No birdleins will sing in his Musik. But will you be that one, my son, you must first have given up all else for it . . . all the joys and pleasures that make the life glad. These will be for the others not for you, my dear . . . you must only go wizout . . . renounce . . . look on . . .' (p. 787)

'To go without . . . renounce':² renunciation is certainly the lesson the Mahonys and their children have to learn. What Richardson had to learn to renounce in order to produce the literary equivalent of the symphony that has not yet been written, one can only guess. But some of her renunciations were also Cuffy's.

What accelerates the pace of Mahony's deterioration is not so much the death of his child as the isolation to which he is condemned after his wife and the remaining children leave him, when they go to the seaside to recover from the strain. Lallie's death indeed rallies his spirit temporarily in his effort to help his wife to bear it. Each meets the blow in characteristic fashion. Mahony is sustained by his belief that the body is the temporary house of the soul; Mary protests violently against the body's transience. Mary's departure is one more example of the clash of two rights: to remain would have jeopardised her health and the health of Cuffy and Lucy, to go is to sacrifice the health of her husband. The pain of their going at first affects him 'like facing death anew'. But then, his temperamental craving for solitude takes over: 'In a word, he was free . . . free to exist observing and unobserved.' In his loneliness, he becomes convinced of the continuing presence of the child, feels that he has been permitted 'to see how thin were the walls between the two worlds, how interpenetrable the states'. He writes to his wife:

I have great—great and joyful—news for you, my darling . . .

To which Mary replied: *You make me very curious, Richard. Can North Long Tunnels have struck the reef at last?* (p. 804)

In question and reply, the image of the true gold and the false is put before us once more in terms of character, and in the exchange that follows, the sympathies of the reader are again evenly divided. Mahony's feeling of elation at being in touch with his child is short-lived and he is left with the melancholy reflection that 'our lost ones were truly lost to us because no longer entangled in the web called living . . .' At this point, he is at one with his wife, all the more convinced of the importance of the loss of the body because, unlike her, he has no living creature, not even an animal, to support him in his solitude.

He comes to himself and, aware again of the world around him, sinks into the blackest depression. News of his odd behaviour has filtered into the township, gossip has exaggerated it, and people are soon avoiding

² Cf. the quotation from John Morley referred to on p. 100.

him. At this point occurs a dream, which expresses not only revulsion from solitude, but which also sounds again the dominant theme of the book:

Only very gradually did the sleeper come up from those unfathomed depths, of which the waking brain keeps no memory, to where, on the fringe of his consciousness, a disturbing dream awaited him. It had to do with a buggy, a giant buggy, full of people; and, inverting the real event of the day on which it was modelled, he now longed with all his heart to be among them. For it seemed to him that, if he could succeed in getting into this buggy, he would hear something—some message or tidings—which it was important for him to know. But though he tried and tried again, he could not manage to swing himself up; either his foot missed the step, or the people, who sat laughing and grimacing at him, pushed him off. Finally he fell and lay in the dust, which, filling eyes, nose, mouth, blinded and asphyxiated him. He was still on his back, struggling for air, when he heard a voice buzzing in his ear . . . (p. 814)

The immediate anxiety which gives rise to the dream comes from the knowledge that people are suspicious of him, which has led him earlier in the day to refuse a lift in a buggy. But the specific occasion has for background his general longing to find a home for his spirit somewhere and his failure to do so, and the longing is part of his endless search for an answer to the riddle of life. The cruelty of the people in the buggy in his dream recalls the cruelty of the men in Venice who drowned the helpless puppy. The dream is, like the puppy incident, prophetic: it points to the possibility of Mahony's having to undergo a similar agony. In the dream, the dominating image of the book, that of the buried miner, comes out clearly once more: 'he fell and lay in the dust' which, 'filling eyes, nose and mouth, blinded and asphyxiated him'. There is a further link between the puppy incident and the dream, provided earlier by Mary's sudden recognition of Mahony's innocence. In a moment of bitterness she looks at him and for once really sees him, unblinded by habit: 'and the result was the amazed reflection: "But he's got the eyes of a child . . . for all his wrinkles and grey hairs."' Like his young son, he was bewildered by the evil of existence.

The process of Mahony's isolation which gathers momentum from this point is depicted with an immediacy which produces an almost physical

effect upon the reader; an immediacy which is due to nothing but the imaginative power of the writer. No amount of documentation, no support from letters or diaries could have produced passages such as this in Chapter III of the second part:

Suddenly, quite suddenly, the idea of exertion, of any effort whatever, was become odious to him . . . odious and unthinkable. He put his arms on the table and hid his face in them; and, lying there, knew that his chief desire was fulfilled: to sit with his eyes screened, darkness round him, and to think and feel just as little as he saw. But, a bundle of papers incommoding him, he raised his hand, and with a last flash of the old heat crumpled notes and jottings to balls and tossed them to the floor. There they lay till, next morning, Mrs Beetling swept them up and threw them on the kitchen fire. (pp. 822-3)

There is only one possible source of such a passage: personal experience, or the ability to imagine such experience, combined with the insight capable of seeing its relevance to that which is outside the self. In other words, fact and the sense of the fact. The same kind of empathy is operating in the passage which occurs shortly afterwards; the collapse of his pride follows swiftly on the collapse of his concentration:

In the little oven of a house the green blinds were lowered from early morning on. Behind them, in a bemusing twilight, behind the high paling-fence that defended house from road, Mahony sat isolate—sat shunned and forgotten. And as day added itself to day the very sound of his own voice grew strange to him, there being no need for him ever to unclothe his lips. Even his old trick of muttering died out—went the way of his pacing and haranguing. For something in him had yielded, had broken, carrying with it, in its fall, the black pride, the bitter resentment, the aggressive attitude of mind which had hitherto sustained him. And this wholesale collapse of what he had believed to be his ruling traits made him feel oddly humble . . . and humiliated . . . almost as if he had shrivelled in stature. (p. 823)

And again:

Or he followed, with all the fixity of inattention, the movements of a fly . . . or the dance of dust motes laddering a beam. (p. 824)

The whole of the chapter is an extraordinary feat of fictional reconstruction of psychotic depression out of the kind of material not to be found in diaries, and to deny imagination to the author of it suggests a

curious kind of critical blindness. At the centre of the chapter on pages 826-7 occurs the passage in which Mahony comes close to facing his hidden fear. But, it should be noticed, even this explanation is qualified by expressions such as 'he thought', 'it would seem'; we are warned that the explanation is not yet complete:

Who were his pursuers? From what shadows did he run?—And in these endless nights, when he lay and searched his heart as never before, he thought he read the answer to the riddle. Himself he was the hunter and the hunted: the merciless in pursuit and the panting prey. Within him, it would seem, lodged fears . . . strange fears . . . (pp. 826-7)

Having admitted to himself the possibility that his wife and children were less dear to him than his own life, he continues:

He believed that the instinct for self-preservation had, in his case, always been the primary one. If this were so, then what he fled must needs be the reverse of the security he ran to seek: in other words, annihilation. The plain truth was: the life-instinct had been too strong for him. Rather than face death and the death-fear, in an attempt to flee the unfleecable he had thrown every other consideration to the winds, and ridden tantivy into the unknown. (p. 827)

The craving for permanence, the craving for change; the wish to obliterate the self, the wish to affirm it, the longing for death at war with the longing for life; the passage sums up the central preoccupation of the novel clearly and simply enough. But commentary cannot cease there. What terrifies Mahony at this point of his self-examination is not so much the fear of death as fear of dying, and of the manner of dying: He had to fight through, to the last spasm, the paroxysm of terror which at this point shook him like a palsy, at the knowledge that he would never again get free; that he was caught, trapped, pinned down . . . to be torn asunder, devoured alive . . . For, below the surface here, under a lid which he never lifted, which nothing would have induced him to raise by a hair's-breadth, lurked a darker fear than any, one he could not face and live; even though, with a part of his mind, a watchful part, a part that it was impossible to deceive, he *knew* what it was. (pp. 827-8)

There is surely no doubt that Mahony is aware of his physical and mental condition, of the horrors involved in it and of the fact that there

is no cure for it, and it is unlikely that any other disease than the one postulated could have given rise to such apprehensions of shame and horror.³ The associations with daemonic frenzy, carried by the phrase 'torn asunder, to be devoured alive', demonstrate his awareness clearly enough, but they are also phrases which have mythic associations with the concept of death and resurrection: Dionysus, for example, was torn asunder and devoured alive before rising anew. The connection between the physical and the spiritual life is made again at this point.

In the next paragraph, which he represents to himself as an evasion, but which is in reality a natural step in the sequence of associations, he once more merges Mary and his mother together in his mind. His ever-present guilt towards his wife over his 'ruinous debt', his childhood guilt towards his mother over some misdemeanour, merge with the guilt he cannot openly acknowledge. This, if one assumes Mahony's illness has a syphilitic origin, is most likely to have arisen from the misuse of a woman, which would have resulted in her injury of him. The ambivalence in his attitude to women, the love and the resentment of the mother-figure, come out in 'the ominous tick of the clock on the chimney-piece' coupled with 'smelling the scent of lavender that went out from his mother's garments'. And this same ambivalence is of course an expression of his attitude to the material world, his adhesion to it, his resentment of its claims.

What begins as a general description of his nightly torments culminates in a particular incident: the sound of the mill-whistle, which is to become the symbol of his break with sanity, wakes him to the torment of reality. Later in the morning he drowns and is awakened from a brief dream which is significantly related to the suicide episode to come later: The stationmaster?—He had been far away, on high cliffs that sloped to the sea, gathering 'horsetails' . . . and for still an instant his brain loitered over the Latin equivalent. (p. 829)

His slight stroke with its attendant aphasia and his anguished plea

³ A *connection* between syphilis and insanity, though not specifically General Paralysis of the Insane, was suspected by Mahony's time, for instance by Maudsley, but the one-to-one relationship was not established. Richardson's attitude is curiously devious: her *narrative* points in the direction of G.P.I., but the possibility that her *father's* actual illness was wrongly diagnosed cannot be ruled out. She, apparently, accepted it as correct.

for help bring Mary home, still after some delay. The whole of this narrative sequence gains in power through its three-fold presentation: we see the situation through Mahony's mind, through the child Cuffy's, through Mary's, in turn; and, at times, as near as possible to 'simultaneously', for instance, during the nightmare ride in the blazing heat when Mahony visits a patient.

The spectacle of Mahony's moral collapse shown in this episode arouses in the reader, as it does in his son, pity and terror in the profoundest sense of the words. The episode has been prepared for long before, in the Buddlecombe period in *The Way Home*, when Mahony was accused of working his horse too hard—an accusation which enraged him by its injustice. Later in the same book, Cuffy, provoked by jealousy, beats his rocking-horse to punish his mother and is overcome by remorse. Now the horse that Mahony lashes is old and tired like himself; its inability to move is his own helplessness, and he loses all sense of the difference between subject and object:

a sense of unreality began to invade him, his surroundings to take on the blurred edges of a dream: one of those nightmare-dreams in which the dreamer knows that he is bound to reach a certain place in a given time, yet whose legs are weighed down by invisible weights . . . all this, while time, the precious time that remains *before* the event, is flying . . . (p. 853)

What he seems to be lashing mercilessly on is of course himself; but it is also Mary he punishes for encroaching upon him, as well as the whole scheme of things by which he is trapped. The horrifying scene ends like the rocking-horse scene, and we see it this time *through* Cuffy's eyes: when Mamma had gone and papa thought nobody would see him, he went up to the horse's neck and stroked it. And that made him [Cuffy] cry more still. (p. 854)

Father and son comfort one another wordlessly as they had done long ago over the beating of the rocking-horse.

The nightmare journey is linked in Mary's mind with her wedding journey, when Richard's incompetent driving had first made her afraid. Then, as now, he had not troubled to avoid the stones and ruts in the road:

How nervous she had been that day . . . how homesick and lonely, too! . . . beside someone who was little more than a stranger to her,

behind a strange horse on an unknown road, bound for a place of which she knew nothing . . . (p. 851)

Her memory of the wedding journey should be compared with her half-formulated sensations on the journey itself, given on page 91: and as they went on and on, and still on, it began to seem to Polly . . . as if they were driving away from all the rest of mankind, right into the very heart of nowhere . . .

So the two ends of her life are joined and the essential man who links them is as much a stranger to mankind as ever.

For the child Cuffy, the journey and the beating of the horse mark a separation and a meeting-point. He sheds the blind acceptance which links child to parent in an apparent continuity of being and suddenly *sees* his father as distinct from himself. But in doing so he becomes aware that he understands him and is appalled by such awareness and the new kind of bond that it implies. And so he seeks to intensify their separateness:

For sometime after this, Cuffy fought shy of his father; and tried never, if he could help it, to be alone with him . . . The events of the drive had left a kind of fear behind them: a fear not of his father, but for him: he was afraid of having to see what Papa was feeling.

(p. 856)

After the insane anger of the horse episode we are given a scene of public humiliation: Mahony's ill-timed and confused declaration of his faith in front of a ribald, uncomprehending audience, in the presence of 'a man of God' who deliberately refuses to acknowledge a soul's need of help, 'to spoil his own comfort by being forced to see things as they really were' (p. 861). The blandness of nominal Christianity signified by the visit of the Bishop is dramatised with uncompromising precision.

In the confusion of his mind Mahony clings to his deepest conviction that 'any country here, wonderful though it might be, was but the land of our temporary adoption . . .', but it is accepted as the raving of either a drunk or a lunatic; like other religious ideas, not to be taken seriously nor to be put into practice.

The mishandling, or apparent mishandling, of a surgical case and the threat of ruin which follows it bring Mahony now to the pass to which he had once unwittingly brought another human being, the wretched Bol-liver, who had sued him over the case of the absconding drayman. The

events of the real case long since past are brilliantly translated into the terms of a nightmare in which his divided self, plaintiff, defendant, and spectator, re-enacts for his dream-self his own experience in terms of Bolliver's. The dream coalesces into the customary image of the figure in flight, now unable to escape because his path is blocked by his wife and children. He whips out his knife to despatch them, as Bolliver had despatched his rabbits, but the dream ends with Mary's scream, which turns into the mill-whistle awakening him to 'the stern, bare horrors of reality, from which there was no awakening' (p. 875). From this time forward his unconscious mind regards Mary as the 'enemy', and his attitude to her finally invades what is left of his conscious mind, until all he feels for her is an implacable hatred for what binds him to the earth.

Unable to bear the suspense of not knowing whether he is to be prosecuted or not, he decides to take his own life, though his unconscious mind is still set against it. For instance, as he sets out, it begins to rain, and he goes back to get his greatcoat; once outside, he makes for the *shelter* of the trees, whereas his conscious act is to fling himself on the wet ground careless of 'tic or rheumatism'. This scene is the climax of Mahony's effective mental life: 'Now at long last, he was answerable to himself alone'.

He strives to come face to face with the truth about himself; he admits the ruthless self-sufficiency that masks an unwillingness to love and a fear of love: 'a fierce Lucifer-like inhibition' which men call pride. Through a process of association, which takes account of Christ's agony which 'had lasted but for three hours' and that of the common soldier who knew that 'the hotter the skirmish the sooner it would be over with', he moves back again to his pride and we are faced with the paradox that what has brought him to ruin is also that which redeems him:

. . . the soldier was under duress to fight to the end: for those who flung down their muskets and ran, crying, hold! enough! the world had coined an evil name . . . (p. 882)

Out of Mahony's poison his healing is about to emerge, and while it is struggling to take effect, the dominant *motiv* is heard again: in the fierce conflict of which he now tossed the helpless prey, he dug his left hand into the earth until what it grasped was a compact mass of mud and gravel. (p. 882)

While he is striving to crucify his pride, he is stretched on the earth; in

accepting all the suffering that earth demands of him, he rises above it. The brief reference to Shakespeare's 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun', on page 880, with its unspoken refrain about 'dust', contributes its share to the physical and symbolic picture.

Richardson now approaches what is the climactic scene in the inner history of her central figure, the scene which forms one of the main pieces of evidence for the view that *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* is in essence a great parable. My approach at this point will be deliberately oblique in an attempt to show what Richardson's mind has in common with other able minds of her generation, though it is not intended to suggest that she is a *savant*.

One of the great books of the century is Sir Charles Sherrington's *Man on his Nature*, the published version of the Gifford Lectures given at Edinburgh University in 1937-8. Sherrington, one of the world's finest biologists, was an evolutionist, committed in general to the doctrine of evolution through the operation of blind chance on the laws of reproduction. In the last chapter of his book, he has some striking things to say about the evolutionary importance of suffering and man's unique imaginative participation in the suffering of others. Towards the end of this noble piece of writing occurs the following sentence:

Even should mind, in the cataclysm of Nature, be doomed to disappear and man's mind with it, man will have had his compensation: to have glimpsed a coherent world and himself as an item in it. To have heard for a moment a *harmony wherein he himself is a note*. [Italics mine] (p. 302)

A few years earlier, in 1930, the mathematical philosopher Bertrand Russell published his *The Conquest of Happiness* in which he wrote: All unhappiness depends upon some kind of disintegration or lack of integration; there is disintegration within the self through lack of co-ordination between the conscious and the unconscious mind; there is lack of integration between the self and society, where the two are not knit together by the force of objective interests and affections. The happy man is the man who does not suffer from either of these failures of unity, whose personality is neither divided against itself, nor pitted against the world. (pp. 247-8)

Six years later, the psychologist Carl Jung first published in 1936-7 two lectures on which was based his later book *Psychology and Alchemy*. He

was led to write the book by observing the similarity between alchemical images and the dreams of patients undergoing treatment. Quoting an old alchemist's saying, *Ars totum requirit hominem*, he says:

It is just this *homo totus* whom we seek . . . Human wholeness [is] the goal to which the psycho-therapeutic process ultimately leads . . . This question is inextricably bound up with one's philosophical or religious assumptions . . . The right way to wholeness is unfortunately made up of fateful detours and wrong turnings. (Ch. 1, especially p. 6 and p. 27)

Jung assembles an enormous amount of evidence reminding us again of the once commonly-held belief that gold was a symbol of perfection, of totality, of the constant interchange or 'marriage' of opposites, both in Eastern and Western civilisations.⁴ His association of the pursuit of psychic wholeness with the alchemist's dream of turning base metals into gold would not have seemed strange to Walter Lindsay Richardson, nor to his daughter, and certainly not to their composite portrait, Richard Mahony. Nor would Sherrington's words about harmony, nor Russell's about the divided self, the 'failures of unity'.

Turning now to the artist: we have seen how in 1917, long before the appearance of these three books, Mahony, in *Australia Felix*, has explicitly stated the nature of his quest and identified it with man's:

. . . he dared no longer delay in setting free the imprisoned elements in him, was he ever to grow to that complete whole which each mortal aspires to be . . .

We have seen how, in 1925, in *The Way Home*, eleven years before Jung gave his lectures on alchemy, Richardson described Mahony's drifting away

from a too rigid orthodoxy. Occult subjects had always had a strong fascination for him, and he now turned back to them; read ancient screeds on alchemy and astrology; the writings of Paracelsus and Apollonius of Tyana . . . Out of this inspiration they taught confidently that all life emanated from God (no matter what form it assumed in its progress), to God would return and in him continue to exist.

We now see, four years later, in 1929, in *Ultima Thule*, still before Sher-

⁴ That Jung was mistaken about certain Eastern symbolic systems does not affect this particular argument.

rington, Jung or Russell, Mahony in his deepest despair, coming to terms with the problems they were to raise. Like Sherrington, he reflects on the omnipresence of pain:

. . . a state of being so interwoven with existence that, without it, life was unthinkable. [Here speaks the evolutionist, thinking of the 'food-chain'.] For, take suffering from life, and what remained? Surely, surely, what was so integral a part of creation could not spring from blind chance? . . . be wholly evil? . . . without value in the scheme of things? (p. 883)

Then follows the experience of integration, of wholeness, of which Russell and Jung speak. Mahony's pride now lifts him up, prevents his final, ignominious flight. He throws away the bottle of chloroform he has been clutching and confronts the fate which, as a doctor, he knows is in store for him, affirming his selfhood by an act which enables him to look God in the face. It is important to realise that, during this whole scene, he is sane, not insane.⁵ The whole point of his action is that he knows his mind *will* collapse in the not-far-distant future. It is then, when he ceases to 'run away', that he is granted a glimpse of what has eluded him for so long, as though his decision not to evade what dignifies the race as a race has at last joined him to other men and to God. This is the passage to which the whole action of the book has been leading; and it is necessary to quote it in full:

In the moment of casting the poison from him, he became aware—but with a sense other than that of sight, for he was lying face downwards, with fast-closed eyes, his forehead bedded on the sleeve of his great-coat—became suddenly aware of the breaking over him of a great light: he was lying, he found, in a pool of light; a radiance thick as milk, unearthly as moonlight. And this suffused him, penetrated him, lapped him round. He breathed it in, drew deep breaths of it; and, as

⁵ Leonie Gibson wrongly represents him as insane at this point; see *Henry Handel Richardson and Some of her Sources*, p. 39. The *threat* of insanity is surely one of the reasons Mahony went out to commit suicide. The context reveals him as extraordinarily clear-minded. To represent him as already insane is to depart from the text and to misunderstand Richardson's vision of her *character*, which must have grown and matured as she wrote. To hold her over a period of eighteen years to a brief note on how she saw her *father* is again to misconceive the way in which artists work.

he did so, the last vestiges of his old self seemed to fall away. All sense of injury, of mortification, of futile sacrifice was wiped out. In its place there ran through him the beatific certainty that his pain, his sufferings—and how infinitesimal these were, he now saw for the first time—had their niche in God's Scheme (pain the bond that linked humanity: not in joy, in sorrow alone were we yoke-fellows)—that all creation, down to the frailest protoplasmic thread, was one with God; and he himself, and everything he had been and would ever be, as surely contained in God, as a drop of water in a wave, a note of music in a mighty cadence. More: he now yearned as avidly for this submergedness, this union of all things living, as he had hitherto shrunk from it. The mere thought of separation became intolerable to him: his soul, ascending, sang towards oneness as a lark sings its way upwards to the outer air. For, while the light lasted, *he understood*: not through any feat of conscious perception, but as a state—a state of being—a white ecstasy, that left mere knowledge far behind. The import of existence, the mysteries hid from mortal eyes, the key to the Ultimate Plan: all now were his. And, rapt out of himself, serene beyond imagining, he touched the hem of peace at last . . . eternal peace . . . which passeth understanding.

Then, as suddenly as the light had broken over him, it was gone, and again night wrapped him heavily round; him, by reason of the miracle he had experienced, doubly dark, doubly destitute. (But I have *known* . . . *nothing* can take it from me!) And he had need of this solace to cling to, for his awakening found his brain of an icy clearness, in which no jot or tittle of what awaited him was veiled from him. As if to test him to the utmost, even the hideous spectre of his blackest nights took visible form, and persisted, till, for the first time, he dared to look it in the face.—And death seemed a trifle in comparison.

But he struggled no more. Caked in mud, soaked to the skin, he climbed to his feet and staggered home. (pp. 883-4)

This passage has been severely censured for its conventional nineteenth-century language and it is true that, in the present state of moral chaos, to which our greed and cleverness have brought us, phrases like 'the Ultimate Plan' tend to raise a satirical smile. But one might as well complain about

the phrase 'fast thick pants' in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*; Coleridge was not responsible for the degeneration of his diction. For Mahony's vision, it is hard to know what other language could have been used. The sentences follow the movement of his thought and experience; it is his kind of language and he was a Victorian, of formal speech habits, with a solid scientific education, a wide knowledge of mystical literature; he was also a Spiritualist and a Deist, in the strict sense of the word. There seems no sense in complaining that the language is not of the kind which would have been used by a modern poet or novelist. Far more important is what the passage *says*, the point in the narrative at which it is said, and what follows. It is important, for instance, that we see his return to the house through the eyes of the child Cuffy: one of the interlocutors in the mind's dialogue with itself, as Pater claimed, will always be the child. And it is no accident that Mahony's reappearance, wet, muddy and dishevelled, reminds his son of the picture of 'Tomfool in *King Lear*'. It is at the moment of *his* greatest degradation that Lear begins to see clearly, and the sequence of pride, anger, fear of insanity and insanity is common to both.

The vision is the culmination of the quest for wholeness formulated in the first book, the brief experience of the right relationship of the total self (body-soul-spirit) to what is outside the self, the harmonising of the inner and the outer. Such a unity is the rarest of treasures; that the search for it should be embedded in a 'miner's story', a search for gold, is only strange to a world which has lost the power of thinking in symbols. That we should find it so is an indictment of the poverty-stricken imaginative and emotional education that is now accepted as normal in Western society, particularly in Australian society. An educated Oriental has no difficulty in recognising the meaning of Mahony's vision, nor the importance of it. He places it at once as an experience of the Buddha's Infinitely Compassionate Light; the notion of material particulars as emanations of the Whole, of the interchangeability of matter and spirit or rather their non-duality, are for him commonplaces.⁶ This is why, though Mahony's spiritual pilgrimage ends at this point, it is important that the book should not. Mahony is only half of the equation, and the long, agonising process

⁶ See Harold Stewart's essay on Pure Land Buddhism in *A Chime of Wind-bells* (Tokyo, 1969), especially p. 217.

of his sloughing-off of the body tests the truth about Mary.⁷ Behind all the irritation at the claims of the flesh, at the demands of the material, is a recognition that flesh is itself a manifestation in time of spirit, not merely a vehicle. 'Samsara is Nirvana . . .'.⁸

In the final chapters, blindly and involuntarily Mary affirms, not her separateness from Mahony, what Swedenborg would call her 'exteriors', but her closeness, which is a matter of her 'interior' being. She demonstrates the truth which Mahony had perceived earlier that her love was: a love which it was impossible to sin against or overthrow . . . which had more than a touch of the divine in it; was a dim image of that infinite tenderness God Himself might be assumed to bear towards the helpless beings He had created . . . (p. 624)

For the marriage of Mary and Mahony, like everything else in the book, has its anagogic meaning and the brief return of Mahony to consciousness while he is dying is not, as has been claimed, a sentimental lapse of the author's, but a part of that meaning. Alchemy was concerned with the 'marriage of opposites'. Richard and Mary Mahony are psychic opposites, water and earth, exhibiting all the characteristics of interchangeability of which Jung was to speak so much later, but which Swedenborg had already described in the eighteenth century in *Conjugal Love*. Mary is the will, which is Love or the activity of life; Mahony, the understanding, or the wisdom of life. In spite of their exterior differences, they recognise one another in spirit (a fact which Tilly unwittingly acknowledges when she clumsily allays Mary's doubts about being the proper wife for Richard) and according to Swedenborgian doctrine the task of their spiritual selves when freed from the body will be to bring their will and understanding into conjunction, and form one Angel, the divine hermaphrodite.

⁷ It is significant that although the trilogy as a whole is dedicated to Richardson's father, *Ultima Thule* is dedicated to her mother. The dedication reminds us again of Richardson's psychological complexity; the effort to reach the mother by identifying herself with the father leads finally, of course, to a reconciliation of her dual inheritance.

⁸ Cf. Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, p. 125: whether extension be visible thought or thought visible extension is a question of choice of words and not of a choice of conceptions. (See also p. 109 on the subject of the non-duality of body and mind.)

Mahony's brief flash of sanity and Mary's response are a kind of pledge that the task will be attempted under other circumstances.⁹

In less esoteric terms, Mary's deep-seated need of Richard can be explained as an obscure admission of the rightness of his point of view that '*semper idem* is the lie we longed to see confirmed' and which, if it were confirmed, would mean death. She has to learn that to be alive means by definition to change, just as he has to learn that self-preservation pursued for its own sake defeats its own end. His equally deep-seated need of her is *his* obscure admission that though his understanding can accept the flux, permanence is not thereby disproved and that in some dim way Mary represents it.

In the last part of the book, with Mahony's retreat to the sea, we are indeed less concerned with the effect on himself, of what happens to his body, than we are with the effect of his illness on Mary and the children. The tragedy is immeasurably deepened by being witnessed through the mind of Cuffy, torn between his love for his father and his wish to see him gone. The effort it must have cost Richardson to write out her childish guilt¹⁰ without extenuation or sentimental distortion should compel nothing but admiration. Except fleetingly, as in the heart-rending scene when Richard, driven beyond the limits of tolerance by Mary's apparent insensitivity, gets up in an attempt to go out into the moonlight 'to find peace', our sympathy with him, like Mary's and the children's, has its edge dulled. We feel him, as they must have done, as a burden on our sensibilities, and this is one of the major achievements of the novel, as anyone who has ever nursed a helpless invalid over a long period of time would be quick to recognise. Once the separation comes and Mahony is completely at the mercy of strangers, feeling for him returns. He is reinstated as a person in the reader's imagination, as in the children's, through Mary's devotion, after her desperate battle to get him out of the asylum. With his soul fled, his shell of a body finds solace in the four walls of a small room; it is here that his body makes its peace with Mary, before it is incorporated in the earth of which it is made.

⁹ John Turnham's recognition of his first wife Emma, on his death-bed, foreshadows this scene.

¹⁰ Cf. Cuffy's secret wish: 'Oh, if only Papa—yes, if . . . if only Papa *would* go away, as he said, and leave them and Mamma together! Oh, pray God, let Papa go away! . . . and never, never come back. . . .' (p. 870).

The greatest irony of all perhaps is that it is in service to that shell of a body that Mary becomes aware of the capacities of her own spirit, re-living in a brief space of time much of Richard's own experience. She learns what it is to have to work to earn a living, with little heart or strength for it; she learns to crucify her pride, when pleading for her husband's release from the asylum; she becomes aware of the universality of pain: 'What *was* life, but care and suffering?—for everyone alike?'; she learns something of the reality of irrational fear. Above all, as she watches him die, she acknowledges Richard as the most vital part of herself, and though the acknowledgment is couched in the terms which a Victorian wife would use of her husband, what she is mourning the loss of is the spiritual principle of the corporate self. Richard's return to consciousness is necessary to assure her it is a temporary loss.

In spite of all that has been said therefore about opposing characters and principles in the novel, they are oppositions that belong merely to the world of nature and the author makes no moral judgments about them. There are in fact few simple dichotomies between the material and the spiritual; each of the many and varied characters has his share of the faults and virtues of the others; in all of them their 'half-souls struggle and mix'. In spite of his predominant other-worldliness, Mahony has taken on enough of the corruption of the world to believe that money and the pursuit of money will bring him his heart's desire; Turnham, who is unaware of the existence of anything but the body, has a courage which redeems his grossness; even Purdy, the personification of shallow, shiftless egotism, has fleeting gleams of generosity and tolerance, though the tolerance is little more than an unwillingness to be emotionally involved in anyone else's troubles. And that, too, is a taint from which Mahony, as he comes to realise, is not quite free. None of our judgments, therefore, on any one of the characters is allowed to be final, and the easy, comfortable and Calvinistic conclusion that character is destiny will not get us very far. This is the conclusion indeed that all Richardson's books repudiate; each of the central figures in turn looks at himself in anguish and says: 'Yes, I did thus and thus because my nature compelled me, but who made my nature so, and why, why?' The view of the world that we are presented with is not that it is a datum in which man makes himself and hence his destiny by an endless set of free choices, but that his nature is a result of interaction between his heredity, his choices, and the operation

of Chance, under God, who is ultimately responsible for the 'helpless beings He had created'. The part played by Chance or Fortune in the book is too often overlooked, and so is the collision of two equally moral choices. It is by pure Chance, for example, that Mahony happens to meet Pincock, the doctor acquaintance who mentions the Barambogie practice to him, even though Mahony's mind was at the time, of course, disposed to listen to him. Similarly, the effect on him when Mary leaves him alone at Barambogie after her child's death is disastrous, but it would have been disastrous at that moment for her and for her children to have remained.

It is difficult to deduce the author's view of Fate or Chance from the evidence of the novel, though outside evidence suggests that it resembled in some respects Mahony's own. His analysis of his own complex motives for accepting Polly's suggestion that he abandon store-keeping to return to medicine (p. 178) ends with the suggestion that his own nature and outside influences had led him 'blindfold along a road that was not of his own choosing' and that this was the work of Providence, 'of a Power outside himself—against himself in so far as it took no account of his poor earth-blind vision?'

What Richardson with dubious accuracy wrote of her real father's attitude to 'outside Powers' was that it revealed 'the Irishman's habitual grovelly attitude of subjection before a whole host of invisible powers that waited to be appeased'. Mahony's self-confessed weakness, that of exhausting his vitality in words and then bowing to circumstance, is not, however, the equivalent of a grovelling appeasement. In any case, bowing to circumstance is not in fact his most characteristic response to the objective world. Most of his 'worldly' troubles come from his *refusal* to bow to circumstance, from his insistence on re-shaping reality to suit himself. What proportion of them comes from physiological causes it is difficult to assess, since he lived at a time when there was no cure for the disease it is most likely he suffered from. The evasiveness of the doctors about his collapse, the vague references to apoplectiform attacks, which 'as in this case—differ little or not at all from true apoplexy' (p. 932), leave only marginal doubt about *Mahony's* disease, whatever his model's may have been. Mahony's physical ill-health can be traced through the novel from *Australia Felix* on and we are never in any doubt that it contributed to his temperamental difficulties. What is plain is that the kind of illness

described and the death to which it led could not have arisen from temperamental causes alone.¹¹ The doctrine of the 'tragic flaw' by which a man causes his own destruction has long been called in question by classical scholars,¹² yet critics of English literature in Australia have hardly noticed the fact. The view that a man's miseries are entirely his own fault seems to give a peculiar satisfaction to certain minds. What can be made of a 'tragic flaw' which would have yielded in significant measure to penicillin is an interesting philosophical speculation. Even if we grant Mahony only a 'disturbed personality' and 'intolerability of depression', we have also to reckon with the fact that these disabilities are yielding more and more to chemical treatment, and that some types of manic-depression, for example, are the result of potassium imbalance. The interaction of mind and body needs discussion on the deepest possible level, as Maudsley pointed out in 1870. If Calvinist critics admit the possibility that Mahony's disease was General Paralysis of the Insane—the tertiary stage of syphilis—they can of course fall back upon the view that Mahony's passionate nature must have led to his downfall: he should have remained chaste until he married. Such a view shows singularly little grasp of the facts of human nature, or of the historical situation of either a medical student in mid-nineteenth century Edinburgh, or of a migrant on board ship during the gold-rushes, or of the situation on the goldfields themselves. Nor is it certain that uncontrolled passion was the only path to ruin, as a rudimentary acquaintance with mid-Victorian standards of sanitation would make clear.¹³ One might also point out that if passions were controlled, as some critics seem to think they ought to be, most of the books they criticise would never have been written!

¹¹ To claim, as Brian Kiernan does (*Southerly*, No. 3, 1969) that 'Mahony's mania is the mechanism his disturbed personality provides for his escape from the intolerability of his depression' is nonsense.

¹² See, for example, Richmond Lattimore, *Story Patterns in Greek Tragedy*, especially Ch. II.

¹³ It is just conceivable that Walter Richardson could have inherited syphilis, especially as it developed into neuro-syphilis, which has been known to be congenital. His father was an Army officer and his marriage at seventy-odd with a girl of eighteen hardly indicates asceticism. Another even more remote possibility is that Mary Bailey became infected without knowing it; she also was a passenger on a migrant ship, where standards of hygiene could have been questionable. There is no need for her virtue to have been impugned.

In fact, Mahony, like all the other characters in the book, behaves in accordance with his own nature in response to the web of circumstance in which it is enmeshed: all of them have a case to present and the author presents it justly; all of them at the same time support and destroy one another and it is impossible for mortal men to define precisely the point at which support ends and destruction begins. Professor Kramer's statement in her first book that 'Richardson destroys the illusion that there is an easy or even a right solution to every problem' is absolutely central to any discussion of this work. To find it a matter of satisfaction, as so many modern critics seem to do, that a man brings most of his unhappiness upon himself is to fail to understand the trilogy and to fall short of the degree of insight attained even by the unphilosophical Mary in the final scene. The fact that a man's troubles 'are of his own making' would, one might suppose, if it *were* wholly true, inspire compassion rather than contempt. 'The pity of it, Iago, the pity of it!'

It is in fact the human compassion of the book which comes out most strongly in Mahony's death scene, mediated as we should expect through the consciousness of Mary. For, though it has been necessary to stress the deeper levels of meaning for the purposes of this study, it should be stated emphatically that Mahony and his wife are as far as it is possible to be from allegory. They are human contraries perhaps, but not abstract contradictories, and the book is as important on the surface level as on any other. The characters are living beings in a world which is a visible world, and their story can be, and must be, read on this level if it is to be understood, like the story of the Good Samaritan.

Indeed, one of the most remarkable things about the novel is the way this basic philosophical, psychological, and biological conflict in human life, dramatised in the personal history of a father and a mother, is an indissoluble fusion with the social, historical, and geographical background. The whole book from the opening sentence to the great climactic scene in which Mahony burns his scrip—a purging by fire—is an emblem of its own times, and even more, of our own, as well as of our inner conflicts. The truth that 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon' seems to be the one which most constantly needs reiteration, in all ages of human history.

In Richardson's great drama of pain, which is one man's life and the life of humanity, there is only the gleam of consolation offered by the biologist's view that the purpose of life is life. What matters is not the

individual, but that life itself should continue: 'Lovers passed, but the pledges remained, had put on immortality' is the author's comment; while Mahony visiting his old medical school reflects thus:

Never before had it been made so clear to him of what small worth was the individual: of what little account the human moulds in which this life-energy was cast. Momentous alone was the presence of the great Breath: the eternal motor impulse. Each young soul had its hour, followed a starry trail, dreamed a kingship; then passed—vanishing in the ranks of the mediocre, the disillusioned, the conquered—to make room for the new company of aspirants thronging on behind. (p. 457)

But the impression of overwhelming pessimism which, perhaps because of this impersonal view, oppresses many readers, is lightened by the description of the face of the dead John Turnham, by Mahony's achievement of his vision, and by his brief return to consciousness before he dies: By day, for the children's, for her work's sake, she was forced to bear up. Now there was nobody to see or hear her. The office was closed, the children slept: old Bowey dozed over the lamp in the kitchen. She could weep, without fear of surprise, alone with him who had passed beyond the sound of human grief; in this little back room where, by the light of a single candle, monstrous shadows splashed walls and ceiling: shadows that stirred, and seemed to have a life of their own; for it was winter now, and the wild Australian wind shrilled round the house, and found its way in through the loosely fitting sashes.

How long she sat thus she did not know: she had lost count of time. But, of a sudden, something . . . a something felt not heard, and felt only by a quickening of her pulses . . . made her catch her breath, pause in her crying, strain her ears, look up. And as she did so her heart gave a great bound, then seemed to leave off beating. *He had come back* . . . And in the breathless silence that followed, when each tick of the little clock on the chest of drawers was separately audible, she saw his lips, too, move. He was trying to speak. She bent over him, hardly daring to breathe, and caught, or thought she caught the words: 'Not grieve . . . for me. I'm going . . . into Eternity.'

Whether they were actually meant for her, or whether a mere instinctive response to the sound of her weeping, she could not tell. But dropping on her knees by the bed-side, she took his half-cold hand

in her warm, live one, and kissed and fondled it. And his lids, which had fallen to again, made one last supreme effort to rise, and this time there was no mistaking the whisper that came over his lips.

'Dear wife!'

He was gone again, even as he said it, but it was enough . . . more than enough! Laying her head down beside his, she pressed her face against the linen of the pillow, paying back to this inanimate object the burning thankfulness with which she no longer dared to trouble him. Eternity was something vast, cold, impersonal. But this little phrase, from the long past days of love and comradeship, these homely, familiar words, fell like balsam on her heart. All his love for her, his gratitude to her, was in them: they were her reward, and a full and ample one, for a lifetime of unwearied sacrifice.

Dear wife! . . . dear wife.

He died at dawn, his faint breaths fluttering to rest. (pp. 985-6)
No ruthless pessimist would have allowed any such alleviation of the final horror, though the scene is less an alleviation than a culmination of the concept of marriage embodied in Richard and Mary. And pessimism is ruled out finally by the last sentences of the book, in which Richardson 'makes allowance in her scheme of life for a great possibility':
All that was mortal of Richard Mahony has long since crumbled to dust . . . The rich and kindly earth of his adopted country absorbed his perishable body, as the country itself had never contrived to make its own, his wayward, vagrant spirit.

'All that was mortal' . . . 'the rich and kindly earth' . . . 'adopted country' . . . 'perishable body'. The earth, our kindly mother, our adopted country, receives back its due. But that is not, for Richardson, the end of the story.

'Ultima Thule' . . . the name is most likely to have been taken from Longfellow's volume of poems of that name, published in 1880. Richardson made no secret of her love for Longfellow and she read his verse while she was at school, not long after her father's death.

The elegaic mood and tone of the poems, the metaphysical beliefs of the poet, match those of the novelist and her novel, and the poem entitled *Dedication* is a fit commentary on Mahony's earthly journey and his physical resting-place:

How far since then, the ocean streams
Have swept us from that land of dreams,
That land of fiction and of truth,
The lost Atlantis of our youth! . . .

Ultima Thule! Utmost isle!
Here in thy harbours for a while
We lower our sails; a while we rest
From the unending, endless quest.

Chapter 9

Who are the philosophers—the real lovers of wisdom—of truth? Are they not the workers, the investigators—the collectors of facts?

—WALTER LINDESAY RICHARDSON, in *Are These Things True?*, 1872.



Fact and Fiction in 'Richard Mahony'

'WHAT A HISTORIAN she would have made if she had chosen to be one!'—so Weston Bate, a professional historian who has made a special study of the Ballarat of the gold-rush period. In a lecture in 1970,¹ on the use Richardson made of her historical sources in *Australia Felix*, Mr Bate noted with interest, not her adherence to historical facts, but her departure from them. Nevertheless, he expressed his admiration for the Proem to the first book in the following terms:

I find it still, after much reading, the most satisfying description I know of the essence of the early Ballarat experience. Why? Because of its immediacy, and I suppose because of my frantic longing as a prisoner of the historical discipline to be able to do what the novelist is able to do—make individuals breathe, think and feel through a series of experiences which one knows were there, but which historically one can only apportion between numbers of people.

The imaginative historian, that is to say, grants her what literary criticism has sometimes denied her: immediacy.

Bate points out that the Proem has indeed been constructed out of pieces of Howitt, Kelly, Withers, Westgarth and a number of other histories, but that the miner buried at the bottom of the shaft with his 'nose and mouth pressed into the sticky mud as into a mask' is Richardson's

¹ 'From Gravel Pits to Green Point', part of the seminar held to honour the centenary of Richardson's birth at the National Library, Canberra, 23 November 1970, and since published, together with the three other lectures, by the Library.

own miner. The source books tell her that the miners' jumpers were blue and the mud was yellow, but, says Bate, it is the novelist who tells us: Where, here and there, a jumper had kept a tinge of blueness, it was so besmeared with yellow that it might have been expected to turn green. (*R.M.*, p. 8)

He rightly concludes: 'So the poet inside the novelist takes over and improves upon anything that had been produced by those who actually saw the situation'. He points out the dangers of this method: vivid as is her description of the watery sounds of the goldfields, it is not accurate because she had not read the definitive description of them. He also notes that she departed from fact in making the western township busier than the eastern, and speculates about whether she knew what she was doing. I think she did. Her conception of the western end as the busiest and most go-ahead fits in with the total pattern of characterisation and theme, while it does not do violence to the facts of her father's own life. According to Bate, the western township where Mahony, and certainly Dr Richardson, finally settled 'was much more stable and attracted most of the wholesalers, the solicitors and all the banks'. In the novel, Mahony moves there from his modest weatherboard cottage near the Great Swamp, after his first experience of financial stability, when the solicitor Ocock sells some shares for him at considerable profit. The move fits in with the pattern of Mary's ambitions to see him as a rich and respectable local doctor; the whole movement of *Australia Felix*, on the social and personal level as has been pointed out in Chapter 6, is towards bringing order out of chaos, towards consolidation, settled security. Walter Richardson's letters unfortunately do not shed much light on when this move was made, or whether, as in the novel, there was an intermediary stage between the log-and-canvas home and the brick house in Webster Street. During the Chiltern period, in June 1876, he writes that a house he wishes to buy is about the size of our 'wooden cottage in Webster Street', but he could have moved to another in the same street, or as Mahony does, rebuilt in brick on the original site.

Bate is particularly interested in the novelist's setting aside of the evidence she must have read about the vigorous cultural life of Ballarat, about the beauty of the landscape (mentioned, incidentally, by Carboni in *The Eureka Stockade*), about the graciousness of squatting life in the district. She concentrates, he shows, always on the dark side. He also questions

her handling of Mahony's attitude to goldfield politics, believing it unlikely he was ostracised in business because of lack of sympathy with the more radical diggers, since his more moderate opinions were quite common. He sums up her selections from her historical sources:

She gradually cast out the Richardson of history, a participator according to the records of Ballarat and the family records and certainly according to Dr Stoller's magnificent documentation and arrived at the Mahony of the novel. She gradually wrote in a world gone mad, materialistic and brutish, without any relief.

The gist of this paragraph is correct, but it needs some clarification before one can come to any sort of conclusion about why she did what Bate says she did. Bate has examined the Ballarat records and Stoller has documented Walter Lindesay Richardson's medical career and analysed the history of his illness as it is described in the novel.² The present writer investigated, independently, the philosophical background of *Richard Mahony*,³ in the course of which it became clear that the Spiritualism issue was a major one, not a minor one. Following the lead first given by Dr F. B. Smith,⁴ Walter Richardson's connection with the Spiritualist movement in Victoria was traced back to its origin in his student days, and during the course of this investigation I felt it likely that he had had a special interest in syphilis, as his article on the subject in *The Harbinger of Light* and other material demonstrates. The two independent lines of inquiry crossed when it became evident to me that Mahony's illness could not be accounted for in terms of a personality defect alone. It was at this point that Dr Stoller provided much invaluable medical information from his own separate investigations, for which I am indebted. The weight of evidence is on the whole in favour of his hypothesis that Richardson's death was due to a syphilitic infection of the brain.

² See *Meanjin* article by Stoller and Emmerson, also their contribution to the National Library seminar, 'Richard Mahony and the Spirochaete'.

³ See Appendix to this volume; 'The Man, the Portrait and the Artist', *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 1, 1970; also 'The Pilgrim Soul', *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 3, 1969, and 'Anti-Vaccination and Syphilis', in *Medical Journal of Australia*, 7 March 1970.

⁴ See 'Spiritualism in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century' in the *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 3; also the thesis, 'Freethought in Melbourne in the Nineteenth Century'.

It is difficult to know what Bate had in mind when he used the term 'family records'; none of the kind which support Stoller's researches or my own were available in any detail in Australia until after the delivery of the Richardson centenary lectures in November 1970. Before that only Walter Richardson's medical, Spiritualist and other miscellaneous writings in obscure pamphlets and journals were accessible in libraries, and had not been consulted. In June 1968, however, Henry Handel Richardson's nephew in London showed me a varied collection of letters, diaries, papers (including one on the Ballarat goldfields written by the novelist's father), and photographs, and consented at my suggestion to make them available to the National Library in Canberra. I had time only to glance at them briefly, and photostat copies of them did not arrive in Australia, for one reason or another, until early in 1971. By this time I had examined most of what was available in Australian libraries by or about Walter Richardson.

A careful examination of Mary Richardson's early letters to her husband would take a long time, longer than I have had time to give to it; they are written, as Richardson says in the novel (p. 36), in a beautiful minute Italian hand with complicated flourishes, a hand which is almost indecipherable on microfilm since the sentences are written vertically and horizontally on the same sheet, no doubt in order to conserve paper. The originals are almost as illegible.

Nevertheless, what can be read of these, together with the information in the letters of both husband and wife that are quite legible, shows that the novelist did with her personal sources what she did with her historical facts: she discarded what was of no use for her artistic purposes and retained what was, altering dates if it suited her. The collection of letters is by no means complete⁵ and the novelist must have been as frustrated as a historian would be by the fact that many of them are undated, so that the sequence of events is difficult to follow. This makes the telescoping of random happenings into a coherent story in the early stages of *Australia Felix* all the more admirable. At some of the points in their lives which need clarification—what was Richardson doing on Eureka

⁵ A large number of Walter Richardson's letters from Chiltern survive, but Mary's to him are not in this collection. Walter disliked Mary's keeping his letters, and could himself have destroyed many of hers before his daughter acquired the papers.

Day, for instance?—there are no letters to help; he could have been away visiting Mary, for her letters to him begin on 22 April 1854, and they were not married until August 1855. At others, they were presumably together, and therefore no letters *could* exist. One looks in vain, for instance, for some hint of the sex of the still-born child; perhaps Mary's use of the masculine pronoun on page 130 of the trilogy, before the child's birth, may be some indication, though after it was born she refers to the baby as 'it' (p. 165). Nevertheless this mass of important material does throw light on some of the questions raised by Weston Bate.

The real-life father was not at all blind to what Bate calls 'some of the finest humanised landscape in Australia . . .'. What surprises those who know only the Mahony of the book and who concentrate particularly on the Mahony of *Ultima Thule* is Dr Richardson's admiration for the local scenery. In a letter dated 11 June 1855 he describes:

a pleasant walk through beautiful scenery which I long to show you. It resembles a gentleman's park in England more than anything else. I gathered some lovely heath yesterday, exquisite in appearance. They want the perfume of English heaths, a great loss to the flowers of the Antipodes.

Admiring references to the scenery are frequent and do not always by any means stress the colonist's preference for 'parkland'.⁶

Nor was the real-life father isolated from the social life of Ballarat, neither in his store-keeping days, nor when he set up in practice. Whether he was acquainted with the squatting stratum is not clear, though there is a tantalising reference to 'farmers from Learmonth' in the letters; he knew the Kabat family well, and there may be a cross-connection here with Marcus Clarke, whose fellow-jackaroo was a Kabat. Richardson and his wife were friends of the Wanliss family for many years; P. D. Wanliss, a future Legislative Councillor, gave evidence in the Gold-fields Commission (1854-5). The name 'Scott' occurs several times in the mid-wifery case-books; though where the professions of the husbands are noted there seems to be a predominance of patients from the tradesman class—which is understandable. Walter Richardson seems to have gone to all the

⁶ Richardson's conviction expressed in a letter to Nettie Palmer that all the early colonists disliked the scenery is an absurd generalisation. She had obviously not read Alexander Harris, or 'Australie', whom she should have known from Sladen's anthology, since she knew his work.

social events in Ballarat whenever his work permitted and he felt well enough to do so. There are even more references to ill-health in the letters than in the novel. This fact is not particularly striking in itself. One gets the impression from reading Victorian letters—those of George Eliot, for instance—that our great-grandparents were ‘poorly’ most of the time. One wonders however they achieved the work they did. Even so, Walter Richardson was much plagued by an excruciatingly painful ‘tic’, which he treated with chloroform and chlorodyne.

His letters are full of references to visitors dropping in while his wife is away, of friends or colleagues he brings home after the theatre, or to play whist in the evening, of long yarns and discussions until one or two in the morning. He was also a respected and admired Freemason, for there is a letter in existence signed by a large number of ‘brothers’, expressing affectionate sympathy with him in his severe illness in April 1859. Later, we find him writing to Mary in Melbourne:

I am thinking of going down on 11th June, so as to be present at the installation of the Grand Master. I have been asked to represent the Ballarat Lodge, so if that is not too soon, the ceremony takes place on the 12th, I could stay until Saturday 15th.

The apparent reluctance to take part, which Dr Stoller notes in the novel as a projection of the author, is not present in the letter.⁷ Walter Richardson was, according to most of his letters, a ‘participator’, as the public records examined by Dr Stoller show him to have been. There is no doubt he was touchy, but the feeling of being an isolate is expressed only on two occasions: once in a mood of petulance, once late in the Chiltern period when he was depressed.

On one of the most interesting of Bate’s questions, the existing letters throw no light at all: the changing of the date of the infamous licence-hunt of 30 November 1854, a few days before the Eureka riot. But the early letters imply that if Walter Richardson was not himself mixed up in it, his friend Alexander Brooke Smith (the ‘Purdy Smith’ of the novel) may well have been. Walter’s letters to Mary are nearly all undated, but it becomes clear after a while from the context that the courtship and

⁷ The handling of this incident in the novel shows Richardson altering facts to suit herself, either the date of the event, or the age of Mahony’s brother-in-law, whom he meets on the return journey. The real brother-in-law was not Minister for Railways.

engagement were not the whirlwind affair of a few months that the novel makes them out to be. At one stage certainly in 1855, Walter complains that his friend Brooke Smith, like himself, feels hurt at having been kept waiting for a year. Smith, the letters reveal, was *engaged* to Polly Bradshaw, the younger of the 'Beamish' sisters of the novel. The letters contain references to Polly's not having heard from Smith for a long time. Walter's explanation is that 'where he is today he might not be tomorrow', that 'he mightn't want his letters seen going through the post', that 'his whereabouts are secret', all of which make one suspect either that he was, halfway through 1855, a fugitive from the Eureka riot, or, which is more likely, that he was in pursuit of fugitives from Eureka. According to his own accounts (see p. 369) Smith joined the police force late in 1852, and was certainly in the force in the sixties and seventies in north-eastern Victoria. The Chiltern historian, W. C. Busse, records that a number of Eureka refugees made their way to the Beechworth-Chiltern⁸ area when the Indigo diggings opened up in 1858.

There is in the letters at least one reference to a consequence of the Eureka riot. Walter refers to a Mr William Bradshaw, evidently a brother of the Bradshaws for whom Mary worked, as a member of the Patriotic Fund, and later says: '[he] is to be a magistrate and a considerable man. I saw him on the hustings at the last election here . . .'

and again:

Mr W. Bradshaw is full of philanthropic schemes and I fear thinks rather indifferently of me because I don't join, the fact is I have been so *robbed* and had so many impositions practised on me that I think more hardly of the diggers than I did . . .

The comment may throw some light on the 'ostracism' possibility. From the letter, it appears that Walter is treating William as a patient, but would like to have 'some other medical man's opinion'. It is never possible to be sure which William is being referred to in some of the early letters: Mary had a brother William, as well as a brother Harold on the gold-fields.

W. Bradshaw is apparently the same as the one named in Carboni's

⁸ Where, according to W. Hornadge, Brooke Smith fell foul of Ned Kelly. See below.

book as '—Bradshaw, Esq., J.P., of Magpie Gully'.⁹ His name figures on a list of persons authorised to collect 'Friendly subscriptions' to support distressed diggers, or their widows and children. There was also an Edward Bradshaw, whom Walter visited at the Whitehorse Hotel, in Whitehorse Gully, on Mary's behalf.

Though it is disappointing that there is no direct reference to Eureka in Walter's letters, or to the licence-hunt, it still seems to me most likely that the reason given for the alteration in the date is the one suggested in Chapter 6: the novel is about a man 'on the run', and what we first see is men on the run.

What sort of tent Richardson lived in when he first went to Ballarat in 1852 there is no knowing from the letters; Bate's conjecture that it was like von Guérard's, in his engraving of July 1853, is the most likely. (Incidentally, Walter Richardson's gold licence for that very month is still in existence amongst his papers.) What we do know is that the log-and-canvas dwelling of the novel, where he lived when he was wooing Mary and to which he brought her, was a fact. There is a sketch of it on one of his early letters to her before marriage, with her flag flying, larger than life. There is also a separate, comic sketch of the same dwelling, after marriage, during the Ballarat floods, with the water swirling round it, with Mary and others present and Walter in the doorway. On the roof is the inscription 'Dr. Richardson, surgeon', and on the other wing of the structure the roof bears the inscription 'Parlour'. There is no doubt that the real Mary knew the sort of dwelling she was coming to on her marriage and made light of it¹⁰ as the Mary in the novel does not, though she comes to accept it out of loyalty to her husband. It would have been strange if she had not known, since so many of her friends and relatives were trying their luck on the diggings. Fact and fiction are woven together so that again the balance is slightly towards gloom, rather than cheerfulness, even in this trivial detail.

⁹ The Bradshaw family may be responsible for the name 'Dandaloo' which occurs in *Australia Felix* as the property of the alcoholic Glendinning. The *Argus* records the death 'at Danderoo of Euphemia, infant child of Mr and Mrs Charles Bradshaw, late of Magpie Gully, Ballaarat', 29 October 1857.

¹⁰ There is a reference in one of Mary's letters before marriage to Walter's living quarters, begging him not to go to too much trouble to alter them, on the grounds that what is good enough for him will be good enough for her.

Other details of characterisation appear in these early letters. There is no doubt about Richardson's pride in himself, for example: the first flamboyant signature (which the novelist calls 'Dickens-like') is the earliest hint of it. He cared more perhaps for public opinion than the novelist allows: we find him advising Mary to practise the habit of letter-writing because it improves one's diction, which the world sets so much store by. The tremendous affection for cats and dogs—a trait which became almost an obsession in his daughter—is revealed in the first few letters. His compassion and his social conscience, which are marked in his behaviour throughout life, are more evident in the letters than in the novel.¹¹ Both he and Mary are full of concern about the depressed state of the diggings and of Melbourne itself, after the first flush of success. The trials and tribulations of his and Mary's friends and relatives who are in trouble with their shafts are a constant subject of discussion and 'the unfortunate condition of the labouring classes' in the city arouses compassion. Walter writes from Ballarat to Geelong: 'There is an influx of unemployed here which has the effect of reducing wages and making all grumble except the employers.' His politics, like his daughter's, were a curious mixture of conservatism and radicalism; one remembers his speech at the Cavendish Rooms in London to the English Spiritualists, when he praised the high standard of living of the Australian working man and referred to Jesus Christ as a communist! Something of the radicalism comes out in Mahony's discussion with Mr Beamish over the land question, Mahony taking the side of the small settler against the squatters and thus aligning himself with the more thoughtful diggers (p. 57).

On balance, however, it is the conservative side of Mahony that is stressed and this fits in with the general purpose of depicting him as a lonely gentleman in a land of money-grubbers. Bate is right when he surmises that the novelist

deliberately gives the events leading to the Eureka Rebellion overtones of ratbag materialism and republicanism unrelieved by the theme of justice which is strong in Withers.

In doing this, she is able to make Mahony more isolated in his opinions without obliterating altogether the side of him that was more 'daring'. What she is aiming at is to show his failure to identify himself with any

¹¹ In *The Way Home* (p. 555) Mary is spoken of as Mahony's 'social conscience', with a slightly different twist to the word 'social'.

group at all: to make him indeed *more* like herself, not less, as he actually was. This point comes out particularly strongly in the early pages of the Proem to *The Way Home*.

Bate offers the hypothesis that discovering the genesis of the novel in the family material she knew existed was 'vital to Richardson's personal search for identity', but that she needed a large body of historical material to fill out the family records. 'Search for identity' is a phrase one gets rather tired of hearing nowadays, but there is some sense in using it in this context. It is not a phrase, however, which covers the motivations of the novelist completely. The general tenor of the novel suggests that she shared Carboni's view (it is not impossible she knew it) that:

Balaarat (*sic*) was a Nugety Eldorado for the few, a ruinous field of hard labour for many, a profound ditch of Perdition for Body and Soul to all.¹²

Carboni's opinion that 'gold-thirst [was] the most horrible demon that depraves the human heart, even a naturally honest heart' (p. 14) is paralleled in the Proem and borne out by the novel. Neither Mary nor Richard escapes the subtle corruption. Chapter XVII of Carboni's book about storm, death, and life as the order of Providence would also have appealed to her, especially his conclusion that death is life. The word 'mammon' was constantly used in reference to the passion for making money that seemed to the detached comfortably-off visitor to be the sole interest of Australians (Darwin remarked on it, even before the gold-rush period),¹³ and the novel's moral thesis, that it is impossible to serve God and mammon, is plain enough by now.

But we have also to consider Richardson's own statement that there were plenty of novels about the successful migrant and that she wanted to write one about an unsuccessful migrant. This needs to be looked at in the light of the fact that she herself in Europe was at least a 'disgruntled' migrant: as far as music was concerned a failure, and as a novelist hardly known at all until 1929. From her books alone, her average earnings over thirty years were about a shilling a week. Nevertheless, she avoided her father's answer to disgruntlement and tied herself firmly to a task, though she was fortunate enough to have a husband who enabled her to do so and a thoroughly congenial task.

¹² See Raffaello Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, ed. Geoffrey Serle, p. 180.

¹³ See *Journal of a Voyage Round the World*, p. 531.

The actual germ of the novel may possibly lie in the dream which Walter recounts to Mary in one of his early letters. It is a cheerful letter beginning with a reference to 'Spring, that most delightful of our [seasons] in our adopted home'. Then:

. . . I dream, as of course every lover does and that I dream of her I think of during the day is not to be wondered at. But I had a dream the other night, when all around was still that somehow or other business had managed to go all wrong and that I was ruined and compelled to fly. I remember distinctly saying to a friend, *for I had one left*: 'But my dear fellow, the worst of it is that I was on the point of being married . . .' I was much relieved when I awoke and found myself all right.

In the novel, business does go all wrong and the psychological rejection of Mary is equivalent to the loss of her. Mahony is deprived finally of even one friend, and flight is the burden of the novel from the beginning almost to the end. But Mahony 'wakes' from the life that he has come to regard as a 'semi-sleep' and reconciling himself with Mary as he dies finds himself 'all right'. The whole outline of the novel is contained in these few lines. The result, if this was indeed the germ of it, is a feat like that of George Eliot's with *Adam Bede*, a book which arose simply from the remark of her aunt that she had spent a night in a cell with a young woman condemned to death for child-murder. Though Richardson had more material available for characterisation, it is not material that is very easy to use because so much of it is undated and many of the names are unidentifiable; and she had no material at all for the geographical and historical background, apart from a short article written by her father on the goldfields, half of which is missing. The references in the letters would have been unintelligible without her historical research.

The dream is an anxiety-dream and Walter Richardson like many other colonists had plenty to be anxious about throughout his early married life, even in his Webster Street days. Mary was sometimes away from home for several weeks at a time, often staying with her Uncle, Joshua Turnham, Assistant Superintendent of the Pentridge Stockade, with its new Panopticon, mentioned in the correspondence. Sometimes she stayed with John in Bull Street, Melbourne, at other times with friends. Walter's letters to her oscillate between complaints that there are no patients and finances are gone, and complaints of overwork. There is, too, a curious wavering be-

tween lack of confidence in his own professional skill and the conviction that he was too good for his patients, while Bunce (the 'Dr Munce' of the novel) could not do 'half his work'. The wish to have the support of another opinion had less significance then, however, than it would in these days of wonder drugs and sound medical training. Although Richardson had had the best training available, doctors required the reassurance of their colleagues more than they do now; in addition, Walter's over-anxiety might have been caused by his ill-health, which culminated in 1859 in the serious illness already referred to. The prevailing tone about money matters is on the whole gloomy; he is always referring to the financial failures of medical men he knows and the novelist has transferred this tone to Mahony's view of life in general. One wonders, at times, if the practice at Ballarat was as flourishing as Stoller assumes, and whether Dr Richardson relied much more than the Mahony of the novel on his income from dividends. He certainly followed the mining market very closely and did not leave his buying and selling wholly in the hands of his solicitor. He was constantly advising his relatives, including John Bailey, about investments. Nevertheless his midwifery books show that he was a popular obstetrician; the number of his confinements more than doubled in 1861 compared with 1860: from 67 to 137. Some of his side-comments on his patients are very interesting, particularly the one about Mrs Ocock giving birth to a strong boy, four months after marriage!¹⁴

Walter Richardson's career as a medical man shown in public records has been amply documented by Stoller and, since this chapter is not intended to be a biography of the novelist's father, there is no point in recapitulating his findings. What it is most concerned with is the way the novelist has adhered to or deviated from the facts of her father's life as they are now more clearly revealed. Some of the deviations are minor inconsistencies; some are serious departures. Of the first order are the references to Mahony's profession before his marriage and soon after it. In the novel, at the time of the licence-hunt, the Commissioner of troops addresses Mahony as 'doctor'; so does old Ocock, Henry's father, a little later. His pro-

¹⁴ Mrs Ocock is recorded as being a banker's wife, aged 18, pregnant for the first time. There is also a reference in 1859 to a Mrs Milson: 'I was called in as I was passing and never got paid. She was a notoriously bad woman. Still-born male.'

profession, the reader would infer, was public knowledge.¹⁵ After the riot, Mahony is represented as searching for his brother-in-law and for Purdy Smith among the bodies of the Eureka victims; he stops to splint and bandage a wounded man's leg (p. 101) and later visits Purdy in hiding and attends to his injured foot. He is not able to follow up the treatment because Purdy disappears; late in the novel Smith blames Mahony for his lameness. Yet on page 133, it is stated categorically that none of the members of Mahony's profession knew his own, which seems odd when the police commissioner knew it and the garrulous Long Jim. The matter is further complicated by his comment on their ignorance:

And, though piqued by their unsuspectingness, he at the same time feared lest it should not be absolute, and he have the ill-luck to hit on a practitioner who had heard of his stray spurts of doctoring and written him down a charlatan and a quack. (p. 133)

For Polly's confinement he calls in a doctor from two miles away and only when her life is in danger reveals himself as a medical graduate of the same university. To which the doctor replies:

God bless my soul! why couldn't you say so before? And why the deuce didn't you yourself attend . . . (p. 163)

Mahony's anxiety to conceal his profession from his peers is left unexplained, except casually, later, as a natural nervousness where his wife was concerned.

The picture given in the letters is very different, and supports Stoller's view that Walter Richardson made no attempt to conceal his profession on his voyage from England in the *Roxburgh Castle*. His profession is not mentioned on the gold-licence (No. 133) dated 29 June 1853, which bears the name 'Walter Richardson', but then no mention was required. His letters before his marriage make several references to 'patients' he has been treating, to his calling in other doctors for consultation, and there is an allusion to a search for 'another' male nurse for a difficult case. There is also a reference to his drawing teeth, in the intervals of store-keeping, at ten shillings per tooth, a fee which understandably gives him great satisfaction, in view of the depressed state of business. It was indeed a considerable fee in those days. He also writes to his wife, while she is away on a

¹⁵ He is 'routed out', for instance (*R.M.*, p. 32), 'to set a collar-bone' for Long Jim, who has fallen down a shaft while drunk.

visit, informing her that he has decided to take up his profession again and make a home for her as soon as he can raise the money. This situation is handled very differently in the novel, where, although Mahony is seen to be hankering after his profession and hoping to resume it in England, the suggestion to resume it in Australia comes from Mary. The letter is undated, but must lie between 1855 and 1857; it carries no suggestion that the decision had anything to do with Mary's disastrous confinement;¹⁶ the reason implied is the lack of custom in the store. What is certain is that Richardson registered with the Medical Board of Victoria in December 1856, but as Stoller has pointed out, registration was not compulsory until 1862 and he could have begun to practise regularly, and indeed did practise sporadically, before his registration.

Richardson makes only a brief reference to the medical profession in his own essay on 'The Ballarat Gold-mines', but it is enough to suggest that it would have been difficult to do any doctoring at all without everybody knowing about it; if he could count the doctors, so could others; and his friend Brooke Smith knew he had practised in England:

When the writer arrived on Ballaratt in 1852, gold-digging was an occupation followed by the majority in the colony and consequently by the majority in this place; the law had few representatives, medicine somewhat more, and there was only one minister of religion.

(One of the representatives of the law, Charles Henry Hackett, mentioned by Carboni, seems still to have been on visiting terms with Richardson and Brooke Smith in his Chiltern days.)

There is no suggestion in any of the letters of any promise of financial backing from his brother-in-law John Bailey, and indeed, in 1856, according to his obituary notice, John Bailey was not a wealthy Melbourne merchant, but was working as a farmer on some land he had bought at Waurn Ponds (Germantown), as well as helping to edit a Geelong paper. Walter certainly did not go to Melbourne to ask Bailey for Mary's hand; she seems still to have been estranged from John at the time of her marriage, and it was the Bradshaws he had to persuade to release her.

Both the early letters and brief allusions in the novel reveal that Walter Richardson, like Mahony, originally intended to return to practise in England, and the evidence from the letters of the first English period contra-

¹⁶ The factual basis of this confinement is not firmly established.

dicts the notion that his journey to England was merely a visit, as Stoller seems to think. He meant to settle there, though he kept an open mind about returning, but advised Mary not to say anything about their plans, 'in case we have to go back'. No doubt he kept up this fiction himself in his Letters from Home to the *Australian Medical Journal*. He had certainly been for long under strong pressure from his mother to return to England, but her last letter to him in this collection is dated 1863 and it is likely that she died before he arrived there, in which case the visit to her in Dublin is more of a fiction than ever. All her letters came to him from Brighton, where she had lived for years after moving from Edinburgh. She died, however, in Scotland.

The virtual omission of his mother (Lucinda Cheyne) from the novel is one of the major departures from fact; fear of her domination of him and admiration of her have been subsumed into the character of Mary. She wrote to him constantly, as Clutton-Brock has shown and the letters confirm, in tones of implacable doom, recounting with relish every personal and public disaster which came under her notice. She sent him newspapers and borrowed money from him on her other children's behalf, especially Lucinda's. (It was Walter's sister Lucinda who skipped about being a governess at Castlemaine and Kyneton; who broke her 'mâchoire', and gave Mary so much anxiety, not Mary's sister (or sister-in-law) Sarah, of whom Walter seems to have been very fond. In the novel, old Lucinda is a shadowy figure offstage and only a couple of echoes of her survive: Mahony's fear of her as a child, and the phrase she uses in one of the letters: 'the colony ruins the body as it ruins the soul'.) If Walter was unsettled in his mind about his attitude to the colony, the blame can be laid mainly at his mother's door. It is not unlikely that he fled there partly to get out of her reach. Nevertheless he was fond of her and proud of her, as his early letters to Mary reveal, when he asks her to write to his mother, as he will write to hers. Richardson's curiously devious attitude to her sources comes out in connection with Lucinda. In the article 'Some Notes on My Books' she makes a concession to her more usual insistent claim that *Richard Mahony* was a work of imagination, saying:

The woof of fact and fiction is so intricately spun that even for their author, the unravelling would now prove a lengthy and difficult task. She seems bent in later life on making it more difficult! In the same article

she says that except for a vague memory of Australia¹⁷ 'the only material I had to go on was about a dozen family letters'. Mrs Kernot, as we have seen, reports her as saying she could never forget her childhood: it was 'bitten into her memory with acid'. In *Myself When Young* (p. 24) Richardson speaks of using 'letters *and* diaries' to supplement her 'vague' memory. There are certainly far more than a dozen letters in the new collection, and judging by the opening chapters of *Australia Felix* little doubt that she had seen them. Yet she says in *Myself When Young*, written towards the end of her life:

However, *quite recently* [italics mine] I came on an old letter of my father's, written to my mother before marriage, in which he speaks of my grand-mother's 'glorious voice', and mentions that she also played the harp, the accordion and the flageolet! (p. 14)

The actual letter makes it very difficult to understand the later statement in *Myself When Young*:

Whether or not my father was musical I cannot say. But we were given to believe that his mother had at one time been well-known in Dublin as an amateur singer; and this my Irish relatives, whom I met on coming to England, confirmed. (p. 14)

These two sentences have to be reconciled with the one in the novel criticising Polly's lack of musical ability, and with the sentence from the letter itself:

She did well enough at it, God bless her! . . . but he came of a musical family; his mother had sung Handel faultlessly in her day, besides having a mastery of several instruments: and he was apt to be critical. (*R.M.*, p. 295)

The sentence in Walter's letter runs:

. . . she sang as I have never heard woman sing, played the piano, harp, flageolet and accordion, danced in her day and played whist . . .

The phrase 'glorious voice' does not occur in the letter, as Richardson claims. Either she had seen the letter during the writing of *Australia Felix*

¹⁷ *The Getting of Wisdom*, written and published before she revisited Australia, with its vivid and accurate descriptions of Sorrento is enough to refute this statement. Besides, she was in touch in Europe with some of her Melbourne friends.

and had forgotten she had done so, or its details, or else she had been given more precise information by her relations than that her grandmother was a well-known amateur singer. If, as she said, she had come across the letter 'recently', her use of the words 'glorious voice' is inexplicable.

In fact, her memory is not entirely to be trusted in *Myself When Young*, or else her veracity is at fault. She gets the name of her childhood home in Melbourne wrong, for instance; it was 'Springfield', St Kilda, not 'Fairfield', though the latter name turns up in the family letters, in another connection. And, as we have seen, there must be more at work than a faulty memory over her claim that she was refused permission to visit her old school in 1912, or in the suppression of her musical triumphs. A record of the latter exists among the papers, identical with that quoted in Professor Kramer's *Myself When Laura* (p. 8): the family preserved the page on which was printed the letter from the visiting Hungarian musician, Edward Remenyi, in 1884 to 'Alfred Plumpton, Professor and Composer of Music, Melbourne', praising the work of his pupils and singling out that of 'Miss Richardson'.¹⁸

The significant alterations made to her personal sources have an element of psychic compulsion about them, which does not interfere with the artistic achievement, but is curiously bound up with it. She seems to have had a need not for facts in order to write fiction, but to manipulate facts in order to square with her fictions. The alterations are more likely to have been inventions than family legend. Her mother was dead long before she began to write *Richard Mahony* and it is doubtful whether she kept in close touch with her relatives, though she does mention to Nettie Palmer 'an old Aunt in the Midlands'. This aunt, however, is more likely to have been her mother's youngest sister, not an Irish relative.

¹⁸ On the back of the page, which she had sent to her husband's Irish relatives, is an interesting comment in Mary Richardson's writing:

Miss Guinness who won the scholarship was over 20 years of age and had been five years at the Paris Musical Conservatoire, it was hardly fair to Ettie only 14 years to have to compete with her but she was second.

They would not let her try for the Junior Scholarship as she was in the first class. I feel very proud of Ettie after only home training.

Two years later, however, Richardson was in possession of the senior piano-forte scholarship.

Richardson seems, in her general strategy, to be under compulsion to reduce Mahony to nothing, in the financial, social, professional, and personal spheres, so much so that one wonders how much revenge for her unhappy childhood played a part in the artistic creation of this tragic figure. It is strange that the tracing of the progress of Mahony's disease, for example, is far more 'factual' than any other aspect of his history.

To take the financial aspect first, since in a novel whose central moral conflict is between God and mammon one would expect the turns of Fortune's wheel to be of primary interest. In *Myself When Young*, Richardson makes it appear that the real-life father's fortune was made from his medical practice, and Buckley¹⁹ taking his material at second-hand writes:

His medical practice was so comfortable that he retired after a few years [!] and when Ethel Florence was four, took his family on the standard Grand Tour of Europe.

He omits to mention the first visit and the struggles to set up practice in England, and makes Ethel Florence four instead of three when the second visit to England began. He also overlooks the fact that even Mahony by no means makes his fortune from medicine—he is saved from money troubles several times by luck with shares. Mahony's practice is comfortable enough, however, when he leaves it, in spite of its falling off after his brush with Ocock; he had then been practising for more than 'a few' years. The letters indicate that Walter Richardson's investments were an important part of his income in his Ballarat days, and he seems to have lived on his dividends between the latter part of 1869 and the early part of 1874. However he came by it, his fortune at its peak must have been quite impressive. Even after his losses, the Mahony of the novel manages to save £3,000, roughly the present-day equivalent of \$60,000, from the wreck. It is true that he cuts down the sum by what would now be about \$20,000 on building a house, borrowing more than half of the money to do so. Even in the Chiltern and Queenscliff period the letters make it clear that the family was not wholly dependent on the father's income from practice, though one can understand his anxiety to avoid living on dividends from wildly fluctuating mining shares, or on savings. In the novel, however, the practice is

¹⁹ V. Buckley, *Henry Handel Richardson*, p. 4.

made to appear much more crucial to their existence and his growing eccentricity a more significant obstacle to his conduct of it. One of the most effective recurrent metaphors in the novel—Mahony's failure to insure his life—has no basis in fact at all. The statement of Walter Richardson's assets for probate of his will shows that he had *two* life assurance policies each for £500 or so, a total of \$20,000 in present-day terms. He also had several bank accounts, including separate ones for his wife and children. When he took out the second policy, it is impossible to say. Writing to his wife from Chiltern, trying to cheer her during a period of anxiety about money and ill-health, he made a list of his assets, at the head of which are the words 'Assurance: £545'. He might have forgotten he had two policies, considering his state of mind at the time. The letter is not dated, but it was written after an illness, urging Mary not to hurry back because he was feeling better, probably about two and a half years before his death. This letter, and his accounts in his prosperous years, show that he was meticulous about remembering to pay the premiums. The same letter makes it plain that Mary knew he had borrowed money to build the house—a fact she does not learn in the novel until she returns from the seaside visit.

The accounts kept by Richardson during the Melbourne period give some idea of his affluence and of its sources. His receipts for 1872, for example, totalled £2,854 (\$57,080) and his expenses £1,130 (\$22,600), in a period when taxes would have been minimal. In December 1872, his investments in shares amounted to nearly £5,500 (\$55,000) and he had in addition assurance, savings-bank deposits and other assets, including his luxurious house. Some of his investments were in his wife's name and they were distributed among eight different companies, his largest holdings being 200 Great Extended Hustlers. There is no trace in the existing material of shares called Australia Felixes—the ones which made 'his' fortune—and it would be characteristic of Richardson to have invented this ironic name. Some real shares, however, are mentioned in the novel: 'New Moons' for instance. Walter Richardson also held a number of shares in trust for Mary and Edgar Bailey, presumably his wife's relatives. During these years he paid regular sums to his sister Lucinda; there are also intriguing references to 'five guineas for Townshend's child' which suggest one possible source for the first part of Mahony's name.

A more likely one, however, is that of Chauncey Townshend.²⁰ In passing, it might be noted that there is no evidence to support Richardson's statement in *Myself When Young* that the family used a hyphenated name. Walter Richardson never hyphenated his signature and his letters are frequently addressed to Mrs W. Richardson. The nickname 'Polly' was certainly not permanently dropped, and both husband and wife spelt 'Mary' as 'Marie' from time to time, for no apparent reason. The children are usually referred to as 'Ettie' and 'Lillie', though in one letter from Chiltern their father calls them 'Ada' and 'Florence'. The daughter's obsession with names and nicknames is not hard to understand.

Other interesting entries in the accounts are the subscriptions to the Yorick Club, the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the Melbourne Bowling Club, and the price of opera tickets. There is little sign of the introverted Mahony here! As to the Yorick Club, a possible connection with Marcus Clarke needs investigation, through the link with Kabat already mentioned.²¹ Other entries detail the expenses incurred when Dr Richardson visited Sydney by himself not long after his eldest daughter was born, apparently to recuperate from an illness. He writes enthusiastically to his wife about its beauties and its magnificent climate, and looks forward to their visiting it together the following year. He stayed in Sydney part of the time with his young nephew Alick, and while there became an honorary member of the Union Club, Sydney. Richardson was by no means as abstemious as the Mahony of the novel is portrayed as being: there is understandably a good deal of criticism of colonial drinking habits in the novel, and Walter himself was critical about them. But the accounts show regular purchases of wine and beer and Richardson's interest in good wine continued until late in his life. Earlier in his career occurs a letter urging Mary to drink plenty of beer for her health's sake, and just before he left Chiltern he was ordering a case

²⁰ Chauncey Hare Townshend, poet (1798-1868), author of *Facts in Mesmerism* (1840) and *Mesmerism Proved True*, 1854. He was also interested in Animal Magnetism, and published a book of verse, *Sermons in Sonnets* (1851). But another possible source of the name is G. Townshend's *Adventures and Sufferings of an old Colonist* (Melbourne, 1866).

²¹ It may be of course that by the time Richardson joined the club, Marcus Clarke had ceased to frequent it; it lost its original Bohemian character fairly early and became somewhat staid and respectable.

of local wine for his friend Dr Graham. Nevertheless, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that he at any time drank more than moderately, unlike many members of his profession in those days. One of his accounts shows the name of Messrs Paterson, Ray and Palmer, the firm his brother-in-law was connected with at the time of his death. A most interesting financial entry occurs in Mary's handwriting in 1878, which may indicate a date after her husband's collapse:

Bought 20 New Lothairs from Mr Nixon, 18/9 each.²²

There is no indication of the fate of Mary's transaction, but it shows what is evident elsewhere in the correspondence, though the fact is muted in the novel, that Mary was also interested in the stock market and as capable of making independent financial decisions as her real-life husband. Although the fictional Mary is represented as 'good at figures', it is hard to imagine her spending such a large sum on shares during the financial stress of the 'Gymgurra' days, and she is represented as being ignorant of financial language. In *Myself When Young*, Richardson allows her mother, in the Maldon period, her share of business acumen, but it was apparently in evidence long before.

In making Mahony leave his financial affairs wholly in the hands of his agent, the novelist is simply emphasising his unworldliness and impracticality—and perhaps his irresponsibility—qualities which are far less in evidence in the real man. It is interesting to remember that his daughter had some business sense; she had money invested in the United States, though it brought her no income during World War II; and she was alive to the possible value of her manuscripts to libraries, and conducted the sale of the film rights of *Richard Mahony*, just before her death, with considerable aplomb.²³

²² According to Serle (*The Rush to be Rich*, p. 64) the New Lothairs were still doing well in the 1880s; so were New North Clunes in which Richardson had had shares. Serle's book makes it very clear that Richardson's fortunes reflected the general fluctuations of the mining markets, and were far from being atypical.

²³ Presumably Metro-Goldwyn Mayer still hold the rights of this film. It is a scandal that it has not been made in Australia long ago.

Richardson may have been, as Olga Roncoroni says, the least materialistic person she had ever known, but she liked comfort, and her expensive tastes apparently put some strain on her husband.

Whether or not Walter Richardson owed the comparative collapse of his fortune to the wickedness of an absconding agent—a faint parallel to the case of the absconding drayman in the novel, which caused the wretched Bolliver's downfall—there is no evidence in the letters. It may have been due to a slump in the mining market, which he could not cope with in his absence in Europe; it is not utterly impossible that he left his affairs in the hands of his brother-in-law Samuel Bailey and that Bailey was careless.²⁴ Sam was mixed up later, through negligence rather than dishonesty, in some defalcation business during the Chiltern period. He apparently is the 'Jerry' of the novel, and was in a country bank, at one time at Beechworth.

In the novel, Richardson deals Mahony's financial career its final blow—a magnificent artistic stroke—when she makes him burn all his bonds and scrip, all the evidence of what assets he possesses, and leave his family virtually penniless:

A pitiful forty-odd pounds standing to his credit in a Melbourne bank and her own poor remnant of Tilly's loan was literally all they had in the world. (*R.M.*, p. 934)

The facts are otherwise. Probate of Walter Richardson's will was granted about a month after his death on 1 August 1879. His assets were then stated to be worth £2,350, in present-day terms about \$47,000. After payment of his debts, the net sum was £1,850, on which probate duty was £18 10s. That is to say, his widow inherited an estate which would now be worth \$37,000. She was therefore by no means penniless, but wisely decided not to risk living on interest from her capital: there was no old-age pension to look forward to, nor other social services which would enable her to bring up two young children and educate them; and the number of jobs open to women of her class without any training was negligible. The design of the novel, however, demands Mahony's total ruin and there is some reason for thinking that some concealed animosity in Richardson's attitude to her father—which is certainly expressed in the portrait of Cuffy—some resentment for her childhood sufferings, helped to shape that design. Yet what she causes to happen to Mahony has to be measured against what she causes to happen to Mary in 'The End of a Childhood', which is, of course, pure invention. The

²⁴ It is more probable perhaps that Edgar Bailey kept an eye on his affairs: there are frequent references in the account books to 'Ned's commission'.

symbolic destruction of both her parents, in terms of their own characters as she saw them, seems to have been in some way necessary to her.²⁵ At the same time, she accomplishes this destruction without being unfair to either: *Ultima Thule*, dedicated to her mother, is certainly a celebration of her tremendous courage and initiative in adversity, but it holds the balance of sympathy between man and wife with even-handed justice.

Not only does Richardson depart from the facts in order to emphasise Mahony's financial failure; she also manipulates them in order to stress his failure in personal relationships.

The Mahony of the novel is an austere, isolated figure, who becomes a complete solitary as the book progresses, until he thrusts away from him, when his mind gives way, even his own wife. It is Mahony's wife who is constantly the centre of a large group of relations, friends, and acquaintances. Again the facts are otherwise. Like his wife, Walter Richardson had a number of relatives in the colony and a large circle of friends and acquaintances, some of them the most distinguished men of their time. Some were his patients, James Bonwick, for example. His nephew Alick followed him to Australia and settled in Sydney, where he was in 1871 travelling auditor of accounts for the New South Wales Railways. His sister, Lucinda, also lived in Victoria for a number of years, though she paid a visit to her mother in Brighton during the sixties and then went to Ireland. Whether she returned to the colony is not clear, though Walter was still making payments to her in the early seventies. A half-brother named Cheyne settled in Melbourne and set up a photography business; another brother or half-brother came out to the colony and went back to England, much to old Lucinda's disapproval. Still another half-brother, John Cheyne, left Tasmania and went to India, where he died in dramatic circumstances of a fever. Walter's mother kept him constantly informed of all these movements and he himself corresponded with his relatives and friends at home and abroad and commented on their failure to reply if they delayed too long in doing so. He was a most hospitable man and scrupulous about returning

²⁵ If, as I think she did, she equated Fate with genetic inheritance (Maudsley's 'tyranny of organisation') then wiping out Mahony and Mary is equivalent to destroying her heredity. Yet the inheritance she resented so bitterly enabled her to bestow eternity on her parents and to achieve it herself in bestowing it.

the hospitality he himself, or more frequently his wife, enjoyed. During his first trip to England he paid lengthy visits to Dublin to his Irish relatives—not of course to his mother—who, if she was not dead, was certainly not living in Dublin at the time.²⁶ There is no hint in the letters of the social isolation of Mahony depicted in the novel.

During his second visit to England he was positively lionised by the London Spiritualists,²⁷ who tried to persuade him to remain in England as an official lecturer. Under their auspices he met a number of distinguished men, including a Russian prince, and renewed his acquaintance with the family of his former chemistry professor at Edinburgh—McDougall Gregory, who had first introduced him to Reichenbach's theory of 'odic' force. There is no sign in the lecture he gave to the admiring audience of English Spiritualists in July 1873 of the moody, irritable 'spoilt child' of the latter part of *The Way Home* or of a would-be recluse. Whether one is interested in the matter of the lecture or not, it is easy, serene and confident in tone, well-organised and well-informed, not only about its particular subject, but about the general affairs of the day in Australia and England. He retained his interest in current affairs to the end; one of his last and saddest letters from Queenscliff in 1877 shows his interest in the 'Eastern question'. He speaks of a Russian victory and says 'poor Turkey seems likely to be conquered'. This opinion reflects his dislike of 'that turn-coat, Gladstone'.²⁸

The letters from Chiltern written during the most difficult part of his life show him still behaving as a social being, anxious for the company of his fellow-men and regretting the lack of it. He is certainly perturbed about his financial affairs, but so were many people in Chiltern at the time when he lived there. The local paper of the period confirms Richardson's opinion, expressed in his letters, that numbers of people were leaving the town because of lack of business and that others, like Lloyd the chemist, were feeling the pinch. The paper was full of advertisements of businesses for sale. In 1876 and 1877, while he was practising in

²⁶ Both the Richardson children stayed with their relatives in Dublin, an uncle and aunt, while their parents toured the Continent; Cuffy's journey to Italy is an invention.

²⁷ See Smith's thesis, 'Freethought in Melbourne . . . '.

²⁸ Support for the Turks was unusual in view of the widespread agitation in England over the Bulgarian atrocities.

Chiltern, the town was in fact going through a mining crisis. The Chiltern Valley Gold Mines Company was formed in a mood of optimism by John H. Wallace in 1876 and the Victory shaft sunk, but then lost in 1877. In spite of the troubles in the mine (the flooding that Dr Richardson describes in a letter for instance) the manager Henry Nickless retained the loyalty of the company and the miners, and a second shaft was sunk in 1878 with more success. By that time, however, Richardson like many others had left the town and was not to see Chiltern in its more prosperous days. Between 1876 and 1920 gold to the value of £1,275,997 was obtained from local mines.

In addition to the mining depression there was also, it must be remembered, a disastrous drought during the period Richardson lived in Chiltern and his difficulty in making a living is certainly not attributable entirely to his own shortcomings, as it was not, indeed, in Ballarat. While in Chiltern, he was seeing old friends, including Brooke Smith, Judge Hackett and many more; he was Vice-President of the Athenaeum,²⁹ a popular performer in the theatre, and possessed a season ticket to the swimming baths. He pursued his interest in Spiritualism with others who shared it, notably Robert Scott, one of the mining engineers, whose grandson still lives in Chiltern and remembers hearing of his grandfather's passion for the subject. The doctor Rohner whose practice he took over was a well-known Spiritualist. Richardson was not, then, as is Mahony in the novel, completely sunk in solitude and cut off from the outside world, though his practice began to dwindle in the later stages, partly because of the general depression in the town.

Reference to the *Chiltern Federal Standard* for 1877 suggests that he offended a number of patients over his attitude to compulsory vaccination, of which he disapproved with good reason, and that some gossip arose towards the end of his stay to the effect that he drank. The gossip was most probably due to a misinterpretation of the symptoms of his final illness, which were beginning to show themselves³⁰—the uncontrollable tremors, for instance, and the lapse of memory which occurred when he went out to post a letter (*not* the professional visit to the station-

²⁹ The *Chiltern Federal Standard* reporting the annual general meeting in 1877 records that Dr Richardson had attended ten out of twelve monthly meetings.

³⁰ The novel makes very effective use of this misinterpretation of symptoms.

master described in the novel). There is no doubt that Richardson became more and more worried about his health while he was in Chiltern and expressed the view in a letter to his wife that he would not live to be an old man and would not be sorry to go. Whether or not he attempted to commit suicide is still doubtful—letters or diaries dealing with this point may have been destroyed, if ever they existed. If he attempted it in the somewhat public manner that is described in the novel, where he is brought home in a state of collapse by the local police, it is surprising that the *Federal Standard* did not make some sort of allusion to it: the paper takes an increasingly hostile tone towards him after the vaccination argument. It would be rash to conclude on the basis of the letter in which he makes a list of his assets and points out that it would be better for the children if he were to die first rather than his wife—he was anxious about her health too—that he was in a suicidal mood and that the mood was strong enough to cause him to attempt to kill himself. In moments of depression many people have thought that death would be welcome without feeling the urge to hasten the event themselves. Richardson was interested in the phenomenon of suicide,³¹ the incidence of which was high enough to be remarked on in the newspapers of the 1870s; he also has cuttings about the subject in his scrap-book and notes in his Commonplace Book; a reference to the suicide of an acquaintance in one of his very early letters indicates that he felt tremendous pity for a sufferer who would take such a drastic way out. Without more evidence than is available, it would seem unlikely that Walter Richardson would have added this particular burden to those that his wife would have had to bear at his death. And the question of the validity of his assurance policy, which formed a substantial part of his assets, would have had to be considered. There had already been an extended court case over such an issue reported in the *Argus* during the early part of 1872, which Walter Richardson no doubt had read.

The most likely explanation of this episode is that the *mood* of the letter alluded to provided the basis for the novelist's invention and as an

³¹ His friend H. K. Rusden delivered an address on suicide to the Eclectic Association of Melbourne, which was printed in 1875. Rusden was a prolific writer on controversial questions. His address, which is a splendid piece of closely reasoned, sustained argument is not a justification of suicide, but an attack on legal and social intolerance of suicide. He objected to its being regarded as a crime.

invention it is one of the imaginative highlights of the book. It rounds off the picture of the Outsider—the suicide is the ultimate Outsider—and it enables her, as we have seen, to put an end to Mahony's attempts to flee the unfleeable: he accepts the kind of death that is in store for him, his own particular destined death.³² He is also forced to use the pride that had hitherto cut him off from his fellow-men, to make himself accept their common fate, and so through the renunciation of his will, to attain a brief glimpse of what he had sought for so long in vain. The scene also intensifies, when he returns to the world of day, the sense of his failure in that world: he could not even take himself out of it competently. Whatever Walter Richardson may have thought or written on the subject of suicide, it seems unlikely he would have left so detailed a description of an unsuccessful attempt at it. And the question *when* he wrote it, if he did so, is a serious one. He felt even writing letters to be a burden at this period and had to write them over and over. The long and lucid analysis of Mahony's state of mind and the description of his vision bear all the marks of controlled organisation, even if, as is barely possible, they were worked up from scrappy notes. On the whole then, although the Chiltern period, with good reason, was the gloomiest of his life so far, the gloom is magnified enormously in the novel. There is no doubt that throughout his life Walter Richardson was easily offended and in certain moods inclined to be sceptical about the sincerity of his friends' affection for him. We find him in the 1860s quarrelling for some reason with the Bradshaws³³ and instructing Mary to drop the connection; he was furious with Brooke Smith during the Chiltern days for failing to honour a bill which he and a friend from Toorak had agreed to back, but that affair soon blew over. These episodes, however, are the normal wear and tear of personal relationships, intensified by an Irish

³² What must have impressed Richardson most about the events of her father's life was the element of irony in his fate, and she causes it to permeate the novel. The fact that a man who placed the highest value on human reason should have died insane no doubt struck her as forcibly as the thought of Beethoven's deafness. One of Walter Richardson's letters on leaving Chiltern expresses doubt about lodging money in a certain bank because the manager had once been in Cremorne; not many months later he himself was to be an inmate.

³³ Possibly over the non-payment of salary to their former governess?

temperament. There is no sign of strain in his friendship with Dr Graham, or the Cuthberts, for instance, and it was with Dr Graham that he stayed in Melbourne after leaving Chiltern and before going on to Queenscliff. Mrs Graham went up to Chiltern to be with Mary while the household effects were being disposed of. Even the letters of the Queenscliff period, when time is running out, reveal Walter as still interested in what is going on around him, able to tell amusing stories to his wife in his letters,³⁴ and relating normally to the new people he is meeting, above all enjoying the fact that they will be once more within reach of civilised society. He is still a worried man, but not, at the beginning, a withdrawn man.

The transmutation of a 'participator' into an isolate has a plain artistic purpose: to enhance the tragic effect. Mahony is pitted against the world, a complete solitary, condemned *by fate* to bring about his own downfall. He is the tragic Protagonist, while Mary and the Rest become the Antagonist, representing the things visible among which he can never feel at home. Such a temperament is not wholly that of the novelist's father, but has much more in common with her own, and with that of her grandmother, the melancholy Lucinda, who confessed in one of her letters that she could never bring herself to confide any of her inmost feelings to anyone else. Like her grand-daughter, Lucinda seems to have got more pleasure out of animals than human beings; unlike her grand-daughter, she preferred off-beat animals like lizards and frogs. They are also linked temperamentally by their musical ability.

As for the growing hostility to the wife, which is such a marked feature of the novel, there is no sign in the letters of any such estrangement, and the letters continue well into the year before Walter's death. The late letters acknowledge the difficulty he has in concentrating on the writing of them, but they are not the letters of a man who has lost feeling or intellectual control. It seems safe to say, as Clutton-Brock has said, that he remained passionately in love with his wife throughout his life and that his love was returned in equal measure. This absorption of husband and wife in one another might well have made their late-born children feel 'out-of-things', even if there had been no abnormal circumstances in

³⁴ About his old friend Baron von Mueller, for instance, threatening to dismiss a young under-gardener for presuming to read books on botany.

their lives.³⁵ The profound, unbreakable bond between husband and wife, in real life, is re-established in the novel after their estrangement, in Mahony's return to consciousness as he is dying. His seeming hatred of Mary is part of the artistic, not the biographical material: the estrangement from the wife represents the final cutting off from the world, as suicide represents it in *Maurice Guest*.

One of the most important alterations in facts made by the novelist to bring out the surface oppositions in the natures of Mahony and his wife concerns their attitude to Spiritualism. In the novel it is a constant bone of contention between them and Mary is shown as completely sceptical. In real life, however, his wife shared this interest in a way which is completely concealed in the novel. Early in their married life, we find Mary writing to her husband asking and receiving permission to 'visit the clairvoyant'. Another letter written from Pentridge Stockade on 5 June 1860 reveals Mary as saying: 'Shall I go to the mesmerist in Collins Street or not? Aunt would go with me.' Mary's name appears, along with that of her sister or sister-in-law, on the list of what is apparently a preliminary meeting of intending members of the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists, possibly at Richardson's home, or perhaps Dr Motherwell's. The list contains the names of several well-known Melbourne doctors, including Dr Graham's, besides that of H. K. Rusden, brother of Rusden the historian. Henry Rusden was secretary of the Royal Society in Melbourne for many years, and the V.A.P.S. was later joined by other distinguished men, including Alfred Deakin. Interest in the subject, as I have pointed out elsewhere, was by no means confined to 'eccentrics'. Walter Richardson was the first president of the association and a regular contributor to its journal *The Harbinger of Light*. His connection with the movement lasted until his final illness, and his wife had certainly not cut herself off from it as late as the Chiltern period. In a letter to her, full of concern about her health, he begs her to visit Miss Armstrong (a well-known healing medium), and be guided by her. The correspondence indicates that Mary took his advice. He reassured her about treatment by

³⁵ There is a reference in one of Mary Richardson's letters—before the birth of her daughters—to a relative who is having trouble with her children, and a comment to the effect that she and Walter were fortunate to have no children to cause them such anxiety. Such a comment would hardly have reassured a sensitive daughter anxious for certainty in love.

pointing out that Miss Armstrong used 'only simples'. Arguments about Spiritualism raged in the Melbourne press during the late sixties and early seventies. In December 1871, the *Australian Medical Gazette* (p. 224) carried a scathing attack on 'the fashionable humbug of the day':

At least two prominent members of the profession in this city, exclusive of a number of small fry, are known to have given their adhesion to this the latest and most transparent of shams—the offspring of mental imbecility and cerebral softening. One hospital physician, connected with Melbourne University, is said to have habitual recourse to the 'spiritual' services of an ex-grocer now carrying on the business of medical 'medium' and bibliopologist—offering the nostrum *spiritus vitae*—Terry's Etherial Medical and restorative Medium and Health-producing Regenerator . . .'

Another hospital physician, also connected with Melbourne University, with better taste or more gallantry, prefers a female medium, with the additional advantages of youth and good looks. The University of Melbourne is particularly unfortunate in its office-bearers.

Neither of these doctors can be Richardson, since he was not practising as a hospital physician at the time, but one wonders who the young and good-looking medium might have been: was she the germ of 'Mrs Marriner' perhaps? (It is interesting to note that although Richardson sent the birth notice of his first daughter to the *Gazette*, there is no announcement of the birth of the younger daughter fifteen months later.)

The *Argus* picked up this article and printed a strong sub-leader supporting it in January 1872, in spite of a vigorous defence of the Spiritualist case by correspondents earlier in the month.

This is not the place to go into details about the history, the rights and wrongs of Spiritualism or Richardson's own connection with the movement. What can be demonstrated from the family papers is that the real-life situation is not at all the same as that in the novel. In real life, Richardson, although he kept an open mind about the findings almost until the end, was a leading member of the Victorian movement, not, as Mahony was, merely a visitor in other people's homes attending séances. Unlike the Mary of the novel, his wife was also involved in the movement; so were their loyal friends Dr Graham and his wife, whom they had known in their Ballarat days, long before the V.A.P.S. was

formed. A sister-in-law of Mary's was a member of the first Melbourne circle, and Mary's brother, John Bailey (that uncompromising materialist 'John Turnham', of the novel), according to a note in Walter's hand written soon after John's death, had also been interested. Henry Handel Richardson then inherited not only her father's interest in the subject, but a whole tradition of interest inside and outside the family circle.

In the novel, all the emphases are altered and it is permeated by the scepticism of Mary and her friend Tilly Beamish. (Whether in fact Matilda Bradshaw, the 'Tilly Beamish' of the novel was the friend who remained constant to the end, is dubious.³⁶ According to the letters, the 'wealthy friend' who is most constantly mentioned right up to the Queenscliff days was Mrs Graham, the wife of the doctor with whom Richardson stayed, and who prescribed for him after he left Chiltern. Mrs Graham was certainly not the 'rough diamond' who corresponds to the Tilly of the book.)

Again, the artistic purpose of the alteration is plain: as in esoteric doctrine generally, the women represent the values of the visible world, the earth, and the 'vulgarising' of them is a concealed comment on the fact. The change also fits in with the view of Mary as the epitome of common sense, in preparation for her assumption of the masculine role of protector and manager. She certainly—in real life as in the novel—needed this quality in the last four or five years of her husband's life, but the account of the serene self-confidence of the Mary of the pre-Melbourne days does not altogether square with the evidence of the letters. The real Mary looked as anxiously and demandingly for news from Walter as he did for news from her, and during the first visit to England we find him on more than one occasion begging her not to worry so much, lest she injure her health; he cites her mother to her as a model of equanimity. It is their oppositions that are stressed in the novel, not what they had in common. Here again, in *Myself When Young*, we find Richardson arranging facts to suit her fiction: she denies her mother any intellectual interests at all,

³⁶ A letter from Richardson to her sister in the 1940s recalls that, during her visit to Australia in 1912, the party stayed with 'Aunt Polly' at Geelong, presumably the younger Bradshaw sister; though there is a possibility that it was her uncle Edgar's wife; or even John Bailey's widow. The number of Marys in the letters makes for confusion, and needs the concentrated effort of a full-time biographer to clear it up.

yet at least one letter from her mother written in 1896 reveals that she took a keen and intelligent interest in literature and in the theatre. She tells her daughter she has bought a complete edition of Schiller's works and that she has been to see *Maria Stuart*. Her comments on the production are lively and to the point, and her opinion is that Duse could have played the chief role better. Certainly her son-in-law, J. G. Robertson, thought it worthwhile to write to her at some length on the subject of the theatre in London. The diary that she kept of the journey back to Australia with her two young children towards the end of 1874 does not suggest that she was the unadulterated *hausfrau* of the novel, nor does the journal she kept on her voyage to England, when she was taking the girls back to study music. Henry Handel has deliberately heightened her mother's earth-bound aspect, and heightened her father's unworldliness, and this is precisely what an artist with any real dramatic sense ought to have done. Yet there is no attempt to disparage the contrasting values the two figures represent; if the reader's sympathies tend to veer in one direction, they are checked and balanced at once by a reference to the opposite view, as the conversation between Mahony and his wife after the London *séance* has already shown. Richardson is not in any simple sense a dualist, believing that the body is one thing and the soul another; for her, as for Blake and for Eastern religious thinkers, this world is not a shadow of a world in some sense 'more real' than one elsewhere, but an *expression* of the real and so partaking of its reality; visible objects are 'bits of soul that we perceive with the five senses', 'every minute particular is holy'. At Barambogie, Mahony, like his wife, regrets the withdrawal of one of these 'bits of soul' from the orbit of the senses when his daughter Lallie dies, and once he is alone comes to share her point of view about his loss, without discarding his own belief.

The constitution of Mahony's own immediate family in the novel is one of the most interesting deviations from fact. It is difficult to establish the exact date of the birth of Walter Richardson's first-born child, or its sex, but there is a reference in one of his Ballarat letters in 1860 to the fact that he had 'lost only one child'. Since there is no trace of its registration, it was presumably still-born like the child in the novel, and Clutton-Brock has accepted this presumption. It was common however to record still-births in birth notices in the Melbourne *Argus* and further

search may throw some light on the question of date and sex.³⁷ Why the novelist endowed the fictional father with a son and two daughters, when he begot only two living daughters, is capable of several explanations. The simplest is that the arrangement takes the book further away from the region of autobiography. Again, perhaps the still-born child *was* a boy and she felt her parents deeply regretted his loss. By re-creating a boy she was restoring the family complete. Her mother in a diary expressed a passing regret that she had no son to support her in her widowhood. Then, the girl Lallie, who dies in the novel, is the more positive, adventurous member of the pair of twins, Lucie the more submissive and dependent. Lallie may, therefore, represent Ethel herself in the restored trio, her death a kind of making amends for the loss of the long-dead brother. But since Cuffy (the Cuthbert whose name she gave him was her father's friend and solicitor) exhibits so many of her own characteristics (his fear of having things fall on his head for instance, described in the novel on page 925) a more likely explanation is that he is the boy she wished she could have been to please her parents, and, more significantly, the boy her difficulties of adjustment made her want to be. Then again, doubling the sister may be one more manifestation of the sibling rivalry which is so marked in the novel, as well as in the autobiographical material. Her sister may have loomed twice as large as life in her mind so that she felt it necessary to kill off the more competitive aspect of her. The rivalry by no means rules out the peculiarly deep bond between the sisters which the Cuffy of the novel expresses in the offer to marry Lucie when he grows up. Nothing much can be made of that in isolation; many small brothers have said as much. It gains significance only from the unusual closeness that existed between the sisters even after their marriages, as described by Clutton-Brock (see p. 26). It is interesting to reflect that Pin, the younger sister in *The Getting of Wisdom*, who is closer to her mother than Laura, is provided with two small brothers as a counter-weight; she is not allowed, that is to say, to have her mother all to herself while Laura is away at school. Cuffy's

³⁷ Lucinda Cheyne, in a letter to her son about two years after his marriage, says she is sorry Mary had had a 'fausse couche'. This expression refers to a miscarriage, not a still-birth. A note in Walter Richardson's midwifery case-book for the same period which could refer to his wife also describes a miscarriage.

jealous devotion to his mother, his possessiveness towards her, have their origins in the novelist's own personality, and may perhaps be traced back to her birth 'trauma'.³⁸ The killing off of a twin sister may also have part of its explanation, supported by reference to the last short story, 'The Coat', in the possibility that Richardson felt some sort of guilt about her failure, or more likely her refusal, to bear a child; she may have felt obscurely that in refusing to give life she had destroyed it. If Mahony is her own 'self', as she admits, then the death of a child for which he felt himself at least partly responsible could be regarded as the author's tortuous confession of her own guilt-feeling about failing in her woman's role.

The question of the relationship between the sisters is a study on its own. Richardson depicts her sister Lilian in *Myself When Young* as extremely dependent and emotionally insecure. She depicts Pin in *The Getting of Wisdom*, first as under Laura's thumb and very plain, then as rebellious, and finally very pretty. There is no doubt that Lilian admired her sister's intellect enormously: Clutton-Brock's evidence is enough to demonstrate the point.³⁹ There is also no doubt that Lilian led, in the end, a far more adventurous and enterprising life than her cloistered sister. Soon after Ethel's marriage, we find her mother expressing relief that she was 'coming out of her shell—it's good for you both to have a little outing, it gives you fresh ideas and thought'.

Lilian seems to have been in no need of such advice. Not long after her first marriage to Dr Otto Neustatter, she was actively involved in the suffragette movement; Mrs Pankhurst was able to hold a meeting at her house in Dresden,⁴⁰ and Lilian herself, as Olga Roncoroni relates, was imprisoned for demonstrating in London. During the war, when her

³⁸ Conflicts with her mother seem to have begun early and are more emphasised in the drafts for *M.W.Y.* than in the finished version. They were the main reason apparently for her being sent to boarding-school.

³⁹ See 'Mrs Lins': 'As I told you it [her expected child] will learn in its very earliest infancy that its Aunt is the cleverest woman in the world and you will probably become its God and its oracle and have to give the proper answers to its questions . . . later on it can pay you long visits . . .'

⁴⁰ See E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 542: 'We were able to arrange a private meeting in the house of Mrs Lindsey Neustatter, who was afterwards fined because the meeting was less private than the police thought fit.'

husband as an alien had to go back to Germany, she and her son lived with her sister and brother-in-law in London. During this period she became very much interested in psychology and in new ideas in education and suggested to her husband after the war ended that he come to England, abandon his profession as an oculist, and take up psychology. By this time she had met A. S. Neill and was fired with zeal by his ideas for running an emancipated school. Her husband was equally enthusiastic and the three of them set up the school first of all in Saxony, then in Austria. Then it was moved to England and Lilian became so much involved in it that an amicable divorce was arranged; she married Neill, who was much younger than she, Otto married an American, and they all went off on their honeymoon together. Lilian devoted the rest of her life to Summerhill (the name crops up in the Richardson family tree); her son was a chairman of its board and her grandchildren attended the school. What Lilian did for Summerhill has never been properly acknowledged; Neill himself in his recent book on the school makes one brief mention of 'my first wife' and there is no reference to the time, the money, and the devotion that she, and at times her family including Ethel Richardson, gave to the enterprise. It seems a matter of much regret that an autobiography which Lilian embarked upon has never been published and is perhaps lost.

It may well be, then, that in spite of her own artistic and intellectual success, Richardson had cause to envy Lilian's more outgoing temperament, her charm and her beauty, her ability to get on easily with people.

Nevertheless, none of these devious explanations of departure from the family pattern may be essential. The web of destruction in which Richardson enmeshed her fictional hero gains pathos by the death of a child, and by the burden he bequeaths to his wife in leaving her two children to support instead of one. It is another invention which is justified simply on artistic grounds.

One of the finest of Richardson's re-creations is the figure of John Turnham, based on her uncle John Robinson Bailey, who died at the age of forty-five, when she herself was sixteen months old. Considerable reconstruction work has been done on 'Turnham'. His name has been borrowed from the uncle who was Assistant Superintendent of Pentridge Stockade, and his career does not follow the course of his life very scrupulously. John Bailey arrived in Victoria in June 1852—not 1844 as in the

novel—and took up a position in a softgoods firm in Melbourne. Soon afterwards he set up his own business in the same line in Malop Street, Geelong, and about a year later acquired a partner and continued business under the name of Bailey and Honey. Then he bought some land at Waurn Ponds and lived as a farmer on his property for four or five years, at the same time helping to run a Geelong newspaper. In 1858 he went to Ballarat and became editor of the *Ballarat Star*. While Walter Richardson was recuperating at Queenscliff after his severe illness in April 1859, he took the initiative in making arrangements with Dod, the postmaster, to telegraph the English news straight to Ballarat, so that John would get it quickly for publication in the *Star*. It will be remembered that in the novel the Mahonys do not become acquainted with the Queenscliff postmaster's family, the Spencers (of whom Dod was the original) until just before Mahony's collapse. The news that John was going into politics could not have come as a surprise to his sister and brother-in-law as it does in the novel. In fact, reference to the *Ballarat Star* for 13 August 1859 shows Walter Richardson's name on a list of pledges asking Bailey to nominate as a member for Ballarat West. A letter from Bailey in the *Star* states that he has had no intention of taking part in the election 'except in the discharge of my duties as a journalist'. Then follows a detailed outline of his policy, which is lightly skipped over in the novel and made to appear far less radical than it actually was. He declared himself in favour of:

1. Free selection.
2. A modified system of deferred payments.
3. The uniform taxation of all alienated and unimproved lands.
4. Ample commonage reserves.
5. Equitable extinction of the squatter's present tenure of occupation.
(No wonder the Mary of the novel is asked to conciliate the squatters' wives she knows!)
6. Devotion of half taxation from land to improvement of roads and bridges.
7. Ample endowment of municipalities.
8. Establishment of local insolvent courts.
9. Introduction of the South Australian system of conveyancing titles and registration of land.

10. Abolition of state aid and the establishment of one system of national education.
11. Reform of the Gold-Fields Act in accordance with what the working man agreed to be necessary.
12. A law legalising mining on private lands.
13. Abolition of gold export duty; fiscal reform.
14. Establishment of a Victorian mint and if possible a national bank for government transactions and profitable employment of the savings of the people.

Some of these radical ideas were shared by his brother-in-law, as his speech to the London Spiritualists in 1874 suggests. Mary's remarks in the novel that if John were elected he might come to live in Ballarat is the reverse of the truth: he went *from* Ballarat *to* Melbourne after his election. Mahony's remark to Ocock in the novel that he took no interest in the mining market is also wide of the mark. Walter Richardson followed it closely and through John's editorship of the *Star* must have had access to its every movement. He certainly kept an eye on it for John when the latter left Ballarat.

Bailey had already unsuccessfully contested an election at Geelong in 1856. But in August 1859 he was returned as a member for Ballarat West and became Postmaster-General in the Nicholson administration in October, an office which he held for a year. He then became Commissioner for Customs, fulfilling a prediction of his brother-in-law's that he would go in again, but not as Postmaster-General. He held his new position, however, only for a month, and, leaving politics, joined the firm of Paterson, Ray, Palmer and Company, becoming a partner, and also in 1869 a justice of the peace for the Melbourne district. He died, as in the novel, of cancer, on 6 May 1871 at his home, Vaucluse, in Richmond (*not* Brighton) and was buried in Kew Cemetery. He did in fact marry three times: first Susannah Tyler, who died on 13 August 1859 at Ballarat, while John was engaged in the election campaign. He did not, subsequently, marry Polly Bradshaw, the real-life equivalent of the 'Jinny Beamish' of the novel, but, on 4 April 1861, a girl recently arrived from England, Jane Rainsford, the daughter of William Rainsford, of Surrey. The marriage took place at Christ Church, St Kilda and Jane's sister-in-law Mary wrote to her husband that she was sure she would make John an excellent wife. She bore her husband three daughters in quick succes-

sion, who were nine, eight, and five when their father died. Jane herself died on 21 February 1866, of puerperal fever, at her home in Hotham Street, East Melbourne, at the age of thirty-six, four days after the birth of a daughter. On 24 July 1869, John Bailey married for the third time, Mary Ringrose Atkins, the daughter of John Robert Atkins, barrister, of Toorak. The wedding took place at Christ Church, South Yarra, and a cousin of the bride, the Reverend George Wilkinson, assisted the officiating clergyman. John had a son, Edgar Atkins Bailey, by his third marriage, who was six months old at the time of his father's death. The agitation which this marriage is represented as causing, in the novel, and Mary Mahony's disapproval of it, may have some basis in real life. Atkins, I am given to understand, had a reputation for the kind of ruthlessness which is attributed to Ocock in the novel. It would seem that Bailey had, by his first wife, more than the two children of hers who survived him.⁴¹ Certainly, his eldest boy Harry did not run away to America, as Turnham's John does in the novel. He was with his father, at the age of

⁴¹ On 17 May 1858, Dr Richardson delivered Mrs Bailey, of Webster Street, aged 26, of a girl. He notes in his case-book that she developed 'puerperitonitis' but does not record what the outcome was. It is not certain which Mrs Bailey was confined. John Bailey's wife, Susannah Tyler, was 27 when she died in August the following year 'after a long illness', but her address is given in the death notice in the *Argus* as Sturt Street, Ballarat, and there is no mention in the case-book of a further confinement. On 5 February 1860, Edith Elizabeth, youngest daughter of John Bailey, M.L.A., aged one year and nine months, died at Ballarat. Her age would fit in with that of the baby girl mentioned above, who was that Mrs Bailey's fourth child. The children of John Bailey, Harry and Emma, were certainly in the care of their Aunt Mary and Uncle Walter for some time after their mother's death; whether there was another child beside Edith Elizabeth, supposing the Mrs Bailey of Webster Street *was* her mother, and who looked after them, is not clear.

Dr Richardson also delivered Mrs A. Richardson, 10 February 1861, of a girl: 'nice, easy, labour'. Presumably his nephew's wife, since he writes the name in the same style as he uses for his signature. 'Mrs Alex' occurs again in 1862: she could be the nephew's wife, though the nephew's name was usually spelt Alick. Another familiar name is that of Mrs H. Cuthbert, solicitor's wife. Richardson's last confinements at Ballarat are dated 1 and 2 November 1867.

seventeen, when he died and his name, Harry Elphinston Bailey, appears on the death certificate as the informant. He did, however, have a younger sister Emma, who seems to have been nicknamed "Trotty" as in the novel.

This brief outline shows how much the novelist has compressed and altered the facts of John's early life. At the end of it, Mary Richardson could not, as Mary Mahony did, have looked after John and calmed his hysterical, pregnant wife. Mary Richardson herself gave birth to her younger daughter a little over a week before John's death and would not have been up and about to attend his sick-bed. John's wife had already given birth as stated above; whether she was already pregnant again is irrelevant to this study.

Walter Richardson, however, *was* present at his brother-in-law's death (as well as Dr Graham) and *did* say to him 'Have no fear of death, John'. What he added, which is left out of the novel, is a request that John would, if he could, visit the Spiritualist circle which met once a week in Walter's home. John, he says, consented and was manifested about three weeks after his death. He was asked if he were happy, to which he replied 'No'. He was also asked if he had seen God, a question to which there was no answer! Section 141 in Richardson's *Commonplace Book* describes a séance held at his house on 25 May 1871, which was the eleventh night of meeting after John Bailey's death: 'Miss Armstrong, Alfred Morris, Messrs Cater (2) Mrs Marsh and myself were present.' The entry continues:

I called in Mrs Bailey (John's wife). 'Are you glad I am a spiritualist?' asked by his wife. 'Yes'.

The note adds that Richardson then narrated the conversation he had had with his brother-in-law before his death, alluded to above. In a further note describing the thirteenth meeting, Mrs Bright and Mrs Richardson were reported as joining the group. (Mary would by that time have recovered from her confinement.) When they did so, 'the table moved towards them'.

The reason for leaving out all this material is plain: it would have detracted from the portraits of John as an uncompromising materialist and of Mary as a complete sceptic, necessary to the dramatic conflict. Other departures from the facts have already been noted in connection with Walter Richardson's wooing of Mary: he certainly did not ask John's permission to marry her, or at any rate not in Melbourne. Cuffy's visit

to John's death-bed is almost certainly an invention, at least for the reason stated in the novel, and the Richardsons did not go to England soon after John's death, but nearly two years later, sailing in April 1873, in the *Atrato*, not the *Atrata*.

Nothing in the novel is allowed to interfere with the concept of John as the personification of the urge to make money in the colony and of the urge to keep it. It was the men who kept their heads during the gold-rushes and stuck to business or investment in land who came out of that chaotic period most triumphantly, from a worldly point of view. John prefers bricklayers to gentlemen, and 'Nature exists to be coerced and improved' is his defining slogan. But, ironically, nature triumphs. The man may represent abundant and proliferating vitality, his money and his fruitful marriages, the emblems of it, yet it is the disease which is distinguished by its uncontrolled proliferation of cells, by its greed for life, which conquers him. When she seized on this fact and made the most of it, Richardson was a poet indeed, if a grim one.

Just as interesting is what she does with the paucity of material about Brooke Smith, that slightly sinister 'doppelgänger', who weaves in and out of Mahony's life as Purdy Smith in the novel.

After being pardoned for his share in the Eureka riot, the fictional Smith wanders off to become a barman in Euroa, a shearer on the Goulburn, a drover in Mildura, a labourer in a boiling-down works on the Murray. He returns to Ballarat, gets a job in the Gold Escort as a mounted trooper, quarrels with Richard over Mary and disappears. He returns again when the Mahonys arrive back from England to find themselves rich, marries Tilly at last, and gets mixed up in shady mining speculations, indirectly causing Mahony's ruin. At the beginning of the novel Purdy is the familiar of bawds on the goldfields, and disappears with a prostitute in Melbourne; his last conversation with Mahony is not only salacious but slanderous; he accuses him of being responsible for his lameness.

Very little of this is likely to have been true. Tracing his real history is not easy, but there is enough evidence available even so far to indicate departures from fact.

In the Melbourne *Argus* for 22 February 1872 appears the following death notice:

Smith: On 8th December last, at Hove, Brighton, Sussex, Caroline,

wife of Thomas Heckstall Smith, Rowlands, St Marys Cray, Kent, and mother of Alexander Brooke Smith, Beechworth, aged 65. Brooke Smith's name, as we have seen already, occurs constantly in Walter Richardson's letters. His first name 'Alexander' is mentioned also: and it is not impossible that he is the 'Alexander' referred to when Richardson wrote to his wife about the selling up of the Bradshaw Family Hotel in 1859. 'They have all gone to live with Alexander', he reports, and adds that the failure is a just reward for their treatment of their governess.

The references in the letters are supported by Walter Richardson's account of his own life during the years 1849-51, where he records the taking of his degrees, his hospital service in Edinburgh, his coming to London, and his leaving for Wales in January 1850 (see p. 22). In July 1850, 'I was engaged by T. H. Smith, of St Mary's Cray, Kent, as assistant, where I am now' [he was writing in December 1851]. There can be little doubt that Brooke Smith was the son of T(homas) H(eckstall) Smith mentioned in the above death notice, that he and Richardson became friends while Walter was working for his father, and that the making him a childhood playmate of Walter's in Dublin as a member of a lower class is a fiction.⁴² One of Richardson's Ballarat letters reveals that he was still writing to Brooke's father in 1860, assuring him that his son's illnesses were not serious. He expresses surprise to Mary that Brooke is on sick leave again after a recent visit to England, and regret that he has not answered letters. Mary Richardson was constantly in correspondence with Brooke's sisters.

None of this comes out in the novel. According to Clutton-Brock, and this is confirmed in Dr Richardson's own hand, Walter was accused by the local Board of Guardians of professional neglect during his period of service in Kent, a charge against which he hotly defended himself, with dignity. Preserved in his Commonplace Book is a letter to the Reverend Folliot Baugh, of Chelsfield Rectory, Kent, setting out the circumstances of his case after he had discussed it with Mr Smith, presumably his employer. It concerned the unexpected death of a patient he had been asked to visit, and who, when he visited him, was up and about and seemed in no danger. Richardson's description of the insolent behaviour of the members of the Board of Guardians—they talked among

⁴² He is, however, on p. 35 of the novel, referred to as 'a little apple-cheeked English boy', no doubt in deference to his Kentish origin.

themselves while he was giving his evidence—suggests at least that there was a good deal of confusion over the facts of the case, and the letter leaves an impression favourable to the writer. Certainly professional negligence is not a fault that would occur to the mind in connection with Richardson when one is considering the total evidence of his medical career: his concern for his patients is well-attested. One of the extant letters, for instance, relates to his most difficult days in Chiltern, when he himself was declining rapidly in health. It is from a grateful clergyman patient, who later became a personal friend.

Richardson's income for his last year in Chiltern—which he states to be £600—does not indicate a lack of confidence in him and he points out to his wife that his bad debts are only a fraction of those of his friend Dr Graham in Melbourne. The hostile tone of the *Chiltern Federal Standard* does not necessarily represent a general opinion: the vaccination issue was a contentious one; the arm-to-arm method, as Richardson pointed out, was highly insanitary, especially in the hands of unskilled operators. If he himself was compelled to get pure lymph sent up from Melbourne, it was not surprising that without proper refrigeration on a long hot journey, it would lose its efficacy, in what was then an inexplicable fashion. And, to put it mildly, he was dealing with some difficult people during his stay in Chiltern.⁴³

The connection of the real Brooke Smith with Chiltern⁴⁴ can now be made reasonably clear, and Richardson's departure from historical fact on this point is one of the most striking in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Readers will remember the description on page 952 of Mary Mahony's nightly duties as a post-mistress at 'Gymgurra', in real life Koroit in south-western Victoria. Between 1.30 a.m. and 2 a.m. each morning, she has to open the door to exchange mail-bags with the coachman:

. . . the glimpse caught through the open door of the black darkness and loneliness without alarmed her each time afresh. For the country

⁴³ W. C. Busse records the opinion of a visiting Scot that Chiltern at this period was 'the most alcoholic and un-Sabbatarian town in Victoria'.

⁴⁴ The departure of the real Richardson for Chiltern is not nearly so eccentric as it appears with Mahony in the novel. The presence of his friend in the district would have been one incentive to go there, and the prospects of the town in 1876 seemed bright, not only to Mahony.

was anything but safe. The notorious Kellys had recently been at work in the district, and not so very far from Gyngurra either; the township still rang with tales of their exploits. And after the Bank, the post-office was the likeliest place to be stuck up, if not *the* likeliest . . .

The reference is the one concession Richardson makes to the greatest sensation agitating the public mind in Victoria in the latter part of 1878 and she sites the main actors in the drama hundreds of miles from the scene of their operations.

Walter Richardson was committed to the Cremorne Private Asylum, Melbourne, on 11 September 1878 and transferred to the Government Asylum at Yarra Bend on 18 November 1878. In March of the same year warrants were issued from Benalla against Ned Kelly for shooting with intent to murder and against Dan Kelly, Skillian, Williamson, and Mrs Kelly (Ned's mother) for aiding and abetting. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the circumstances leading to the issue of the warrants, Ned and his brother disappeared from the Greta-Benalla district and were not heard of for some months. Their hideout was said to be in the 'almost impenetrable ranges forming the watershed of the King and Broken Rivers'.

In October, however, only about a month after 'Mahony's' collapse, they certainly were heard of again and in a region very far from Koroit. They were in the Wombat Ranges between Mansfield and Greta and on 26 October at Stringy-Bark Creek, Ned and Dan Kelly and two others shot the policemen Lonigan, Scanlan, and Kennedy, a triple murder which 'sent a thrill of horror through the whole community . . . in the same breath the public of Victoria denounced the murderers and the authorities . . .'.⁴⁵ All available police were sent to north-eastern Victoria and Superintendent Nicholson was put in charge of operations. One of the officers acting under his instructions was Inspector Alexander Brooke Smith, of Wangaratta, that is, 'Purdy Smith'.

Walter Richardson's letters do not make it clear what Smith's profession was (they did not need to), or how he came to be connected with Chiltern, but reference to the *Second Progress Report of the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Kelly Outbreak*, held in Melbourne in 1881 after Kelly's execution, enables us to trace the outline of his career with

⁴⁵ W. C. Busse records that the Kellys were at Barnawartha (two or three miles from Chiltern) in 1876.

some accuracy, allowing for misprints and confusions of spelling in the report. Superintendent Nicholson tendered to the Commission a List of Officers in the North-Eastern District of Victoria from 1854. The list conveys some information about Smith's movements in the district. In 1861 he was a sub-inspector at Wangaratta for two years; from 1864 to 1866 he was at Wood's Point. After leaving Wangaratta he was, for about a year, sub-inspector at Chiltern, between February 1863 and the time he left for Wood's Point. The next mention of him is as an Inspector at Wangaratta between July 1870 and June 1874; Ethel Richardson would have been a little over six months old when he returned there. Between August 1875 and February 1880 he was Inspector at Wangaratta and Beechworth. The boundaries of police districts appear from the list to have been constantly changing, so that it is hard to know the exact area of an officer's authority; Smith is, however, described as 'Officer in Charge in the Ovens District' between February 1876 and February 1878. It is, at any rate, clear from these dates that he was in the north-eastern district throughout the whole period of the Kelly gang's operations. It is also clear that he would have been a very well-known character in the area during the time (1876-7) that the Richardsons lived at Chiltern. Yet he is quite absent from this period of the novel except for brief references in letters from Tilly and as a haunting presence in Mahony's 'court-room' dream. In real life, however, he and Richardson met fairly frequently.

Under cross-examination before the Royal Commission, Smith said that he had been in the Police Force in the district on and off for about twenty-four years up to the time of the Wombat murders. He is vague about dates, as he is about everything else in his evidence, but said at his second cross-examination that he had joined the Police Force on 5 November 1852, as a cadet at ten shillings a day. If the statement is true, and if he were stationed at Ballarat (he does not say so, unfortunately), then he would not have been, as he is in the novel, of the diggers' party, but of the police's, that is a licence-*hunter*, not one who was *hunted*! He told the Commissioners that he joined the force when he was about seventeen and was appointed by Mr Latrobe, under Mr Sturt, possibly the 'influential friends' mentioned by Mary on p. 316 of the novel. He also said he would be forty-nine in April 1882 (the dates of his cross-examinations were 8 and 9 September 1881) and that he was due to retire on a pension in six years' time. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the piece of information

that he was *not* a married man. In the novel, Smith is married to Tilly Beamish, Mary's best friend, in about 1872 or 1873. In real life, Brooke Smith was, at least in 1855, engaged to the *younger* Miss Bradshaw, the 'Jinny Beamish' of the novel, and had been so for about a year. She did not, as we have seen, marry Mary's brother, as she is made to do in the novel, and that Smith married her late in life, after his enforced retirement from the Police Department, is unlikely.

After leaving the north-eastern district in 1880, Smith became First Inspector in the Horsham and Wimmera district, a move which seems to have been a great relief to him. The former district he described as the 'hardest I was ever in' while 'Horsham is one of the quietest in the colony'. A quiet life was apparently what Smith wanted: one of the reasons he did not capture Ned Kelly when the opportunity was presented to him was sheer laziness. This is made clear in the evidence of Constable Charles Johnston, one of his subordinates, before the Commission on 28 June 1881. He gave a sober and convincing account of Smith's dilatoriness and indolence, including the fact that it was hard to get him out of bed! He also testified that Smith led his men four times over the same tracks into the Warby Ranges in pursuit of the Kellys, thus giving them ample opportunity to get a good head start. The Kellys had been reported as passing over the river under the bridge at Wangaratta on the morning of 3 November 1878, and Smith did not lead his party out after them until after noon, three days later!

His own evidence before the Commission is quite unimpressive, confused and contradictory. Curiously enough, it displays a strong streak of the hypochondria hinted at by Walter Richardson in the letter already referred to. Smith opened his remarks to the Commission by apologising for his dilatoriness on the grounds of exhaustion caused by his duties. He had been advised by a Doctor Hutton, he said (now unhappily left for England!), to lie down and keep still: 'Those were his very instructions'. Smith certainly followed them, to Kelly's profit.

The second day of his cross-examination he asked for an adjournment because he had such inflamed eyes he could hardly see. Pressed by the Commissioners, he decided to stay and seemed to have no difficulty in reading the documents they asked him to look at! Later when questioned about what pension he would be prepared to accept if he were retired, he

said he would be quite glad to retire: he had done thirty years' service and 'I have a broken collar-bone now!'

One wonders whether there was not some measure of truth in the words alleged to have been spoken of him by Ned Kelly, quoted by W. Horn-
adge in his *Down Under Calendar*, 1972:

I would like to know who made this article who reminds me of a poodle-dog, half-clipped in lion fashion called Brooke E. Smith [*sic*], superintendent of police. He knows as much about commanding police as Captain Standish [the Commissioner] does about mustering mosquitoes and boiling them down for their fat on the banks of the Lachlan.⁴⁶

Certainly, to judge by his performance before the Commission, the members were justified, in their *Resumé of the Evidence*, in referring to his inefficiency in the Wombat murders case (Section IV), and to the 'personal peculiarities and unsuitability of Mr Brook Smith [*sic*] for the work' (Section VII). They recommended that he be asked to resign, but 'having in view his former efficiency' (before the Kelly affair), gave their opinion that it should be on a pension of £100 per annum, half what he expected to get upon retirement.

Smith's evidence before the Commission leaves over a year of his earlier career unaccounted for. He said he left the force in 1857 after an accident and was reappointed about eighteen months later. Whatever the accident was, it is hardly likely to have been like the one attributed to him in the novel, sustained at Eureka. To appoint a lame policeman to deal with such a rough district as north-eastern Victoria would have been an impractical proceeding; it is implausible enough in the novel, where he figures as a member of the mounted Gold Escort for a while. His 'accident' would have occurred earlier in time than his quarrel with Mahony over Mary after the ball in Ballarat. But it coincides in time with his real-life visit to England; in 1860 Walter Richardson refers back to this visit, and to his being again on sick-leave.

Alexander Brooke Smith's death certificate shows that he died on 20 March 1882, less than a year after he had given evidence before the Kelly Commission and before his forty-ninth birthday. He died in Richmond

⁴⁶ In his evidence to the Kelly Commission, Smith mentions plaintively that he had been several times acting-superintendent, but never quite managed to secure permanent promotion!

and was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. Details on the death certificate were filled in by one of the undertakers at the funeral, a fact which indicates either that he died and was buried before there was time to notify his friends (which is unlikely as his illness had lasted three months) or that he was without close friends and relatives at the time of his death. His rank or profession was declared 'gentleman', the cause of his death certified by a Dr Maloney as 'Diseased liver, jaundice', and his marital status said to be 'unknown'. If he had acquired a wife between September 1881 and March 1882, she was not at his funeral.

Something should be said about Richardson's decision to set aside this material; it is unlikely that she was altogether ignorant of it, though there is no evidence in the extant notes that she knew of it. Quite simply, she follows her usual practice: she discards facts that have no bearing on her artistic purpose and sticks to or fiddles with those that will advance it. It is quite obvious that to introduce such a dramatic incident as the Wombat murders into *Ultima Thule* would have been an aesthetic blunder of the first magnitude. The reader's attention in this part of the novel must be focused entirely on the psychic, moral, and mythic conflict between Mahony and his wife and to introduce considerations of any sort of importance extraneous to that conflict would be disastrous.

Moreover, Smith's share in the Kelly drama was largely a comic one and to include any account of it would have been out of keeping with the tone of the final part of the book. The tragedy of Mahony demands his total isolation during the Barambogic period and the reappearance of Purdy is kept until exactly the right point: he turns up at Shortland's Bluff when Mahony's control is all but gone, reintroduces in a distorted guise the brief sexual arguments of their youth, and taunts Mahony on the subject most calculated to arouse him to fury, the subject of money: the hunger for gold which provides such a complex symbolic structure for the book. Mahony's tearing up of the five-pound note Purdy leaves behind is equivalent to a tearing of him out of his heart and mind. With Purdy gone, there is only one link more to be broken. What Richardson does with Smith in fiction is far superior to anything that might have come from following his actual career as a policeman, and she shows admirable artistic restraint in refusing to use one of the most colourful events in Victorian history for *Ultima Thule*. Her rejection of it should be compared with her use of the Eureka episode. It is clear that far from 'needing

the support of facts' in order to write, as often as not she threw the facts away.

Whatever happened in earlier years in St Mary's Cray, Kent, Richardson has also turned to good account in the novel. Brooke Smith would hardly have been ignorant of the vexatious incident with the Board of Guardians; the Purdy of the novel dogs Richard's footsteps in spite of his sporadic attempts to throw him off and seems always to be repressing some kind of utterance which might anger him. The genial youngster of the pre-Eureka days grows gradually not only more shiftless, brusque and vulgar, but develops into a sort of grotesque caricature of the Wanderer and the Exploiter of womanly devotion that mocks the tragic figure itself. It will be remembered that, in 'The End of a Childhood', Purdy, like Mahony, ends up as a 'useless log'. Two facets of his characterisation do come perhaps from Walter's letters about his friend: his exuberance and his loquacity are constantly remarked on and there is a hint in the later letters of his unreliability. There is no reference, however, to the vulgarity which is dominant in the fictional figure. One of the subtlest uses of Purdy occurs in the nightmare about the court case, the invention of which is an imaginative triumph, in *Ultima Thule*, pp. 871-5.⁴⁷ In this ingenious amalgam of all the key events in the history of Mahony's life, in which he is plaintiff and defendant and observer all in one, Purdy is the plaintiff's counsel:

A common, shoddy little man, prematurely bald, with a protruding paunch and a specious eye—he wouldn't have trusted a fellow with an eye like that farther than he could see him. Most improperly dressed, too; wearing neither wig nor gown, but a suit of a loud horsey check, the squares of which could have been counted from across a road. (p. 872)

The central figure in the case is Mahony's 'self as defendant', appearing to his observing self as servile and wretched as the unfortunate Bolliver had once done to him. His 'plaintiff-self' is absent—too drunk to put his

⁴⁷ No reference to the case of an absconding drayman occurs in the letters; there is a vague reference in a letter before marriage to litigation in Ballarat over the ownership of a dog, and much later to the possibility of Mary's being subpoena'd for some reason or other, but no details are given. It is more likely that Richardson found a reference to build on in one of her historical sources, and, as Bate pointed out, gave it flesh and blood.

case—his counsel untrustworthy. The dream develops into the inevitable flight-dream, inseparable from the characterisation of Mahony; it is also a masterly delineation of a schizoid personality, summed up in the 'observer-self's' cry: 'Two of him? . . . Which was he?' An analysis of the dream in detail would take a chapter on its own; an admirable discussion of it by Elizabeth Loder does not cover it fully even yet.⁴⁸ Its structure and organisation are remarkable not only in the main features, but in its minute details: the witness-box which 'stood high, like a pulpit' for instance, up to which the defendant has to climb with 'palpable effort'—symbols of Mahony's quest for religious truth and the obstacles to bearing witness to it.

What is relevant to the present discussion of Purdy Smith is that the dream goes back in time to Mahony's early days in the colony: the large gold tooth-pick held by the judge, the foul teeth and foul breath, emblems of his early struggles on the goldfields, the brawny digger, Purdy as the counsel; the early interpolation of the idea of children as nuisances, associated more than once with Purdy in the story and quite emphatically in the last scene between him and Mahony; the implication that Purdy as his counsel is making a disreputable excuse for the non-appearance of the plaintiff. All these details stem from obscure hints about the friendship between Brooke Smith and Richardson, going back to their association in England. Whether the contretemps in St Mary's Cray was discreditable to the young graduate Richardson or not (and it is almost impossible to believe that it was), irritation over it might well have contributed to his decision to emigrate.

The official reason for this decision was his wish to recoup the family fortunes squandered by his half-brothers. A much more likely reason was probably the less romantic one of finding it impossible to get a suitable medical appointment at home. E. G. Rowland, in an article 'The Valley of History: The Story of the Upper Ovens' (*Journal of the Royal Historical Society*, March 1968), points out that forty-one medical men held pastoral leases in the Port Phillip district before 1851, the majority of whom had Scottish degrees:

The Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen were turning out medical graduates in excess of the home demand and such young

⁴⁸ See 'The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: Dream and Nightmare' (*Southerly*, No. 4, 1965).

men looked abroad for pastures new. One avenue was to sign on as a ship's surgeon in a vessel sailing to Australia. But most, on arrival, were disappointed to find little opportunity for medical practice and looked for other means of livelihood. (p. 47)

Richardson, who graduated in 1849, may have been one of such young men. The news of the gold discoveries could have simply given added impetus to a step he might have taken in any case. The Mahony of the novel attributes his decision to emigrate to the rosy pictures in the press of nuggets 'to be picked up like cabbages', and refers to the 'tidy little country practice' he had left behind. The real man had had two country assistantships in eighteen months, and had just been able to make ends meet. Whatever the reason for which he left, Alexander Brooke Smith either went with him or joined him soon after and would certainly have known his immediate history.

The reason for Purdy's prominence in the novel has been argued elsewhere. Richardson knew her Freud and would have been familiar with the phenomenon of projection, though she could have found plenty of models in literature, especially German literature, without recourse to clinical psychology. And once more there is the faint hint of an element of revenge in the portrait of Smith: his unpleasant side is uppermost.⁴⁹

The surviving papers enable us to see Richardson's imagination at work on small details as well as engaged in the more important transmutations already examined. One has already been pointed out by E. Morris Miller, who noted that the grave of Walter Lindesay Richardson was easily distinguishable from the common earth, as Mahony's was not.⁵⁰ Again the artistic purpose is clear: alive and dead Mahony failed to distinguish himself as he had longed to do, as his model had, indeed, done. A paradox may also be intended: as Mahony had held aloof from the herd in life, so in death he was joined to the common substance of humanity. Man's fate is dust and none can escape it: this is the burden of Thomas Browne's writing, particularly in *Urn Burial*, of the prayer book, which Richardson's father knew well, and of the novel as a whole. It should also be noted that in making Mahony's grave anonymous Richardson obliterated

⁴⁹ Purdy provides an opportunity for an uncompromising denunciation of men, on Tilly's part, that Mahony does not. A passage in Mary Richardson's diary takes a similar stand, but specifically exempts her husband.

⁵⁰ *Meanjin*, No. 3, 1949, pp. 177-80.

ates her father completely as a man, though she allows for the possibility of continuance for his 'wayward, vagrant spirit'.

Another minor alteration concerns Mahony's medical writings. In *Ultima Thule*, in his solitude during Mary's absence at the seaside, he tries to write articles for the *Australian Medical Journal*, first on *paracentesis thoracis*, then, because he cannot get past the first sentence, on 'Why I do not practise Homeopathy', which also defeats him. In real life, Walter Richardson published the first article in the *Journal* in February 1864; the second appeared as a pamphlet, from internal evidence, probably in 1867; it was published undated in Ballarat and can still be consulted in the State Library of Victoria. Looking through the British *Lancet*, during the years of his first English visit, the writer discovered two of his letters on the subject of uterine hydatids. He wrote many other medical articles on various subjects for Australian medical papers, and, as I have pointed out elsewhere, he sent regular contributions from 1870 almost up to the time of his death to the Spiritualist magazine *The Harbinger of Light*, besides publishing a pamphlet *Are These Things True?*, on Spiritualism, in reply to an attack by David Blair, *littérateur* and former clergyman. His writing on medicine is lucid and forceful and at times eloquent, though no one but a medical man is competent to judge the subject matter. Of his notes on Spiritualism more will be said towards the end of this chapter and in the Appendix. None of these articles are mentioned in the novel and it is odd that Richardson does not allow her hero some credit at least for his writings on midwifery, since Mahony is admitted to be a skilled accoucheur. Perhaps for some obscure reason she wished to deny him literary skill; more likely she did not want to run the risk of his being identified too easily before she was ready to identify her hero herself, though the reference to homeopathy was risky. The abortive article on *paracentesis thoracis*, however, was not published under that title: its heading was 'A Case of Empyema'.

A trivial detail of some interest is the letter Mahony writes to his wife from Barambogie, during a period of great anxiety, in which he instructs her to go to a stationer's and buy some better writing paper. Walter Richardson did in fact do so; he was constantly ordering paper and cards from Purton's in Melbourne. But the detail about crested paper is an invention. There is no mention of it in the original letter and he was not at the time using crested writing paper. The only crested paper that sur-

vives is from the days of affluence in Melbourne on which his motto *Virtute paret robur* appears, with a lion rampant. The mention of crested paper at a time when Mahony's life is crumbling to ruin heightens the tragic effect with cruel wit.

Something needs to be said about the remaining documents in this collection and the use that is made of them. One interesting point concerns the handwriting. Richardson describes her father's notes on his Bible as written in a minute neat hand. In fact, his handwriting fluctuated wildly throughout his life from the early letters to the later ones and often in the same letters. It could be minute, it was more frequently large, rambling and untidy. There is little to be made of this, except during the latter stages of his illness. He was a very busy man while he was practising and frequently dashed off long letters in a hurry. On the other hand, his wife's writing, in the formal, tiny Italian script of the day varied very little throughout her life, except to get larger as she grew older; its basic structure remained the same and it grew noticeably firmer. Though the style of Henry Handel's own writing is not at all like her mother's, it is small, neat, firm and regular.⁵¹ If any weight can be placed on the fact that many schoolchildren tend to imitate the handwriting of the teachers or the parent for whom they have most affection, or that some women imitate the hand of the men they love, some slight hint of where Richardson's strongest emotional ties were may lie in this trifling evidence. Her husband's handwriting was also small, neat and firm.

The most important papers are Walter Richardson's own accounts of his first couple of years after graduation; his Commonplace Book; and his article on 'Ballarat Goldmines'. It is difficult to say when this article, only the first part of which survives, was actually written. It was certainly after the appointment of General Edward Macarthur as Acting-Governor in 1856; and comparing what Richardson says about deep-shaft sinking, the need for capital, and the introduction of machinery, with Serle's accounts in *The Golden Age* (Ch. 8), suggests it was written in the late fifties. Richardson's geological observations seem to coincide with what Serle says about the need to sink deep to get to the underground clays, and it is clear that he has read the work of Murchison, Humboldt,

⁵¹ Her handwriting was the result of discipline; she records that her school-girl hand was large, sprawling, and untidy.

and Phillips critically and qualified their conclusions with his own observations on Ballarat.

He mentions Golden Point and the Gravel Pits, describes the Redan Lead, and looks back to the bad old days when 'the odious licence-hunting was law'. He tells a gruesome story of the danger of water rising without warning at the confluence of two gutters and a miner falling back to drown just as his mates had nearly got him out of trouble. He is very critical of goods that come from England or Ireland and says that Americans have been 'usurping our markets . . . simply because they send *bona fide* articles suited to our wants'. He enumerates the superior American equipment: windlasses, rope, buckets, axes, tomahawks, clothes-pegs, candles, and butter. He has some scathing remarks to make about the export of Cork butter, which swindled 'the retailer out of fifteen pounds weight in every keg, by iron hoops put on in Liverpool, salt and water put in also'. One wonders whether at the time of writing the article Richardson was not still a store-keeper or had fairly recently ceased to be one.⁵² He had certainly not lost his sympathy with the trader.

The article ends with a description of the method of blasting and a promise to astonish the geologists of Europe in the sequel! The little essay is short, but lively, and displays that love of precise detail which distinguished the minds of the author and his daughter. It is evident that the novelist had read this article and had it typed, for there are corrections to the typing in her own handwriting. *When* she read it, however, is another matter. If it was before she began to write, at least she had something to begin on.

Walter's account of his own doings before his arrival at Ballarat show that he was still in England in January 1852, since he attended a mesmerist and clairvoyant séance on the 13th. It also confirms the present writer's conjecture, that he possessed a copy of Liebig's lectures on chemistry, which incorporated Reichenbach's theories on quartz and odic force. Notes in Richardson's later handwriting reveal that the translator of Reichenbach, Professor Gregory: gave in Edinburgh University at which I was a student an extra lecture every Saturday morning on Baron Reichenbach's researches. He was compelled to desist by the University authorities as dealing

⁵² Perhaps this was the article, mentioned in *Australia Felix* (p. 189), 'their uncle was writing for the papers'.

with a dangerous subject. [Slips of the pen have been corrected in this quotation]

Richardson also records that he undertook the care of his namesake, one of his late brother's children and placed him at Ockham School, Ripley, in 1850; he apparently continued to pay his nephew's school fees after he himself had emigrated. He tells of his interesting midwifery cases and remarks that he had acquired a library of twelve midwifery volumes. He also remarks that during 1851 his expenditure had equalled his receipts: 'but I have spent money on acquiring knowledge and time on acquiring experience in professional matters'.

This brings us to the most important point about Walter Richardson and links him directly with his daughter: his passion for facts, for truth, his appreciation of the fact that truth was not simple, but infinitely complex. If he could have foreknown it, he would have subscribed to Ortega y Gasset's opinion that all humanity past, present, and to come are the visual organ of divinity. This passion led him into paths that seem strange to minds conditioned to a simplified view of Darwinian materialism. He knew they were strange, but he held to the view that every fact however strange might turn out to be a 'divine disclosure'. He would have been far less astonished than many modern television viewers who recently watched the B.B.C. program *The Mind of Man*⁵³ and regarded demonstrations of the interaction of mind and body as a revelation. He would not have been surprised to find an Indian yogi subsisting by mental control on less than a quarter of the necessary supply of oxygen, or by a young man bringing his mind into a condition in which it could induce a fall in his blood pressure.

His attitude can best be conveyed in his own words from some rough notes:

On all questions of any importance there are always two sides—Many minds being differently constituted they draw different conclusions from the same facts—The basis of all sciences is fact—Science or accurate knowledge is the interpretation of nature—Man's relation to nature or the external world . . . About facts there can be no dispute, although the inferences from facts may be debatable—Popular opinion can never be fixed but must always be liable to be amended

⁵³ Re-broadcast in August 1971 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

—There are always questions of large import upon which hasty persons take strong views and active partisanship—

An incomplete article on 'Mesmerism' displays the same tone:

An earnest student of nature, Agassiz, once said, All new discoveries go through 3 stages, 1st. They are untrue—2nd they are true, but are the work of Satan, 3rd Everyone always knew they were true—

Louis Agassiz, the great anti-Darwinian naturalist whose *Fishes of Brazil* was so much admired by Cuvier, became Professor of Natural History at Harvard in 1848. Walter Richardson certainly knew his work well, and his interest in it is transferred briefly to Mahony in the novel. Richardson's *Commonplace Book*⁵⁴ contains numerous quotations from the works of Agassiz and also from Darwin's *The Descent of Man*. The preference for the latter book is understandable: it allows for the possibility of an 'upward development' in mind and spirit; its tone is far less cruel than that of the *Origin of Species*, since it concentrates on co-operation rather than aggression.

His reading was eclectic in the extreme, a consequence of his concept of truth, and there are quotations from Comte, Newman, Froude, William Howitt, Grote's *Plato*, Maudsley, Owen and Pusey, Whateley, Manning and innumerable other writers, all in what seems to be irrational juxtaposition, but which give evidence of a mind committed to the view that 'Heresy simply means private judgment' (note 245) and that 'All men are agreed that real knowledge must be founded on observation' (note 252). Like Maudsley, he thought the more facts we know about the human body the better, and that the hand of the Almighty would not be foreshortened when it came to mind.

That there are copious notes from Swedenborg one might have expected, but Richardson's passion for Swedenborg was not in the least unusual even on the goldfields. Serle's note on Horne on page 359 of *The Golden Age* is worth quoting on the subject:

⁵⁴ It has for epigraph:

None ever feared the truth should be heard,
But those the truth would indite [*sic*]

Burns.

The book and its epigraph are mentioned in the early version of *The Way Home*, Part Two, Ch. VI. It was cut out in the omnibus edition, when the novel was shortened, see p. 555.

Note Horne's comments on the digger (*Australian Facts and Prospects*, p. 135) 'In some of their tents you may find on a shelf made of a strip of bark the most unexpected books and periodicals, mixed with a few pamphlets of the kind you would anticipate. Practical treatises on gold-mining, chemistry, on pumps, and cottage gardening, jumbled up with the writings of Swedenborg (well thumbed and read) old numbers of Blackwood, or Frazer . . .'

Walter Richardson justified his participation in Spiritualism by his conviction that, as with mesmerism or hypnosis, 'observation and experiment [would help] to unravel what seemed at first miracles'. Having heard Gregory's lectures as a student, he first attended a séance in January 1852 and was much interested in the experiments, which he thought seemed genuine. He himself could detect no possible collusion on the part of the clairvoyante. At his first 'experience among the spirits' in Melbourne some seventeen years later, however, he expressed himself as highly sceptical. His letters during his Ballarat days show that he and his circle of friends were experimenting with hypnosis—not in a particularly serious context—fairly frequently.

To sum up, Walter Richardson was typical of many scientific men of his day, including A. R. Wallace, co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of evolution by natural selection. These men were revolted by the inbuilt cruelty of the Darwinian system and bent their energies towards discovering some means by which they could acquit the scheme of things, or God, of meaningless vileness, without doing violence to their reason. They had little chance of success in a period in which ruthless, open-ended progress on all fronts seemed ordained by Providence itself. The present age, having inherited the black and bloody legacy of such beliefs, as well as some of their undoubted benefits, might have provided a more favourable mental climate in which Richardson could have made a much more fruitful use of his considerable mental gifts. The field of neuro-psychology, for example, could surely have found a place for him. Our own times also would have seen to it that he did not die the brutal death he did at such an early age.

His passion for facts, without restriction on the term 'fact' itself, Richardson passed on to his daughter: their points of view are fused in the passage on page 191 of *Richard Mahony* already quoted, describing Mahony's reaction to the reading of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*:

Before him, but more as a warning than a beacon, shone the example of a famous German savant, who, taking our Saviour's life as his theme, demolished the sacred idea of a Divine miracle, and retold the Gospel from a rationalistic standpoint. A savagely unimaginative piece of work this, thought Mahony, and one that laid all too little weight on the deeps of poetry, the mysteries of symbols and the power the human mind drew from these to pierce to an ideal truth.

Neither Walter Richardson nor his daughter had any fear of facts, nor any undue reverence for what general opinion claimed to be facts. As far as the relationship between fact and fiction in the novel is concerned, the preliminary examination of these family papers compels admiration for the remarkable skill shown in shaping the material into a coherent and convincing fictional form, which expresses a dramatic theme and a vision of life. The novelist is using, in short, to reach her goal, like Coleridge, 'the road to Xanadu'. The only name for the process is imagination.

Those who deny it to her and claim that she was a victim of the dictatorship of facts, never say, strangely enough, why facts are bad, or why, for instance, it is impossible for a work of history to be a work of art. One needs an answer to the question how it would have improved *Australia Felix* if Richardson had put the You Yangs on the wrong side of the road, or Mount Buninyong in the wrong place. Most readers are not deeply concerned about where she puts them in comparison to the amount of concern felt for the fate of Richard and Mary, but if she is going to mention geographical features at all, it is surely better to be accurate about them, unless there are clear artistic reasons for disguising rather than revealing the setting. Most readers in fact take pleasure in the faithfulness with which a scene is painted and there is nothing sinful about preferring the detail of a Dutch interior to an impressionistic riot of colour. It is possible surely to enjoy both. One of the troubles is that so many literary critics will insist on making false distinctions between reason and imagination, as though they were separate 'faculties', whose proportions can be measured and whose peculiar operations can be accurately charted. As John Philip put it:

People seem automatically to make the connections: science-reason; art-
imagination. But you must not suppose for one moment that science stems from reason alone. The facts are very much to the contrary. The achievements of science have come about, and continue to come about,

only through the most powerful exercise of human imagination. It is true that science does insist that the fruits of imagination survive the tests of reason and observation. But alas, how many non-scientific constructs lie in ruins today simply because they do not survive these tests!⁵⁵

It is true that Philip involves himself here in a distinction between reason and imagination which strict logic would question, but he does not make the false equation he complains about.

The scientific hypothesis in essence is one form of image-making—a fact that those who complain of Richardson's addiction to 'science' overlook. Within the framework of the hypothesis or image, the scientist confines himself to rigorous observation and tries to eliminate *irrelevant* subjectivism. This is exactly Richardson's method. She sets up her 'hypothesis', her primary image, drawn from observation of real people, that life is a tension between flight and rest, change and permanence, and then piles up evidence to support it, compelling assent by the very plainness of her language and the elimination of the narrator. It is too easy for an author to betray himself in metaphor, however objective he strives to be, and her aim to keep the author out of the work is one reason for her adoption of the kind of diction used by the majority of men.

Fashions in writing come and go and the so-called 'naturalistic method' is at the moment out of fashion: its capacity for a symbolism of structure—as in the parable of the Good Samaritan—forgotten. There are more ways than one of writing poetically and the use of striking diction consisting of coruscating images is not the only one. It is certainly not the most effective one for a very long novel and too great a reliance on it can muffle the reader's response to the characters, as happens often enough in James's novels, or Patrick White's. Richardson's great strength is her ability to enter the consciousness of her main characters and present events through their eyes. The very fact that readers take sides with Richard or Mary, Maurice or Louise, as though they were real people, testifies to the success of her characterisation. The dialogues between Mary and Richard, the reconstruction of Cuffy's point of view (even though her attempts at reproducing the dialect of children are occasionally painful)⁵⁶ bear witness

⁵⁵ John Philip, 'Physics and Biology', *Overland*, No. 48, 1971.

⁵⁶ A reference to 'Toddie' in one of the drafts of *M.W.Y.* suggests that Halliburton's *Helen's Babies* might have had some influence on this dialogue!

to a dramatic skill which has too long been denied her. The creation of three distinct tones of voice which can be recognised without 'stage directions' is enough evidence on its own of the dramatic gift. So is the ability to create emblematic gestures, the meaning of which could not have had their origin in anything except the author's imagination, as, for example, in the passage, after the burning of the papers:

'Richard! My God! What have you done?' *Mary?* . . . *Mary's* voice? Recoiling, he threw up his arms as if to ward off a blow, looking round at her with a face that was wry and contorted. At the sight of her standing in the doorway, he tried to shake his fist at her; but his arm crumpled up, refused to obey: tried to hurl a scurrilous word . . . to spit at her: in vain. (p. 931)

Mahony collapses unconscious and the passage continues:

And *Mary*, whom no audible sound had reached, who had read into the outward fling of his arm towards her only an appeal for help, for support, was on her knees beside him, her bonnet awry, her dress in disarray . . .

Richardson could obviously not have got the meaning of his gesture from her father. Her mother might have given her a hint of the scene as a whole (if it occurred, which I doubt), long before she began to write. But how would the mother know the meaning of 'the outward fling of his arm'? Even if by some remote chance the real *Mary* had regarded the gesture as one of enmity, would she have communicated the fact to her daughter? If ever there was a symbolic gesture, it is this one: a repudiation of the whole visible world the wife had come to stand for, marking the end of Mahony's life as an intelligent being, the withdrawal of the soul from its bodily shell.

The whole novel is indeed a work of imagination as Richardson claimed it to be, in the total sense of the word, a profound parable of the spiritual quest of a man whose aspiration towards the spiritual, like that of most human beings, was less than his capacity to reach it. It rests on the historical image of the goldminer, but also on the image of gold as a symbol of psychic wholeness and health, and finally on the biological interaction between permanence and change, replication and mutation. Every detail in the book can be shown to bear on these themes and the psychological situation out of which the novel arises is that of the daughter rather than the father. It is *her* divided self we are watching, *her* struggle for whole-

ness, projected on to a figure other than her own, with a success that would have defied detection, unless she herself had given the clues.⁵⁷

On the historical and social level, the relevance of the parable to our own situation one hundred years later hardly needs stating.

It is fitting perhaps to end this chapter as it began with the comment of a historian—one of Australia's most distinguished and imaginative economic historians: W. K. Hancock. In his *Australia* (p. 261) he compares the historical novel *A House is Built*, by Barnard Eldershaw, with *Richard Mahony*. Of the first he says:

It is very successful in recreating periods of history, perhaps too successful, for in some chapters one looks almost instinctively for the historian's footnotes.⁵⁸ There is no suggestion of documents in Henry Handel Richardson's fine trilogy, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. This book is architecture on the grand scale, with all the scaffolding cut away.

The more bits of scaffolding one finds, the more one admires the grandeur of the structure which so completely concealed it.

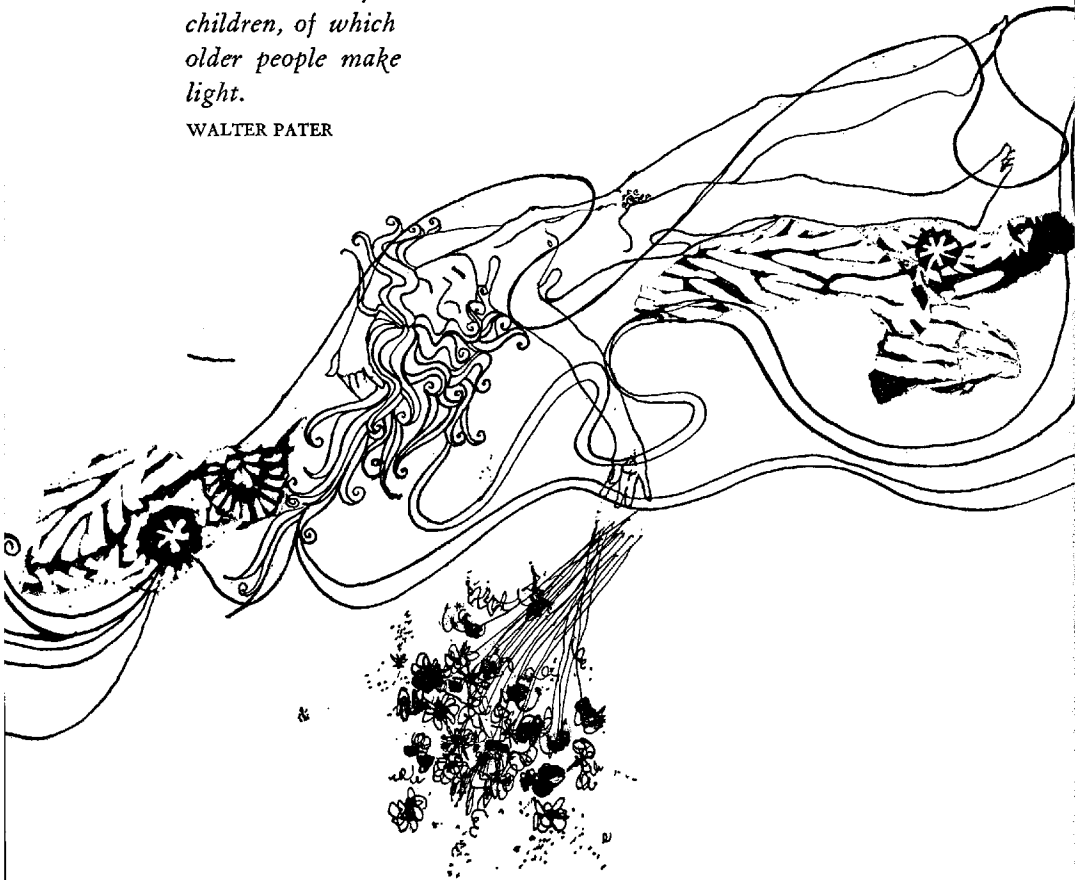
⁵⁷ *Why*, she gave them, even as guardedly as she did, in *Myself When Young*, after having striven so hard to conceal her identity presents something of a puzzle. She certainly needed the occupation of her writing and during the war had no peace in which to concentrate on a novel. There is evidence to suggest that she hoped an autobiography would prevent anyone's attempting to write a biography—she expressed to Mrs Kernot a fear that a particular writer might attempt it. Perhaps she didn't care any more: she was an old woman and the book would be published after her death. Perhaps simply, pride in her achievement: she had waited long for fame. . . .

⁵⁸ In a letter to Mrs Palmer, Richardson described *A House is Built* as 'machine-made' and also criticised it for containing a musical anachronism; Hancock's criticism is expressed more kindly.

Chapter 10

*... the real greatness of
those troubles of little
children, of which
older people make
light.*

WALTER PATER



Settling Accounts

I

BETWEEN *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* and *The Young Cosima* lies a gap of nine years during which Richardson published a number of short stories. These, together with an earlier story, 'Death', re-named 'Mary Christina', were collected and published under the title *The End of a Childhood*, in 1934.

To Nettie Palmer, the stories seemed 'fragments, decorations chipped from some larger structure'; to Gerald Gould the title-piece at least was 'a shaving from a great artist's work-shop'; Green takes the opposite view, holding that 'in them she is essentially an artist, as she is not in any of the novels'.

Whatever the final verdict may be about their artistic qualities, there is no doubt that the stories have an intense thematic and psychological interest. Nor are they the random collection that they appear on the surface to be. It is difficult to believe, for example, that Richardson did not know what she was about when she decided upon their order. The collection begins with the imaginary death of a mother, whose model was her real mother; it ends with the description of a death, based on her real mother's experience of dying, reconstructed from notes made soon after the event, and there is an unmistakable link in the points of view of the two dying women.

The section 'Growing Pains' follows on naturally from 'The End of a Childhood', tracing the difficulties and uncertainties familiar to us in Richardson's *personae* in the novels. 'Life and Death of Peterle Lüthy' and

'The Professor's Experiment' have their own oblique relevance to these difficulties; while 'Succedaneum', besides being Richardson's most explicit statement of the value she placed on art as a refuge from unhappiness, is the converse of the attitude in 'Mary Christina', the final story. The two together, especially if one remembers the alternative title to 'Succedaneum'—'Shadow and Substance'—represent two sides of an argument.

Though Richardson came perhaps accidentally to novel-writing, her habit of making up stories, and of making them up as a refuge from misery, went back to her childhood, as she tells us in *Myself When Young*. At one point in the autobiography she explains a sudden disposition to walk in her sleep as the result of a combination of excessive indulgence in fantasy and a growing awareness of 'the general insecurity of things' (p. 20). A little later on, writing of the period after her father's death, she speaks of the fears she and her sister shared, caused by the mother's absences at work:

I fetched out my ball, and lost myself in story-making. Lil had no such refuge, and lived in a constant twitter of nervous anxiety. Our one mainstay having broken down, might not the other, too, fail us? Or, in her own words, when Mother went out would she ever come back? And this fear ate so deep and proved so lasting that it lay like a blight over her whole childhood. From now on she was only to feel safe and happy by mother's side. (pp. 25-6)

The sense of insecurity, the need for a stabilising figure, though felt more acutely by the younger sister, were certainly still felt strongly late in life by Richardson herself. In 1918, during a serious illness of her husband's, she wrote in her diary that, after he fell asleep one night: I lay for a couple of hours, at least, and cried and despaired. Tried to think *what* my life would be without him—him for whom I write my books alone, the sight of whose dear face has always filled every want I have had . . . Daylight makes the horrors of my night more bearable; but they are not altogether gone. (P.R., p. 83)

Fifteen years later, after her husband's death, in a note dated 28 May 1933, and headed 'Mors Janua Vitae', she refers to the earlier illness and then continues:

Now, what I there dreaded has come to pass . . . in all that time, only

where *he* was was Home to me. To the last, no sound on earth could compare with that of his light quick steps on the pavement, when I had lain awake at night listening for him . . . I was always so fearful something would happen to him, especially of late years when his hearing grew less acute. And, when he was late, or I had forgotten where he was, I have had the car brought out, when I had a nervous fit on, and we have chased him from College to College, to his quiet, amused dismay and my agony. Odd to think that I shall never need to be troubled about his whereabouts again. Death has *had* him; it is over; he is safe now for ever. My heart can be at rest in his eternal absence.

(P.R., p. 103)

The last few lines, with their strange tone of self-preoccupation, recall a similar tone in the first note. Others indicate that for her Robertson represented an entire family: father, husband, brother, in a peculiarly intense way. Taken together they suggest an unusual degree of emotional dependence, an impression reinforced by the faint note of resentment at the withdrawal of protection, which can be felt in some of her references to having to cope with business matters, after her husband's death.¹

'When Mother went out, would she ever come back?' The story 'The End of a Childhood', sub-titled 'Four further chapters in the life of Cuffy Mahony', answers this childhood question, which seems to have persisted in some form into adult life, with an unequivocal 'No'. The events of the story are pure invention. It is true to fact only in so far as it dramatises the hidden fears of the author and her sister. It is difficult to know when the story was actually written and tempting to speculate that it was after the death of Professor Robertson, when her final support was withdrawn. The feeling of being 'at rest in [his] eternal absence' is present in the story, as well as in the diary extract.

To understand these four chapters in Cuffy's life, it is necessary to trace the relationship between him and his mother from the time of his appearance in *The Way Home* at the end of Part Two and the beginning of Part Three.

The description of Cuffy's difficult birth reflects the circumstances of

¹'I do miss him when it comes to business matters', she wrote in a letter to her nephew, near the end of her life. Such references occur, however, in other letters soon after Robertson's death.

Richardson's own² and the interval between his birth and the births of the twin sisters corresponds with the real-life facts. The attitudes of the fictional children to their parents are clearly defined from the outset. Writing of Mahony's anxiety for his children and the affection from which it sprang, the author tells us that they never really warmed towards their father. Instead, they sunned themselves in their mother's love, which knew nothing of fears or apprehensions . . . She alone gave them that sense of warmth and security in which very young things thrive . . . Their devotion to her was the one feature the three had in common . . . (pp. 595-6)

At the same time we are given a clear picture of their parents' different attitudes to their children. To Mary, though they are 'all in all', they are nevertheless possessions, 'her most precious possessions', for her to do with 'just as she thought good'. Through them, she will realise the ambitions which Richard had failed to gratify (p. 596).

The first appearance of tension between Mary and Cuffy, which stems from the possessive element common to their natures,³ occurs on pages 597-8, when Mary unthinkingly fondles the twins, immediately after having told Cuffy she had no time to take him on her knee. Instead of saying goodbye to her as she leaves to go out, he turns round and beats his 'most precious possession', his rocking-horse, whereupon Mary compounds her error by 'threatening never to take him on her knee again', that is, by threatening to withdraw her love:

The child's back being towards her, she did not see how at these words the little face flushed crimson, the eyes grew round with alarm. Cuffy at once left off hitting the horse; just stood stock-still, as if letting what his mother had said sink in. But he did not turn and come to her. (p. 598)

It is the father, who does not regard the child as a possession, but as a

² In the manuscript drafts of *M.W.Y.*, Richardson emphatically denies that she was Cuffy, but the denial is omitted from the final version; she is more evasive in this, however, than in the drafts, about Richard Mahony's being herself.

³ The drafts of *M.W.Y.* state very clearly that Richardson derived more of her characteristics from her mother than from her father. It seems she regretted this fact, since she makes Richard Mahony more, not less, like herself.

separate individual, with his own point of view, who succeeds in penetrating the barrier with words that are to recoil ironically against himself later, in the tragic scene in which he beats the horse at Barambogie:

Never wreak your temper or your vengeance, my little son, on a person or thing that is in your power . . . (p. 598)

Mahony, however, is unable to make his wife understand that Cuffy's feeling of jealousy is a natural emotion and that his possessiveness about objects is a consequence of her mismanagement of him. She turns from disappointment at his lack of malleability to pride in his intellectual precociousness, and especially in his gift for music:

And Aunt Lizzie . . . hailed him as an infant prodigy, and painted for him a future that made Mary's heart swell with pride. (p. 603)

The next encounter with Cuffy redresses the balance: we are shown that Mahony's principles—his insistence on telling children the absolute truth—can have as painful an effect on his son as the mother's obtuseness. When Richard and Mary go off to Tilly's wedding at Ballarat, Cuffy is left without an explanation that he can grasp and is stricken with alarm. The Nurse's comments express in homely language the risk involved in burdening a mind with more truth than it is ready to bear:

If the doctor 'ud just 'ave let me say they were gone to a party, there'd 'ave been none of this. Master Cuffy knows well enough what a party is, and though it 'ad lasted for weeks it wouldn't 'ave made any difference to him . . . It's the things they *don't* understand that worries children. This fad now that they must 'ave nothing but the truth told 'em. Lord bless you! If we did that, there soon wouldn't be any more children left . . . nothing but little old men and women. (p. 626)

His father's sudden return, before Mary, takes the boy by surprise and he does not respond to his caress:

But at three years old even a short absence digs a breach . . . as soon as he was released [he] pattered off to Nannan and the nursery. (p. 635)

Whether Cuffy's first horrifying experience of a death-bed is based on fact is highly doubtful. Ethel Richardson was sixteen months old, not three years, when her uncle died, and the whole episode is inconsistent with what we are told earlier about Mahony's wish to shield his children's little plastic minds from all impressions 'that might pain or harm . . .'.

Certainly Cuffy's fears and feeling of insecurity deepen as he grows, especially during the visit to England, when he is storing up such a vast quantity of new impressions, whose accuracy he was to be unable later to confirm:

. . . with every object that related to them lost or destroyed, Cuffy, throughout his later boyhood swung like a pendulum between fact and dream, and was sadly torn in consequence. (p. 686)

The paragraph has a genuine autobiographical ring.

The account of his early childhood closes with the episode of the drowning puppy, already alluded to: his first experience of brutality. Rejection, equivocation, desertion, death and cruelty: the experiences, if not the words, are all known to him before he is five years old.

In *Ultima Thule*, the children's dependence on the mother is reinforced by the long separation from the father during his financial crisis; then the slow mental and physical decline of the father drives them further and further apart, especially when the boy feels himself involved in the quarrels of his parents.

The resilience of spirit that is so marked in the Cuffy of 'The End of a Childhood' shows itself plainly in the sequence of events leading to the death of his little sister Lallie:

On waking that morning—after a rather jolly day spent at the Bank . . . or what would have been jolly, if Lucie hadn't been such a cry-baby . . . where he had been allowed to try to lift a bar of gold and to step inside the great safe: on waking, Cuffy heard the amazing news that Lallie had gone away: God had taken her to live with him. (p. 796)

At the seaside, where Mary takes the remaining children to regain strength after the child's death, both children begin to associate their mother's distress more directly with communications from their father. Cuffy, to distract her attention and turn it towards himself, wades out to sea (p. 817). When Richard pleads with her by letter to come home and she begins to pack for the return journey, Cuffy's resentment of the father increases:

Why must just *his* clothes be packed? He might get ill, too. Perhaps he would, if he drank some tea. Aunt Tilly said it made you mad. (Like Shoooh man.) All right then, he would get mad . . . and they could see how they liked it! And so saying he scooped up a palmful

of water and put it to his mouth . . . ough! wasn't it nasty? He spat it out again, making a 'normous noise so that everybody should hear. But they didn't take a bit of notice. Then a better idea struck him. He'd give Mamma the very nicest things he had: the two great big shells he had found all by himself . . . (p. 832)

On the return journey he is conscious of the fact that his mother will soon be 'cross and sorry again . . . about Lallie and Papa', and that he and Lucie have already lost her attention. The sight of his father first of all revives the boy's affection for him, but this emotion is quickly replaced by the feeling of shame that is to predominate from this point on, when his father breaks down and weeps on the station platform (p. 839).

But his mother, too, can be a source of his feelings of shame, as when she partially undresses him on the long, hot drive into the bush with his father, the drive which ends in the beating of the horse. So much prominence is given in the novel to the rocking-horse episode and to Mahony's treatment of horses that the possibility arises of a direct Freudian influence. Freud's 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy' appeared first in 1909, a case-history which seemed to him to confirm his theory of the Oedipus complex, though his interpretation has been challenged.⁴ But if Richardson did in fact find much useful, suggestive material in the case history, she does not use it uncritically. What this and many other episodes reveal is the ambivalent nature of Cuffy's feelings towards both his mother and his father: intense dependence on the mother's love, coupled with the fear of her invasion of his 'selfhood'; and on the other hand, confidence in his father's ability to understand his feelings—and in his to understand his father's—coupled with deep shame at his father's abdication of the protective masculine role.

That the feeling for the mother is the strongest element in this complex emotional pattern comes out clearly in Chapter VII of Part Two of *Ultima Thule*, when Cuffy and Lucie compare notes about their parents. In a conversation with Cuffy after the horse episode, Mahony attempts to find a euphemism to express to the boy his premonition that he is going to die:

⁴ See Erich Fromm, 'The Oedipus Complex: Comments on the Case of Little Hans', reprinted in *The Crisis of Psycho-Analysis*. Richardson's use of the rocking-horse incident has more in common with Fromm's interpretation of Hans's phobia than with Freud's.

' . . . if I should have to leave you, leave you all, then I want you to promise me that you will look after Mamma for me, take care of her in my place . . .' Cuffy nodded . . . To hear Papa say things like this made him feel like he did when he had to take his clothes off.

(pp. 857-8)

The boy keeps to himself the fact that 'Papa might be going away' until Lucy repeats to him a remark made in anger by her mother, which she had overheard:

I heard her tell Papa yesterday, one of vese days she'd just pack her boxes an' walk out'er the house an' leave bof him an' the child'en.

An' then he could see how he liked it. (p. 858)

He comforts his distraught sister with the promise to look after her always:

But Cuffy's world tottered. Papa's going would be bad enough . . . though . . . yes . . . *he'd* take care of Mamma so well that she'd never be worried again. But that *she* should think of leaving them was not to be borne. Life without Mamma! (p. 859)

And he compares it to the terror he had once experienced of believing himself abandoned on a railway station while minding the luggage.

Soon after, in Chapter IX, the children are further bewildered by the disappearance and the tragic reappearance of their father on the night of his attempted suicide. With the retreat to Shortland's Bluff, in Part Three, the bewilderment and the shame increase as the father's illness gathers momentum, and the little boy does his feeble best to keep the peace between his parents. His feelings of inadequacy and insecurity are further intensified by the visit from Purdy, whose joke about 'Young people who insisted on putting in an appearance at a later date, unwanted noosances that they were!' bites deep:

(At which Cuffy, flaming scarlet, looked anxiously at his mother for a denial: she had told him over and over again how enjoyed she and Papa had been to see him.) (p. 906)

The progress of Mahony's illness is told at first mainly through his own consciousness, as is fitting, since Mary is ignorant of its clinical nature and sees it as a spectator, from the outside. Through Mahony's consciousness also we get a hint of that sibling rivalry, which, as we have seen, Richardson projects on to her characters Laura and Cuffy:

Dog-tired, footsore, Mahony limped home, his devils exorcised for the

time being. At the gate a little figure was on the watch for him—his youngest, his lovely one, towards whom his heart never failed to warm: her little-girl eyes had nothing of the boy's harassing stare.

(p. 916)

Towards the end of Chapter III, however, the consciousness of Cuffy conveys the information to the reader and the poignancy is immeasurably heightened. Shame and fear are now his dominant emotions, submerging affection; shame at his father's inexplicable behaviour in public, fear of being laughed at by other children. Once more there is the paramount fear of losing the mother, when he is confused by memories of a conversation about a debtors' prison:

And this dim memory returning now to torture him, he rolled and writhed, in one of childhood's hellish agonies.

What would he and Luce do? How could they get up in the morning and have breakfast . . . without Mamma and—no! *just* without Mamma. (p. 922)

Shame and fear have now been joined by resentment, as an earlier passage indicates:

For what a lovely place this would have been, if it hadn't been for Papa . . . The bathing-woman said you were a born fish; and you wished you were: then you could have stopped in the water forever—and never have needed to go home again—or for walks with Papa.

(p. 920)

The chapter ends with complete abandonment to the mother:

And now, when he and Lucie raced home hand in hand of an afternoon, their first joint impulse was to make sure of Mamma: to see that she was still there . . . hadn't gone out, or . . . been taken away.

(p. 922)

On the child's consciousness is superimposed that of the author looking back and assessing the damage:

Only close up to where she stood, radiating love and safety, a very pillar of strength, was it possible for their fragile minds to sustain, uninjured, the grim tragedy that overhung their home, darkening the air, blotting out the sun, shattering to ruin all accustomed things; in a fashion at once monstrous and incredible. (p. 922)

The comment is an excrescence from an artistic point of view and the

word 'uninjured' needs qualification, but it would be pedantic to wish that the paragraph had been excised.

With the collapse of the father, Cuffy's feeling of resentment and rejection is intensified; he is more than ever the scapegoat for his mother's anxiety and watches his sister seemingly favoured, where he is expected to be capable of renunciation, as in the matter of deciding what toys are to be taken to Gyngurra (p. 941). The feeling of resentment is accompanied by the feeling of guilt which the child is incapable of identifying. It is plain enough in the discussion which occurs between the children when they receive the news that their father is coming home from 'hospital':—Oh, *why* did Papa need to come back? They had been so happy without him . . . even though they had to keep a post-office, and weren't *real* ladies and gentlemen any more . . . Oh, if only there had been anywhere to run to, he would have run away. But there wasn't, only just long, straight roads. Here Lucie put her mouth inside his ear and whispered guiltily:

'I don't b'lieve you're a bit glad!'

'Are you?'

Luce nodded hard. Mamma was glad, so she was too; or she'd thought she was till now. But Cuffy looked so funny that her little soul began to be torn afresh, between these two arbiters of her fate. Cuffy wrinkled his lips up and his nose down. 'You're not *true*! I don't believe it.'

'I am!' But her face puckered.

'Well, I'm *not* . . . not a scrap! So there! And if you want to, you can go and tell.' (p. 971)

It is difficult to believe that the appallingly painful scene in which Mahony is brought ashore in the rowing boat in the charge of two warders was actually witnessed by the children in real life. They are absent in the book and their presence would certainly have been an error of taste. No painful or humiliating detail of the scene, which harrows the feelings more perhaps than any other, is spared, and what it cost the writer to reconstruct it may be imagined.

For the rest of the story, the father's . . . imbecile presence lay a dead weight on their young lives. And violently conflicting feelings swung them to and fro. If, at dinner, Papa was scolded for spilling his food, or for gobbling—and he was

most *dreadfully* greedy—Luce's eyes would shut so tight that almost you couldn't see she had any: while he, Cuffy, red as a turkey-cock, would start to eat just like Papa, from being made so sorry and uncomfortable to hear a big man scolded like a baby. They kept out of his way as much as possible, being also subtly hurt by his lack of recognition of them, when he knew Mamma so well: they were just as much belonging to him as Mamma! (p. 980)

Again the note of rejection is sounded, and with the shock of the father's fall, when the children are taking him for a walk, the wish for his death becomes intensified and is expressed through their dreams:

But the memory of the accident persisted, and was entangled in their dreams for many a night to come. Especially Cuffy's. Cuffy would start up, his night-clothes damp with sweat, from a dream that Papa had fallen dead in the road and that he had killed him. And, all his life long, the sight of a heavy body lying prostrate and unable to rise—a horse down in its traces, even a drunkard stretched oblivious by the roadside—had the power to throw him into the old childish panic, and make him want blindly to turn and run . . . and run . . . till he could run no more. (p. 982)

The association of the image of the horse, at this point, with that of the father is interesting. It persisted into Richardson's own adult life, as Olga Roncoroni pointed out. The passage also throws light on Richardson's later inability to sympathise with members of her household who were ill.

The 'violently conflicting feelings' are most in evidence in the final scenes where Cuffy watches his father in his coffin: the immense relief, coupled with the knowledge of the eternal absence:

He was *glad* Papa was dead . . . He'd never, never, never need to take him for walks again . . . (p. 988)

The feeling of relief is then submerged in awareness of finality: if only . . . he'd take him for walks—anywhere!—yes, he would!—if only . . . Oh, Papa! dear, darling Papa!—come back, come back! (p. 988)

It is the cry of a child, in a particularly grievous situation, which comparatively few human beings in present-day Anglo-Saxon middle-class society have to face. But there is something in the cry of the child which rises beyond the particular. It expresses that feeling of remorse which is part of the response of most of us to the knowledge that there will be no

further opportunity to make good our failures of affection, a feeling which is perhaps the hardest burden left by a bereavement.

The link between the novel and the 'story' entitled 'The End of a Childhood' occurs in the last paragraph of Chapter VI of *Ultima Thule*, where Mary is lying awake brooding about her children's future: They trusted her so blindly; and she, what could she do for them? Except for this imagined security, she had nothing to give. And, should anything happen to her, while they were still too young to fend for themselves—no! that simply did not bear thinking of. She had seen too much of the fates of motherless children in this country.⁵ Bandied from one home to another, tossed from pillar to post . . . like so much unclaimed baggage. Rather than know hers exposed to such a destiny . . . yes, there came moments when she could understand and condone the madness of the mother, who, about to be torn away, refused to leave her little ones behind. For, to these small creatures, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, links bound Mary that must, she felt, outlast life itself. Through them and her love for them, she caught her one real glimpse of immortality. (p. 953)

The passage, it might be noted, picks up Cuffy's fear of being a piece of 'unclaimed baggage' alluded to on page 859. And the short story is the realisation of the fears of both mother and son. In it Richardson faces the 'might-have-been' in her own life, forces herself to imagine the ultimate that she and her sister could have suffered. She deals the final blow to Mahony's children by depriving them of their mother and separating them from one another, reducing human existence to a level most senseless, callous and obtuse. The story rests on a foundation of an intricate structure of ironies. In the first place, just as it had been pride that led to most of Mahony's difficulties, although in the end it had been the means of his 'salvation', it is a quality that, transferred to Mary after his death, sets her on the road to her own destruction and brings about that which she fears most. When she is offered marriage and security by her old friend and admirer, Henry Ocock, her chief motive for refusing him is pride; she sees him through Richard's eyes and she will not entertain the thought of his having authority over Richard's children:

No one but the father they were so like would be capable of under-

⁵ For a civilian widow, with children to bring up, or for an orphan, Australia is still a difficult country, not merely in a financial sense.

standing them . . . On no one but herself should their lives and happiness depend. (*E.C.*, p. 19)

Her decision once made to rely on herself, her next positive step takes her nearer to the end she most wishes to avoid. She decides to make arrangements for Cuffy's education and prepares for a visit to Melbourne. The preparations are completely in character: her perfectionist temperament demands that the house be left spick and span for the relieving officer and she falls from a ladder while whitewashing the walls of a room. Accident operating on character, and on a character partly formed by long association with another, and now beginning to identify itself with that other: the complexities of human destiny reveal themselves once more in a simple domestic incident. The broken leg will not heal; she has to make the journey to Melbourne, leaving the children behind, and their worst fears come to pass: she does not return, having died from the shock of an amputation. The children therefore are left in the end in a far worse position than they would have been if Mary had married Ocock; at least they would then have been all together and her presence would have protected them from those aspects of his character which caused her misgivings. Over-fastidiousness, fanatical consideration for others, which is one of the subtlest forms of egoism, lead to her death, as they had shaped her life.

Like Mahony, she faces the truth about herself, during her illness, though the manner of facing it is simple and direct, rather than tortured and complex. She quarrels 'with herself', as she had once argued with her husband:

But at night there was nobody to call her back, and she would drift, and drift, till she was very far away. Otherwise, she had nothing to do but lie and count the throbs (in the darkness they thudded like little hammers) struggling to make herself believe they were getting easier; when all the time (and she knew it) they were growing steadily worse. Then, her courage failed her; and she, who had never been given to brooding, finding it simpler just to shoulder her burdens and plod on—she, too, now fell to questioning Providence, trying to dig out a meaning in, a reason for what had happened. 'It all seems so *stupid*. What's the use of it? What good can it do anyone?' But more often she reproached herself: 'Oh, *why* couldn't I have left those walls alone! So dirty they were not.' And to these words, oddly

enough, there would come an answer. Somebody, or something, that was like, and yet not like herself; something that stood aloof, looking coldly on, would say: 'You could never have done that. It isn't in you.' To which she, her real self, gave back hotly: 'I can't bear *dirt* . . . if that's what you mean!' But as to this, the thing that was her, yet not her, refused to be drawn. The sole response, given in an icy tone, was: 'No use talking now. It's too late. As one's made, one's made—' which sounded like a knell.⁶ And *was* the finish; for to: 'Oh, I know that, I know! But *why* was I made like it? Who's responsible?' never a word came in reply.

Night after night she went through the same performance, to which the unbearable thought was added: 'Oh, *what* would become of *them*, if . . . if . . .' or 'Shouldn't I after all have thought twice, before . . .' Until one night she became conscious that she was talking aloud, getting audible answers. Then panic seized her, lest she should be going out of her mind . . . (pp. 39-40)

This account of an extroverted woman's attempt to grapple with the riddle of why things are as they are has some very interesting features. First, there is the introduction of the notion of the meaninglessness of existence, its ultimate stupidity, which recurs in the final story, 'Mary Christina'. Then the dialogue between the 'judging self' and the ego (the self as it appears to itself), the latter rationalising its obsessiveness: 'I can't bear *dirt* . . .', an obsessiveness which reflects so often a desire for power, itself a reflection of anxiety. On this point the 'judging self' is silent: Mary's capacity for self-analysis is limited, and the reply of the super-ego is in accordance with her nature, which is to accept the fact that things are as they are. But her suffering is so intense that for once this answer is not enough and there comes the question to which there is no certain answer:

But *why* was I made like it? Who's responsible?

The same cry was uttered by Maurice Guest and by Mahony himself, as it has been by all men through the ages. It is a question there is no getting behind: men do not ask to be born, no one consults them on their choice in the matter, and whatever the degree of free-will within the framework of the human history which determines what they are, the ultimate 'responsibility' for their existence at all belongs either to blind chance, or to what can be called in some sense a 'maker'. Man is not in either case relieved

⁶ Again, Maudsley's 'tyranny of organisation'.

of his own responsibility for his conscious choices, but he has, if the Christian interpretation of life turns out to be correct, a final defence: 'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves'. It is true that if the maker decides that his artefacts are no good, he can smash the lot, but that is different from roasting them as a punishment in everlasting hell-fire. If blind chance is the agent, then the question of punishment is meaningless in any case.

None of these issues are discussed in Richardson's work, but they are issues raised by the situations of her characters and by their own natures, sometimes implicitly, as here, elsewhere more directly, as in Mahony's intellectual questionings.

The picture of Cuffy and Lucie given in the story is a logical development from that of the novel. Their preference for one another's company has outlasted the situation which gave rise to it; the dependence of the children upon the mother is as marked as ever, the boy's devotion to her greater than his resistance to her authority:

And then, though he never, never did when it was light, he was much too big—well, then somehow, when nobody was looking, he'd find himself sitting on Mamma's knee; even though his legs were so long now that they hung over it right down to the ground.

And there they'd sit, just Mamma and him, nobody else knowing about it . . . You just sat there and didn't talk, not at all . . . you wouldn't have like to; it was too close for talking. (p. 29)

The seeds of a difficult situation lie in such passages, a difficulty foreseen by the clergyman, Mr Burroughs, from whom Cuffy takes his lessons: He entirely agreed with her that the time was coming for Cuffy to leave home . . . And in relating the incident to his sister, he added: 'Otherwise, he'll turn into a regular oddity. He has all the makings of one in him. Mammy-fed—that's what he is. Nothing but women round him, and only a girl to play with.' (p. 34)

What he does not say, of course, is that fixation on the mother can be as fatal to a girl as to a boy, as Richardson's own after-life seems in some respects to demonstrate.

Burroughs and his sister, both of whom Cuffy admires and loves, are modelled to some extent on the Maldon clergyman for whom Richardson felt so deeply in her own adolescence, and on his sister. Cuffy's pride in

having a Roman nose like Mr Burroughs's is the fictional equivalent of the affinity described in *Myself When Young* (p. 59).

The egocentrism of the child is even more marked in the story than in the novel; the shame felt at the father's abdication of his proper protecting role is felt equally when the mother becomes helpless:

So he played alone. Just at first Mamma's going left a sort of hole in him (like the door). But after that he thought he was really rather glad. For when she wasn't there he didn't need to think so much about her. She wasn't *nice* to think of, since she fell off the steps—not able to walk properly, and her face so red and swollen. He wanted her to look like she always had. (p. 43)

There are traces of this same dependence and egocentrism in what Richardson writes of her relation to her own husband, as we have seen. A cognate and more productive characteristic is the preoccupation with experience for its own sake; having recognised this in herself in the act of becoming a writer, she transfers it to Cuffy, who was destined originally to become a musician. The mother's departure, on the stretcher improvised from Cuffy's bedroom door, as well as being an undignified procedure was 'all the same . . . a *very* exciting going-away' (p. 43).

The sequence of events leading up to Tilly's brutal revelation of the mother's death is very skilfully managed and the potential sentimentality evaded by humorous touches like the incident of the beaded cushion (p. 46), the image of Aunt Tilly getting out of the coach backwards, 'her behind first' (p. 47), and the translation of Tilly's grief into anger (p. 48).

The even greater risk of sentimentality after the children are made aware of their loss is avoided by the brusque insensitivity of Tilly and the cynical argument over their future that goes on between her and their mother's brother. The limits of pathos are almost reached when the boy overhears their discussion and suddenly understands the meaning of their arguments:

Behind the cactuses, which was the most secret place he knew, he flung himself face downwards on the ground. His heart was full to bursting. Nobody . . . *nobody* wanted them, him or Luce, any more. (p. 59)
But there is another tightening of the screw when the little girl is told that she and her brother are to be separated:

Uncle Jerry was starting home next morning; there was only today left to tell Luce and get her ready.—But when they did, it was the

funniest thing: she didn't cry at all, no, not one single drop. She just stood and gaped at them, with her mouth half open, looking more of a silly than ever. And she stopped like this—all day. Bowey said the shock had been too much for her, and she didn't properly understand what was going on. (pp. 63-4)

The child leaves in the same state of shock:

. . . she never once looked at him, or turned her head, or called out good-bye . . . or anything. She just drove away. (p. 65)

The parting from Cuffy forebodes for the child Lucie incalculable harm, but this most painful of impressions is not the final one. In Cuffy, the elements of Richard and Mary are so mixed as to intensify the strengths, as well as the weaknesses of both. The will-to-live that caused Mahony to flee from the thought of his own annihilation is uppermost in the child and as yet uncontaminated by doubts. He is full of resilience, of the enjoyment of life for its own sake, the healthy response of a will strong enough to survive the stresses and strains to which the child has been subjected. Our final glimpse of Cuffy is a parallel to the sight of the young Laura leaving home for the first time, or refusing to discuss marriage because it would put an end to other attractive possibilities; it recalls as well the two young Richardsons for whom their wandering life became a succession of 'exciting perhapses'. The older self of the narrator merges at the end with the young observer:

But after a time, as tears will, they ran dry; and then, very gradually, other and pleasanter thoughts insinuated themselves. The coach. He always had liked travelling in a coach . . . And after the coach would come the train (a train-journey nobody could help enjoying!) and then another coach: it'd be far the longest journey he'd ever gone. (pp. 66-7)

Cuffy continues to build castles in the air about the future, when suddenly the image always associated with hope in the trilogy makes itself felt: Ho! but that was wattles: yes, there they came, a whole crowd of them, in full flower . . . he'd smelt them before he saw them! And shutting his eyes, the better to drink in the adored scent, he sniffed and sniffed, till the dust all but choked him, and his head went giddy.

And, from now on, his spirits continued steadily to rise, hope adding itself to hope, in fairy fashion. Just as mile after mile combined to

stretch the gulf, that would henceforth yawn, between what he had been, and what he was to be. (p. 67)

The scene recalls the wedding journey of Cuffy's parents, when the wattles were in bloom and hopes high.

Here, then, is a story the events of which are pure invention; only the fear which gave rise to it was a 'fact'. For the reader unfamiliar with the novel it powerfully re-creates that fear as it progresses; the reader who knows what has gone before can only admire the logic of the narrative and share the emotions of pity and horror which the story generates. If it is only a fragment, then it is the kind of fragment which the Japanese proverb alludes to:

Better be a crystal and be broken than perfect like a tile upon a roof.

II

The theme of the rejected child, the 'outsider', continues to be heard in the second part of the book entitled 'Sketches of Girlhood'. Taken together the stories trace the growth of perception in the youthful mind from the child's first brief moment of disillusionment with grown-ups towards the tragic awareness of an emotional abnormality. The stories in between these two points are nearly all concerned in some way with disenchantment, or with sudden glimpses of self-consciousness, or with the transience of things. A predominant theme, as one might expect, is the difficulty of relating to the opposite sex, as in 'And Women Must Weep', the great difficulty of coming to terms with, or letting go an attachment to members of the same sex, as in 'Preliminary Canter'. In these stories, Richardson seems to see the world of men and the world of women, each as a closed society, unable to communicate effectively with each other. A story like 'The Wrong Turning' dramatises with great restraint the hazards that face the adolescent in deciding on sexual roles, shows how accident may tip the balance for a nature unsure of itself. In this story a boy and a girl, both innocent and tongue-tied, go for a row in a boat and suddenly find themselves confronted by a crowd of naked soldiers bathing. In an agony of embarrassment, they pass through the jeering crowd, only to find what seems to them a more shocking spectacle of naked men playing about in the bathing-shed:

And now, to these two young creatures, it seemed as if the whole

visible world—themselves, boat, river, trees and sky—caught fire, and blazed up in one gigantic blush. Nothing existed for them any more but this burning redness . . .

Gritting his teeth, the Boy rowed like a machine that had been wound up and was not to be stopped. The Girl sat with drooped head—it seemed to have grown strangely heavy—and but a single wish: to get out and away . . . where he could not see her. For all was over between them—both felt that. Something catastrophic had happened, rudely shattering their frail young dreams; breaking down his boyish privacy, pitching her headlong into a reality for which she was in no wise prepared. (pp. 122-3)

The Girl leaves the boat with a brief good-bye and runs away: as if chased by some grotesque night-mare shape which she must leave far, far behind her . . . even in thought. (p. 123)

It is a 'period' story no doubt, but in spite of that remains a convincing evocation of sexual fear: though it is the damage to the girl that is the more emphasised.

Two stories concern the transience of beauty. The first one, 'The Bathe', expresses the shock and shame of a child at the seaside at witnessing the ugliness of middle-aged women's naked bodies. The second, 'The Bath', in more lyrical vein, celebrates the beauty of the bodies of adolescent girls, but the lyricism is marred by a certain archness, which is disturbing enough if the reader is ignorant of the sex of the author, even more jarring if one is aware of it. The impersonal vision of the artist directed on to his model is not altogether steady, and the mannerism of defining a character by a momentary action, for example, 'the knot-puller', or by the colour of her hair is gauche. Over the story hangs a faint air of *voyeurism*, enhanced perhaps by the phrase 'An elderly woman looked in', and by the role of the mirror. It may be that words are too heavy-handed for such a theme, and that its proper medium is colour-cinema in the hands of a poet-photographer. The version illustrated by Dora Jarret and published by P. R. Stephenson in 1933 suggests something of the sort, though it is disfigured by the trace of coyness which mars the story.

With the story of 'Two Hanged Women' we are brought closer to the borderland of sexual deviation, beyond the mere difficulties of adjustment hinted at in 'Preliminary Canter' and 'The Wrong Turning'. The story gains point from the introduction of a pair of 'normal' lovers at the

beginning, who by a process of noisy courting drive away from their favourite seat on the pier, two dark figures. The young man is surprised when two women emerge from the shadows: he had expected another pair of lovers like himself and his girl. His exclamation, from which the story takes its title, 'Well, I'm damned! If it wasn't just two hanged women!' forms a commentary on the whole story. A false politeness forces the man to use the euphemism for 'damned' about the women, but both 'damned' and 'hanged' have associations with the notion of punishment. The implication is that those who deviate from the norm are excluded, and deserving of society's harshest censure, that there is in any case no place for them. But 'damned' has also connotations of 'doom' and 'destiny' as the conversation about the mother later makes clear.

The story reveals the tangled emotional state of a mother-dominated girl who wishes with her conscious mind to free herself by entering into a normal heterosexual relationship. Her marriage, she feels, will also please her mother. Her friend takes the view that the mother has put the idea of marriage into the girl's head and that it does not represent her real feelings:

. . . she's got a hold on you, a stranglehold, that nothing'll loosen. Oh! mothers aren't fair—I means it's not fair of nature to weigh us down with them and yet expect us to be our own true selves. The handicap's too great. All those months, when the same blood's running through two sets of veins⁷—there's no getting away from that, ever after. Take yours. As I say, does she need to open her mouth? Not she! She's only got to let it hang at the corners, and you reek, you drip with guilt.

(p. 138)

The younger girl accuses the elder of jealousy and it seems that she hopes the marriage will mean an escape from conflicting demands of both mother and friend. In depicting the freedom of her own house, she comes up against the fact of the physical aspect of marriage:

Besides, he'll be away all day. And when he came back at night, he'd . . . I'd . . . I mean I'd— (p.139)

In the passionate outburst that follows, it becomes clear that the sexual

⁷ Richardson must have considerably revised this passage for the collected stories: it is much stronger than that of the typescript in the National Library collection, where there is no reference to the 'same blood running through two sets of veins'.

side of marriage is intolerable to her, and that what she really wants is to continue the infantile pattern of dependence, preferably with her friend as the mother-figure. The older girl sees the difficulty more clearly and is left with a dubious victory:

And so for long she continued to sit, her chin resting lightly on the fair hair, that was silky and downy as an infant's, and gazing with sombre eyes over the stealthily heaving sea. (p. 141)

'Sombre', 'stealthily heaving': the words indicate the tragedy behind the failure to achieve acceptable sexual roles and the intensity of the outburst about the mother and the denunciation of nature's arrangements, though they have a personal ring, lift the story above the level of purely individual aberration. The story leaves us in no doubt about the over-riding importance Richardson gave to the mother-figure in human life.

III

The latter half of the book opens with 'Two Tales of Old Strasbourg' and shows a further advance in the objectivisation of themes. 'Life and Death of Peterle Lüthy' and 'The Professor's Experiment', in spite of the difference in externals, partly brought about by their foreign setting and characters, deal with themes that are familiar in essentials. The first story concerns the will to live, its inevitable capitulation to disease and death, the terrible anonymity of death, and the reassertion of the will to live. It also embodies the notion of incest,⁸ an idea which Richardson found interesting, but difficult to deal with at the time when she wrote.

Peterle is born in the public hospital and all we know of him and his mother at first is that he is illegitimate. The human drama is set against a skilfully etched background of Strasbourg's old streets and lodging-houses, and the flavour of people and language is deftly, if briefly insinuated. The child's mother, stolid and sparing of speech, has another side to her than the one the opening of the story leads us to expect:

The children ran through boots and clothes; there was now an extra mouth to feed; while she, too, if she was to dance this summer, must have a new blouse, a neckerchief, a pair of pointed shoes. (p. 155)

She is, in short, as sensual as she is mute, stoic and patient. It is her

⁸ See Letters to Jacob Schwartz, of the Ulysses Press, typed copies in the National Library, Canberra: 'the infant covers the incest' (22 November 1931).

stepfather with whom she goes dancing, leaving the children alone because the grandmother at the last minute 'let herself be seduced by a wedding engagement'. The character of the main figures is etched in a sentence:

and, since none of the three adults was willing to forgo a pleasure: skat, a wedding, and the dance respectively: there was nothing for it but to shut the door on the little ones, and trust to luck that they would come to no harm. (p. 161)

It is only later when the baby sickens of cholera that we learn that, in her haste to leave for the dance, the mother has been careless about boiling his milk. The muted scene on the return from the dance hints obliquely at the stepfather's jealousy. Henriette has infuriated him by dancing with an Italian. Later, he attempts to divert her thoughts from his rival by presenting her with a rich new neckerchief. So low-toned are these scenes that their significance is barely noticed, especially as they are embedded in such an extraordinary mixture of sordid intrigue and burgher-like respectability and *Gemütlichkeit*. The brief destiny of the child runs its course against the background of an adult illness: in the same apartment-house is a man doomed shortly to die of consumption, who is jealous of the living. As Henriette towards the end paces her room with the dying child in her arms, she becomes conscious of the 'living skeleton' at the opposite window:

an eye alight with malignant pleasure that it was no longer he only, who was to be called on to leave daylight and the sun. (p. 177)

After Peterle has 'alone and unaided, fought his tiny, blind, unknowing way towards the great dark', his mother arranges for his funeral as matter-of-factly as she had performed all her other tasks for him. She is somewhat tired after the burial, and her arms feel empty:

Still, it was better so. Two were enough, more than enough. And she would take care—oh! such care . . . (pp. 180-1)

She drinks a glass of beer, sets out 'with fresh zeal' for home:

And before the sun went down that night, it was almost as though Peterle had never been. (p. 181)

The enormous indifference of life to the elements of which it is composed has hardly found more movingly matter-of-fact expression than this combination of the stolid and the bizarre. The richness of detail of the background, which resembles an old engraving, heightens the sense of

the transience and insignificance of the little life which passes briefly across it.

The second of the two Strasbourg stories forms a contrast with the first. In the first, life and its pleasures are accepted with great zest by Henriette, her stepfather, her grandmother, their stately lodger and his plump mistress, and death is something they merely take in their stride. 'The Professor's Experiment' is a story of the evasion of life, and the different effect of a death on two people, seemingly alike. The Professor prefers the mystery of his Oscan Declension and the peace which will make its solution possible to anything else on earth. His brief excursion into marriage and fatherhood, the death of his wife and child, pass over him like a dream and he has hardly returned from the funeral before he is at work on his proofs, the greatest pleasure in his life. But the story has an unexpected ending: his stern elder sister, who has always kept house for him and ministered to his every need, who resented the intrusion of the pretty, plump, shallow, weak-willed wife, is shocked into recognising the truth about her brother:

The mysteries of birth and death had been enacted before her: the coming of a new soul, the going forth of one with whom you had shared your daily bread. This was life . . . not the humdrum monotony that had always fallen to her lot, which she had put up with only because she knew no better . . . Who *was* Paulchen that he should demand such a sacrifice? . . . She turned her eyes on him, and, as she looked, the scales fell, and she saw him as she had never yet dared to see him; as a mouldy little bookworm, a narrow blear-eyed little delver in abstruse symbols, who lived wrapped up in himself, and for himself alone, without thought or care for the well-being of those around him . . . He and his Oscan Declension! Was it worth a rap to anybody but himself? . . . Did it do anyone good? . . . help the sick and needy? . . . or those in travail? . . . What had it ever done for her, but rob her? . . . of all life might have held for her as a woman. (pp. 231-2)

For the first time in his life, the Professor has to pour his own tea and drink it 'in a solitude peopled by the gloomiest forebodings':

The while, behind her locked door, Annemarie continued to indulge thoughts and hatch plans of the kind that herald revolutions. (p. 233)

IV

'The Professor's Experiment' is one of the most successful and shapely of all the stories. It has a delicious, sly humour that shows itself only rarely in Richardson's work; the characters are sharply drawn and memorable, and the sudden shift of sympathy at the end is managed so as to be entirely credible even though it takes us by surprise. The story has an air of first-hand experience about it that 'Succedaneum', which follows in the next section, has not. We come closer to the life of the pedantic recluse than we do to that of the creative artist, perhaps because the life of the scholar is more easily conveyed in words than the life of a composer. It is true that the robust common sense of the dénouement of the Professor's story provides just the right kind of contrast for the more rarefied atmosphere of 'Succedaneum'. But Richardson's hold on the visible world is stronger and her treatment of it does more to convince us of intangibles than when she writes of them directly.

Nevertheless, 'Succedaneum' is of particular interest, since it is the only direct, unequivocal statement in her work of the doctrine she shared with Pater that 'we are all condamnés', and that the wisest of the children of this world spend the interval between birth and death in art and song.

In May 1932, we find Richardson writing this strange passage to Jacob Schwartz:

The only pleasure I get in life is from my writing. Why should I hurry over it? Especially when I am so miserable between books.

From *Maurice Guest* onwards we have traced the emphasis on the unique resource possessed by the artist against unhappiness and insecurity and have found the novelist relying on it in her own life from a very early date. It is not surprising that she should sum up in a single story the terror of the artist whose inspiration fails him. It is the equivalent of the childhood fear of being deserted by the parents; and if the story were written, as well as published, after her husband's death, the terror it describes would have an added poignancy, since the lack of emotional support would make the need for creative expression more imperative. But why she should be miserable before his death is a mystery.

There is an air of abstraction about 'Succedaneum' which prevents it from being entirely successful as a work of art, and the language, whose deficiencies can be ignored when the characterisation is successful, will

not serve to elevate the abstract to the plane of myth. The central figure, the musician, Jerome Moçs, never comes to life as an individual, and lacks the stature and dignity, the strong sharp outline necessary for the mythic figure he is intended to be. Not even his appearance is suggested, apart from the allusion to 'his sullen eyes'—a detail of mood rather than of physiognomy—and the prose style suffers from an effort to wring emotion out of words and phrases by piling on adjective and adverb. The repetition of these defeats its own end. Moreover, the verbal clichés on which Richardson sometimes relies—and which are usually justified by being in character—here show up only too clearly. In the flow of a long novel they present no obstruction; in a short story, as in a poem, well-worn phrases are too heavy a freight. Almost every page is disfigured with expressions like 'his early fires had burned low'; 'come to grips with life in the raw'; 'pristine vigour'; 'savagely, he descended into hell'; 'a look like a shaken fist, or a dog's bared teeth'; 'curtain of lash' (for eyelashes); and so on.

Nevertheless the story has the conceptual strength which is Richardson's supreme virtue as a writer, and the statement it makes, and the placing of that statement just before 'Mary Christina' in the collection, are of importance in understanding her work as a whole. In reading it, moreover, one has to keep in the back of one's mind the fact that Robertson's death interrupted for some time the writing of *The Young Cosima*.

Jerome Moçs is a gifted composer who is on the verge of finishing a symphonic rhapsody which he believes is his most important work. He loses his grip on it and at the same time begins to doubt the value of what he has got down:

and gradually a feeling of aversion for it grew up in him that fell not far short of hatred.—Oh! surely no other anguish could compare with this? . . . Just as no other human joy touched the joys of creation: this acme of lightness, this sense of walking on rainbows, this supreme surrender to a force outside oneself! (p. 239)

In the last phrase the familiar desire to annihilate the self is present this time as a component of the joy of creation and clearly posited as a joy above all others.

Moçs's emotional state at his loss of creative power, as Richardson goes on to describe it, recalls once more the characteristic feeling of the central figures of the novels: that of being an exile, an onlooker, who longs to

participate and cannot. He experiences a sense of separateness, not only from men and women in general, but from his fellow-artists, and this sensation is expressed by a simile, whose origins are surely very deep in the writer's subconsciousness:

No! envy was not the word: it was at once too much and too little. What he felt was more like the hurt and bewilderment of a child who has been shut out, for no conscious fault, from a lamplit festivity, at which all but him make merry. (p. 238)

Moçs has no taste for the usual 'surrogate' for the artist's incapacity, women or drink, though, out of a timid impulse to sadism, he begins to amuse himself by staring disconcertingly at girls he meets in the street. (One remembers here the young Cuffy's impulse, on hearing the news of Lucie's fate 'to do hard, *cruel* things [to a bird, to the piano]' (*E.C.*, p. 63).) Finally Moçs's attention is captured, not by the eyes of a real woman, but by the eyes of a woman in a picture, an advertisement for the performance of a variety singer. In the description of the singer's eyes, the principal theme of the novels is sounded once more:

And now he saw that they held a vital spark, a kind of spiritual promise, which none of the living had possessed: as if the unknown artist had condensed and compressed in them a sum of human experience. And gradually it began to seem that their message was aimed specially at him; as if these eyes were striving to make some wordless revelation to him, of mysteries in his art, in life, to which he had not yet attained. (p. 242)

And so we get back to the familiar image of the pursuit of the unknown, the out-of-reach.

Moçs, afraid that the poster might have been torn down, finds it has been, and sets off in pursuit of another copy:

Then the hunt began. He scoured the streets, head down before a biting wind, running from one quarter of the town to another, gyrating round advertisement columns without success. Not till late in the day was his search crowned. (p. 242)

Armed with a warning from his friend against letting an attraction to a woman interfere with his work ('For the artist is permitted to enjoy the things of the heart in imagination only'),⁹ he sets off to pursue the

⁹ Cf. Baron von Krause's warning to Cuffy in *R.M.*, p. 787.

unknown singer from town to town. Then chance brings him up against a real woman, whose eyes remind him of the ideal one he is pursuing. In her is embodied Richardson's concept of the law of correspondences, the notion of the 'earthly' being a crude copy of the 'heavenly':

It was, indeed, more of a replica than a resemblance, though both features and outline gave the impression of being slightly blurred, and though the whole face was triter and commoner, entirely lacking in the wilfully heightened character of the unknown artist's brush . . . Here, in this vulgar setting, shone the twin stars that had robbed him of his peace. (p. 249)

Moçs carries off the 'replica', the surrogate, bent on getting out of her what his nature needs for his inspiration. He becomes infuriated with her because of her coarseness in comparison to the delicacy of his imagined woman, feeling all the irritation of mortal man at his inability to make what he has correspond with what he dreams of. He has some limited success in re-moulding her; disguises her clumsy figure with a full skirt, shames her into caring for her hands. She becomes at last the symbol of his own limited, earthly self, 'the mute shadow at his heels', which he cannot escape to find the true incorporeal soul. In a frenzy of frustration, he ill-treats her and the pity her tears arouse makes him see her as a separate person for the first time. Concern for an injury to her hands and the physical act of ministering to her break down the remaining barrier between them. Moçs abandons 'taking' in favour of 'giving', and in doing so discovers that the woman he has in the flesh is beautiful. The knowledge sets his imagination to work again and he begins to make her over after its fashion, now attributing to her the qualities she had hitherto seemed to lack. They spend the summer in bliss, until Moçs sees by chance in a newspaper that the unknown singer, 'the ideal', is in the neighbourhood. His restless longing awakens once more, he journeys to the town, succeeds in meeting the singer, only to find she is a grotesque caricature of what he had imagined, a tawdry wreck:

For this . . . *this!* . . . he had torn up his life by the roots, dragged himself over half Europe. (p. 265)

But there is one redeeming feature:

the voice had not suffered the irreparable damage of the flesh . . .
(p. 265)

It remains 'serene and pure . . .'. The voice of the artist, to put it in general terms, survives the destruction wrought by Time.

Moçs spends two nights with the singer, and then sets out for his 'human' love once more, in a state of mind compounded of a sense of freedom and apprehension. In the train, he finds that:

The gift of creation was his again, he was one again with his daemon, his genius; with that mystic force which alone justified his existence.

Humbly, like one accepting alms, he yielded to its oncoming . . . received it into himself—as the prone, entranced body, lying deep in sleep, receives back the night-wanderer that is its spirit. (p. 269)

He now has a flash of perception of

the handful of notes, the combination of tones, needed to start the chain of ideas that should carry him rapturously to the end. (p. 269)

He sits passively and lets himself

sink into the state nearest bliss vouchsafed to mortal on this side of the great divide; a bliss that shares the quivers of a sheerly physical pleasure, yet is past expression subtle and pure: when the creative artist, freed from the trammels of time, lives through aeons in a few seconds of man's measuring. (p. 269)

Nevertheless, Moçs is torn between his longing for his earthly love and his freedom to create, but knowing that 'To be perpetually aware of a presence, no matter how mute, how humble, would hang him with chains' (p. 272) he sends an abrupt telegram 'Am not coming back. Return home' (p. 273). Out of the desolation of parting (the woman's share of this is conveniently ignored) comes new material for art:

Moçs sat and listened to the grotesque distortions ground out by the wheels, now of this theme, now of that. And oftenest what he heard was one of a tossing sea, sailed by a ship carrying lover back to lover. In its broken rhythm, its restless upward surge, his own unrest, his growing exaltation found vent: he, with his face set once more for what, to him, had never ceased to be the one Reality . . . all else but a ghostly surrogate. (p. 274)

The story has obviously all the makings of a myth that never quite becomes a work of art. But it is a myth which sums up some of Richardson's beliefs and attitudes in a peculiarly succinct way. It is doubtful indeed whether she herself would have subscribed to Moçs's last sentence, whether she really believed that art was the supreme reality. It is much more likely

that for her it was the surrogate for a reality she could not fully enter into: the possibility of a double irony in the title cannot be ignored.

But Moçs's wavering between fact and dream she knew well and wrote about often enough,¹⁰ though never so nakedly as here. In attempting to get at the intangible which resides in the flesh, for example, Moçs succeeds only when he is able to love, and love then causes the tangible to take on the nature of the intangible. Later, when he meets the ideal he had imagined, he finds it as coarse as the flesh that he had lately despised, but now, his perceptions made keener through his earthly love, he refrains from condemning the appearance, and is able to seize upon the essential, 'the pure, serene voice' still worthy of love, within the coarse flesh. What Richardson is striving to show in this fable is the thin line that divides the flesh and the spirit, the interdependence of fact and the sense of the fact, not the distinctions between them. Moçs's creative faculty returns to him, not as a result of abandoning himself to one or other of his 'loves', not because he chooses between them, but as a result of seeing their relationship clearly, of learning to love both the substance and the shadow.

It is important to remember that a musician is placed at the centre of this fable, not a writer. The musician, that is, is the archetypal artist, and music, love, and the reconciling sea are brought together in the climactic passage. Music, also a reconciling symbol, is the most abstract of the arts, but to be heard it must have a fleshly vehicle. And for Schopenhauer, whom Richardson knew well, it was the only art which manifests the cosmic will.

The paragraph describing this inextricability of flesh and spirit is of particular psychological and anagogical interest. Moçs has a sensation of the walls that blocked him in dropping away, and feels a momentary panic at his defencelessness:

For an instant their collapse seemed to leave him alone in space, without a hold, and feeling strangely shrunken. (p. 268)

Then the feeling of inclusiveness takes over, reminding us of Mahony's sensation of unity in his vision:

In the next it was he who filled space, swelled by a power that ran

¹⁰ Cf. the last phrases of p. 686 in the trilogy; and Laura's day-dream by the sea in *G.W.*

through him and overflowed him, magnificently spreading until it embraced all living things. (p. 268)

In these two passages, Moçs's longing for the known and his aspiration after the unknown, his neophobia and neophilia, are reconciled in creativity, which fills space, like God, putting an end to separateness. Art and God, though not identical, are cognate ideas: the artist, like God, creates surrogates which make up his world. Richardson indicates the similarity again in the simile which describes Moçs's reception of the returning creative force: '. . . as the prone entranced body lying deep in sleep, receives back the night-wanderer that is its spirit'. The simile refers first to the immediate occasion; it also alludes to Moçs's summer idyll with his 'human' love, seeing it as a kind of sleep, during which he has continued to dream of his ideal (life is a semi-sleep, death the great awakening, as Mahony put it). The meeting with his ideal face to face is equivalent to awakening, refreshed, from his earthly dream, and the whole process of experience liberates him to create. The simile reminds us that Richardson's view of life and death was the same as Mahony's; and it also recalls the ancient belief that the soul is able to wander about during sleep, as the body wanders during the 'sleep of life'. It finally leads on to the notion of night as the unconscious, the realm of the imagination, the source of the 'possible', out of which all conscious life emerges and takes shape. The whole passage places Richardson again squarely in the Romantic 'idealist' tradition.

In 'Succedaneum' the distinction between shadow and substance is deliberately blurred, as befits, what is, as far as one can tell, a late version of Richardson's *credo*.¹¹ The story which follows it and which ends the book was first published in 1911, some thirteen years after the death of her mother, whose ending had inspired it. In after years, Richardson said that it did not represent her more considered views on the subject of death. The story, as she also said, is about dying rather than death, which is why the name was changed to 'Mary Christina'. But since the woman passes her life in review as she is dying, it necessarily contains some sort of summing-up of the meaning life and death has for her.

It is a very powerful evocation of the physical sensations of dying,

¹¹ The propensities of Louise, Maurice, Laura, and Cuffy are all summed up in the remark made about Cuffy on p. 686 of the trilogy, that he 'swung like a pendulum between fact and dream . . .'.

partly derived from imagination working on observation of her mother's experience; it may also owe something to Richardson's own sensations of losing consciousness; she was prone at one stage to fainting-fits. The description suggests, too, the experience of undergoing anaesthesia by ether, though there is no definite record so far of the writer's having done so:

And the sensation of sinking, of being sucked under by a current she could not stem, began anew. It was as if she were caught and swept round in a whirlpool: for a time she would ride high, on the same level; then came the dizzy, downward drop, and she was by so much nearer to the black, serpent-like, central shaft, so much farther from the blue roof of the sky. Down . . . down . . . down!—a giddy whirl towards the horrors of the dark; and so it would go on in ever-contracting circles, till the awful moment when she whirled no more, and when the churning waters met, with a crash of thunder, above her head. (p. 286)

Mary Christina is dying in great pain: 'Better now than in the spring, when things are freshening up.' By and by she ceases even to respond to the pain and sinks into a twilight torpor in which scenes from her past life, beginning in early childhood, pass before her eyes, bringing her to the present moment. The whole 'confused pattern of her life' now seems unreal to her; and she surveys it without emotion:

Now, the many happenings that composed it struck no answering chord in her; and it passed belief to think that she had once been stirred to the depths of her soul by them. In this hour of profounder knowledge, she saw that they had only been dreams and shadows—delusive images that had tricked her brain . . . And their hold upon her had been an imaginary one: her inmost self, the vilest part of her, had remained unmoved by them, and unharmed. She had not striven in mortal combat; for there had never been a combat to engage in. That was still another illusion—perhaps the greatest of all. Life, tapped at its core, stripped of its rainbow gauds, meant . . . a standing dumbly by, to let these dream-things pass . . . Joy and grief, love and hate, rapture and despair, were, in very truth, one and the same—the thin, blue spire of smoke, that ascended from a phantasmal fire. (pp. 284-5)

Mary Christina, in short, arrives at the point of complete nihilism:

Without substance, without meaning, it had all been an idle beating of the air. (pp. 285-6)

Richardson comes in this story very close indeed to Lawson's stance in his stories of death and burial in the bush: 'It didn't matter—nothing does.' Mary Christina at the last is without hope, or even the wish for hope:

. . . not again would she choose to be of life . . . Not immortality: no fresh existence, to be endured and fought out in some new shadow-land, among unquiet spirits. (p. 285)

Her characteristic will to live asserts itself for the last time, but it is nothing but the reflex movement of the dying:

I will get up and go away . . . far away. (p. 286)

The only concession made by the author to the non-materialist point of view is the vague equation of essence with mind:

Her thoughts, drawing to an inseparable tangle, escaped her, and were reabsorbed in the Supreme Thought. (pp. 286-7)

But the concession is the observer's: Mary Christina dies 'unblessed' by even so minimal a notion of continuance.

The last line of the story assents to the dying woman's own conclusion: The coverings decently stretched and folded, she [the nurse] turned out the gas, and set a night-light in a glass of water.—It threw living shadows on the wall. (p. 287)

The night-light, a tiny gleam in a surrounding darkness, water, symbolising life and the quest for knowledge, glass, the fragile container; the shadows, thrown by these, are the most that can be called living.

The two stories at the end of the book present answers to the riddle of existence that are at opposite poles; they constitute an affirmation and a denial that there is something beyond earthly life. The last story indeed views life itself as a shadow cast momentarily upon an eternal darkness. It is far more convincing as a work of art than the previous story—just how good it is can be seen by comparing it with Simone de Beauvoir's long-winded account of her mother's death¹²—and Richardson seems to be contradicting her most cherished convictions by including it and placing it at the end of the book. Did her mother have the last word after all? Or was Richardson still too close to the death of her husband when the book was being compiled to allow it to end in a major key?

¹² See *La Mort Très Douce* (Gallimard, 1964).

When it was first published, 'Death' had the last words of *Niels Lyhne* for a sub-title: 'Den vanskelige død'.¹³ The inference is plain in the sub-title: Mary Christina, like Niels, dies the hard way, the death of the sceptic. Her story says 'no' to life, even to the hope of immortality, as 'Succedaneum' says 'yes' to it, if at least it can be spent 'in art and song'. The two stories taken together recall, oddly enough, not the style, but the content and mood of another tale whose immediate occasion was the death of a mother, Johnson's *Rasselas*. Like the last chapter of *Rasselas*, these two stories form a 'conclusion in which nothing is concluded'. In *Rasselas*, the Princess longs for permanence: 'She was weary of expectation and disgust, and would gladly be fixed in some invariable state'; she seeks it not in death, like Mary Christina, but in learning. The Prince 'could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects': the eternal longing of the creative artist of 'Succedaneum'; 'Imlac and the astronomer were contented to be driven along the stream of life without directing their course to any particular port. Of those wishes that they had formed, they well knew that none could be obtained.'

Fact, dream, and the commonsense acceptance of both; permanence, restlessness, and the course between them. These are Richardson's themes as they were Johnson's and for much the same reason: both were filled, in Henry Morley's words,¹⁴ 'with a growing sense of the ills of life, associated in some minds with doubt whether there could be a just God ruling this unhappy world'. For both, real happiness was to be found only beyond the grave and both in certain moods apparently doubted whether even this faith might not be self-deception. *Rasselas*, like *Richard Mahony*, is a debate between transience and permanence, between doubt and faith, and *Rasselas*'s colloquy with the philosopher in Chapter 18 is in essence the same as that between Richard and Mary over their dead daughter:


'Sir,' said the Prince, 'mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised: we know that death is always near, and it should therefore always be expected.' 'Young man,' answered the philosopher, 'you speak like one that has never felt the pangs of separation.' 'Have you then forgot the precepts,' said *Rasselas*, 'which you so powerfully

¹³ See Letters to Schwartz, 11 December 1931.

¹⁴ See Introduction to *Rasselas*, Cassell's Modern Library edition.

enforced? Has wisdom no strength to arm the heart against calamity? Consider that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same.' 'What comfort,' said the mourner, 'can truth and reason afford me? Of what effect are they now, but to tell me my daughter will not be restored?'

The Prince whose humanity would not suffer him to insult misery with reproof, went away, convinced of the emptiness of rhetorical sounds and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences. Not only *Richard Mahony*, but the last two stories in *The End of a Childhood* leave the emotional debate equally open, while allowing room for a 'great possibility'.



Chapter II

*One's self is well-
hidden from one-
self. Of all mines of
treasure one's own
is the last to be dug
up. NIETZSCHE*



The Objective Correlative

I

THE SOURCES OF Richardson's first three novels and her short stories are a tangle of fact and fiction which can be only partially unravelled. *The Young Cosima* tells a tale of one of the most heavily documented episodes in recent history: the story of the marriage of Cosima Liszt with Hans von Bülow and her desertion of him for Wagner, the friend he loved as he loved Liszt himself.

The Young Cosima has been treated with scant sympathy by Australian critics,¹ even by Nettie Palmer, who on the whole is the most kindly disposed to it. An American reviewer, however, praised it highly when it first appeared in 1939 and again thirty years later when she compared it favourably with a new, detailed biography of Cosima by Alice Hunt Sokoloff. Writing in the *New York Review of Books* for 10 August 1969, Marcia Davenport concluded that Richardson's novel captured the essential Cosima better than the biography:

Written as a novel that re-creates the emotions of the people who were saved from themselves by their genius, this is literature.

The American reviewer's enthusiasm for the literary quality of *The*

¹ Professor Kramer, for example, felt 'it could have been written by anyone with patience and industry'—qualities which Miss Sokoloff is said to have possessed. She added that the book had very little to mark it as Richardson's 'except the style and the musical knowledge', see *Great Australians* monograph, p. 27. In fact the style is hardly recognisable as that of the author of *M.G.* or *R.M.*

Young Cosima needs some qualification, but her feeling for it is more in line with Richardson's own statement of her intentions, and she quite rightly emphasises its psychological penetration. Richardson indeed was striving to pierce through all the surface evidence accumulated about the events of her characters' lives, to reach the hidden motives that lay concealed below their outward behaviour, and below what they wrote about themselves. These motives had not necessarily anything to do with music.

Richardson herself insisted that the book was not 'a music-novel'. In a letter to Nettie Palmer (15 December 1938) she wrote, we remember, that it was 'only about those whose trade music was'. Again, in May the following year, she wrote:

No, I never meant to go further than the date at which I consider Cosima's youth ends. And it was the relationship of the three people that interested me most; not the woman's career. (N.P., p. 201)

Richardson did not specify the nature of the relationship which interested her most to Nettie Palmer, and Mrs Palmer, carried away by romantic enthusiasm, either failed to observe it or refrained from mentioning it. It is strange, indeed, that in spite of the warning given by the novelist in the letters to her, she insists that 'the atmosphere of music in which the chief characters are steeped determines all their relationships':

It brings things together and controls what they say or do, giving them an identity in themselves and a connection with one another. How, except in the role of disciple and interpreter, could the highly-strung, whimsical, fastidious young Bülow be drawn towards the plebeian, robust Wagner? In what milieu other than the heady one evoked by the creation of great masterpieces could Cosima, a spirited young woman in her middle twenties, forsake home, husband, and the religious faith to which she was attached for a man old enough to be her father? . . . Their devotion to a musical cause is what inspires their attachment and holds them together. (N.P., p. 134)

This is precisely the opposite of what Richardson's letters imply: 'Only about people whose trade music was . . . it was the relationship of the three people that interested me most: not the woman's career'. She sets out to answer the questions raised by Mrs Palmer, but her answer makes it clear that it is not music which 'determines all their relationships'. What

music does is to prevent their relationships from destroying them altogether. It is true that music brings these people together, but once brought together, Richardson shows they would have had compelling reasons besides music for entering into the relationships that finally bound them. The American reviewer's observation that the novel 're-creates the emotions of the people who were saved from themselves by their genius' is nearer the mark. At least they had 'the engrossing pursuit' denied to the characters in *Maurice Guest*, who displayed similar destructive emotions.

One of the chief obstacles to a just assessment of *The Young Cosima* is in fact the absence of a clear statement of its theme. For this Richardson is herself partly responsible: she felt the need to disguise it.

But the failure to perceive it is also due to the preconceptions of readers: a novel about historical personages of acknowledged genius predisposes a reader to expect certain themes and attitudes and blinds him to others. Houston Stewart Chamberlain in 1896² laid it down that Cosima was the essentially feminine woman whose role it was to serve genius when she saw it; Mrs Palmer, in 1950, in spite of the perceptiveness she displays on so many other occasions, writes in much the same strain:³

Cosima is purely feminine, accepting as a woman her secondary role, yet intensely conscious of a world beyond the physical one and ready to spend her entire life for the man whom she sees as the chief figure in it. (N.P., pp. 146-7)

Yet the woman as drawn by Richardson is one of the least feminine of 'heroines' in modern literature, certainly in Richardson's own novels. One only has to compare her with Louise or Mary Mahony to see the difference at once, though even Mary Mahony's femininity is by no means 'pure'.⁴

² In *Richard Wagner*, 1896.

³ Mrs Palmer tended to see Cosima perhaps in terms of her own situation—she herself sacrificed her creative gifts to those of her husband.

⁴ Neither is Louise's. Cf. *M.G.*, p. 121:

'Peace of mind! I have never even been passably content . . . Tonight, for instance, I feel so much energy in me and I can make nothing of it—nothing! If I were a man, I should walk for hours, bare-headed, through the woods. But to be a woman . . . to be cooped up inside four walls . . . when the night itself is not large enough to hold it all!—'

Nor is *The Young Cosima*, any more than *Maurice Guest*, an argument that genius is its own moral justification. It is a novel, like the others, about the interior life of *people*, not about aesthetic theories.

The Young Cosima is an attempt to *understand* the motives that sustained the relationships between Liszt, Wagner, Bülow and Cosima, not to justify one of the relationships in terms of a morality of art. That Cosima followed the course she did is not nearly as obvious a service to art as those believe who regard art as more important than life; and they forget the simple fact that most of Wagner's best work was behind him before she ran off with him.⁵

There are, it is true, three strong interests in *The Young Cosima* which distract attention from the main one. The first is the theme of self-sacrifice, which is introduced with powerful irony early in the book in the scenes between Liszt and his current mistress, the Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, between Bülow and his mother, and finally Cosima and her sister. The first chapter establishes the deep emotional tie existing between Liszt and Bülow; indicates the patience and the deviousness of Liszt's character, which are to be so marked in his daughter, and the lack of self-confidence which both Liszt and Cosima deplore in Bülow. It also adumbrates a situation which is a recurrent one in Richardson's work: the situation capable of being interpreted as 'compromising', which ends up in a marriage. (It is hinted at in *Maurice Guest*, jokingly, in relation to Maurice and Madeleine; John Turnham's second marriage and in particular his third are accomplished in this way; and happy as Richardson's own marriage seems to have been, her account of her engagement suggests that it might have been hastened by imputations of a breach of decorum.) It is obvious that Bülow regards Cosima from the first as a surrogate for Liszt:

'your second self, *Maitre*, your walking image . . . your sympathy, *Maitre*, your intuition! . . . And so I was able to talk to her as frankly as now to you . . . What was more, through her you gave me back

⁵ Unless one subscribes to the view that *Parsifal* is Wagner's masterpiece. Richardson herself, like Nietzsche, considered Cosima's influence on *Parsifal* unfortunate. See Eckart, *Cosima Wagner*, Vol. I, p. 866, where the marginal note seems to indicate that she was critical of Cosima's thankfulness that *Parsifal* ended in *Andacht und Frommigkeit*—devotion and piety.

my faith in myself. Which is so necessary to me. Without which I can do nothing.' (pp. 5-6)

The older man and the young part, after hinting at a solution to the problem of Cosima, with one fear in their minds: what will be the reaction to a proposal of marriage of the women who dominate them: Liszt's mistress and Bülow's mother, to whom each man 'owes so much'?

The second chapter is a skilful, satirical account of a great man under petticoat government, not the least amusing stroke being that it takes place, with all its rapier-edged courtesy, in its comfortable bourgeois setting, under the gaze of Dürer's *Melancholy*, 'the sole picture in the room'.⁶ The total impression is of the tyranny of self-sacrifice; Liszt is weighed down under a load of obligation to a woman he no longer loves, and whose chief weapon is tears. An important point to note about the Princess, for all her tears, her plumpness, and her birdlike gestures with sugar-lumps, is that she is not in the least feminine, even in appearance. Her 'bare, massively-rounded arms', 'the guttural expletive and a violent outward fling of hand and cigar' are the physical equivalents of her mental bludgeoning of Liszt, whose patience in winning the public over to the new music she despises:

'Ah! you and your patience! I have heard the word so often. Sometimes it seems to me but a pretty name for something much less pretty. I have not christened you "dreamer" and "idler" for nothing.' Liszt made no reply.

The Princess inhaled a mighty whiff, belched it forth in a grey cloud, and went on, with growing passion: 'Ah! if only *I* were a man—were you, Franz Liszt, with all your mighty gifts—instead of just a poor weak woman . . . How I would set the world ablaze!—But this, my friend, let me tell you. I have got you *thus far* on the road to fame and glory, and nothing shall divert me from seeing that you go all the way.' (pp. 16-17)

The Princess's words strike a note that is to be sounded more insistently

⁶ According to Sacheverell Sitwell's *Liszt*, p. 147, Dürer's *Melancholy* was not the sole picture in the room; the other was a picture of St Francis de Paule walking on the waves. If he is right, Richardson is again sacrificing musico-historical to psychological and artistic truth, since Sitwell continues: 'the latter being of interest to us because it was to inspire him to one of his most striking compositions'.

on two other instruments even more dominant. Mary Mahony had played it long before on a piccolo.

The chapter ends with an allusion to that impregnability which characterises both Liszt and his daughter:

Yet to present to the world the serene, almost indifferent front that had gained for him the sobriquet of 'Olympian', and formed a wall behind which no one, not even the two men he loved best, was permitted to pass. (p. 26)

The sentence also indicates the true direction of Liszt's affections.

The third chapter is a grimly amusing echo of the second, this time a duel between mother and son. Before it begins, we are given to understand where Hans's affections lie, and as the duel progresses it becomes clear that they also have two objects. Liszt, Wagner and Bülow, that is to say, already form a highly emotional equilateral triangle:

Of all living creatures, Liszt was dearest to him.—Just for a little while, perhaps, his heart had been divided; though, did he look back, *that* seemed more like a sickness than a friendship, a green sickness. (p. 28)

As soon as the mother mentions Wagner's name with disapproval, it is clear that his heart is still divided. The marriage with Cosima he contemplates in the following terms, which are hardly complimentary to the girl:

If such a marriage really met the Master's wishes; or if, by means of it, he could even partially repay the many favours Liszt had done him, there was no unpleasantness he ought not to be willing to face. [1] (p. 28)

The scene displays the same kind of moral blackmail, the same free use of the weapon of tears as the first; the mother, like the mistress, goes to work on the man she has chosen to sacrifice herself for, with all the competence of the female spider devouring her mate for his own good, and both scenes foreshadow the young Cosima's own relationship with Bülow.

In the next chapter we are introduced to these daughters of Liszt, who are capable of rendering Hans 'subtly uneasy', and the conversation between them indicates the source of the uneasiness; Cosima's emphatic statement of her belief that sacrifice is a woman's true destiny rouses suspicion. That Hans has cause to be uneasy is further emphasised by

Liszt's meditation on 'sacrifice', after reading the letter asking for his daughter's hand:

'Oh, *Maitre, cher Maitre*, I not only love your daughter. It's the thought of being more nearly related to you that fills me with happiness.'

'Poor lad! Poor Hans.'

But even as he said it, Liszt's thoughts were slipping. From Hans to himself. For in reading he had lighted on phrases that had a horridly familiar ring. 'She allows me to love her'—whose words were these? . . . only a few short years ago this had been his own state of mind, his own humble posture. And, in rapturous anticipation of a life-time's service, he had felt himself a darling of the gods.—Or yet again Hans' ardent vow: 'Never would I hesitate to sacrifice myself for her happiness.' This, too, drove its dart into him. But in another way. Sacrifice? With time, the very word had grown abhorrent to him. It was sacrifice here, sacrifice there; one gave another, and round and round you spun, in a vicious circle.⁷ And the end of it all? Why, that the one who had given up most, been the chief victim, grew to be the atlas-burden that bent your back, bowed your head. And day by day, hour by hour, you struggled under it, until . . . Only, for God's sake, no sacrifices. (pp. 56-7)

The wedding of Bülow and Cosima inevitably takes place, since Cosima had willed it, and the spider-image forces itself into the mind once more, willy-nilly, after the ceremony; Hans's image is even more ferocious:

Though pale and quiet, she was perfectly self-possessed; in this a marked contrast to Hans, who, both before the registrar and in church, was awkward and ill at ease. But no sooner had they stepped into the carriage to drive home than her maidenly reserve broke down. Turning on him, with what he ever after teased her by calling 'a perfectly tigerish look,' 'the eyes of a real man-hunter', she murmured 'Now . . . now I *have* you!' And the next moment was in his arms. (pp. 74-5)

Bülow henceforward has two women battling for his being: his mother

⁷ One wonders whether or not, when she wrote this paragraph, Richardson remembered the words 'a life-time of unwearied self-sacrifice', written into Richard Mahony's death scene (*R.M.*, p. 986).

and his wife. It is a splendid theme, which in itself would have made a whole novel, but since Richardson is committed to history, it finally fades out and the reader is left to infer the true motives of Cosima's craving to be the sacrificial victim. Like Frau von Bülow, like the Princess Carolyne, she is aiming at the enlargement of the self. The conversation between Cosima and her sister about Cosima's proposal to marry Hans, and Blandine's private reflections on the proposal are evidence enough on this point. She is interested primarily in Bülow as a creator, capable of performing tasks she, as a woman, is unable to perform. Her efforts to turn him into a creator are continually frustrated. Taking up Wagner's suggestion that Hans write a symphony on the subject of the *Oresteia*, Cosima undertakes the preliminary labour of writing a prose-framework for it. At first he humours her and she enjoys the intellectual stimulus:

And then came the cold douche.

He said: 'It's magnificent, it's colossal; and I don't need to say again, my Cos, how grateful I am to you for your trouble. Yet . . . well, I'm not sure we're going the right way to work. For me, I mean. You see, like this, I'm coming to the subject in bits and pieces. And so, when I begin to handle it in its entirety, I may find myself misplacing the values, laying false emphases. It seems to me it would be better—for a one-horse talent like mine—to meet it afresh, and *as a whole* . . .'

So that was that. From now on, she must keep her rhapsodies to herself. (p. 99)

Her second attempt to inspire him fares even worse, foundering on the malice of his mother, as well as on Hans's own resistance. She excuses his distaste for the *Oresteia* theme on the grounds that it had been Wagner's idea, not his own. Now she sets out to provide him with the kind of script which would fit his own temperament:

She had often heard him say: 'Something on heroic lines. Larger than life . . . and rather simple. With not too many changes of scene. Above all, no piling up of details . . .' (p. 124)

So she spends her time in secret, fulfilling the request he had made more than once of his literary friends 'to write him a libretto':

And before the end of the year, *Merlin, a Music-Drama*, had been

stitched into an embroidered canvas-cover, tied with ribbons, and laid beside Hans' other gifts under the Christmas Tree. (p. 125)

His joy is apparently boundless: 'There was no quelling him':

Or not till his old mother, who sat watching these antics with a dry, forced smile, beckoned Cosette to her and whispered: 'Such a pity, my dear, that you cannot also make him a present of the time it will take to write it—this clever piece of yours!' But Hans overheard. And for the rest of the evening Cosette watched the tiny seed of doubt thus sown poisoning his mind; could almost *hear* him thinking to himself: time?, yes, indeed, where's the time to come from? She bit her lip, looked away; but the damage was done. (pp. 125-6)

In fact, her libretto, 'his clever young wife's bugle-call to action' is 'the new burden that was being laid on his overloaded back'.

Cosima's determination that Hans shall be a composer of genius in addition to being a busy conductor and teacher, and the father of a family, makes exorbitant demands on him; he cannot meet the requirements of all three roles. The moral of his story is that it is not an act of charity to free someone for artistic creation if his talents do not lie in that direction. The situation between Bülow and Cosima bears some resemblance indeed to the situation between Maurice and Louise. Bülow in certain respects is very like Cosima herself, though there is less narcissism and more masochism in his temperament. He finds the fullest expression of his selfhood in offering himself as a tool to be used by another self and he evades therefore every opportunity presented him by Wagner and by Cosima to become an independent composer. To make a piano score of Wagner's masterpiece and receive his praise is Bülow's *summum bonum*: So saying, he [Wagner] planted himself at Hans' side, and sang through the whole of *Tristan's* first act.

Tears and embraces followed: with a special hug for his *Auszügler*—the creator of this inimitable piano-score. (p. 248)

The faintly patronising tone of *Auszügler*⁸ ranks them in order. The

⁸ The word *Auszügler* is considered by some German purists to be a solecism. It occurs, however, as a caption to a photograph of Tausig, Klindworth, Bülow: 'Die drei Klavierauszügler Richard Wagners', opposite p. 272 in Eckart, op. cit., Vol. I. The word is not, as I thought, a coinage of Richardson's. Cf. the article referred to in note 13 below.

language is the language of the trade of music, but it conceals, rather than reveals, its true concerns.

There is little doubt that Richardson was aware of the immense possibilities of the 'self-sacrifice for art' theme and the ironic treatment she gives it in the early part of the book indicates that she was capable of making the most of it. But to develop it to its conclusion would have meant writing a novel which would take in the 'old Cosima' as well as the young bride full of missionary zeal. The choice of the *young* Cosima as heroine indicates that her interest in exploring the nature of self-sacrifice was secondary. She ends the story too soon to reveal the full irony of Cosima's 'morbid craving to be the victim'. Cosima outlived Wagner by forty-seven years; her real destiny was achieved, not as his inspiration (his masterpiece was written without it), but as the triumphant 'owner' of his work, the grand old lady of Bayreuth.

It is not surprising that Richardson was interested in analysing the motives of self-sacrifice in the Cosima-Liszt story. The relationship between her own father and mother—as far as the account in *Richard Mahony* can be regarded as a reflection of it—must have raised the question in her mind: 'Who is being sacrificed to whom and for what?' She herself in her adult life was always conscious of being a recipient, rather than a bestower, in human relationships, although her admirers thought of her as sacrificing herself to her art. This partially-developed theme alone, then, reveals *The Young Cosima* to be far less remote from Richardson's experience than it is commonly held to be, and links it closely with her other work.

Superimposed on the self-sacrifice theme is the love-theme. Richardson, it appears to some readers, attempts to account for Cosima's decision to betray husband, father, home and religion by representing it as dictated by the superior claims of an overwhelming passion. The appeal to romance is first made by associating her conflict with the *Tristan und Isolde* music, but it is Wagner himself who states it directly:

See! *your* eyes are dry; but what of mine? Look into them and tell me if you can, my Cosel, what the fate of any other living creature matters, so long as we two are one. (p. 321)

It is important to notice that there is no mention of the supreme claim of art here, only of the supreme claim of love. And it is Wagner who states it, not Cosima. She, unlike Wagner, does not believe the world well lost

for love. Quite likely, of course, he depended on her not to. Still, Wagner's words are a far cry from his earlier patronising, slightly ironic attitude to Cosima, which persists even after they become lovers. The scene in which she confesses the unsatisfactory nature of her marriage with Hans shows clearly that he is moved towards her first by pity, which overcomes reluctance and discretion:

Flinging prudence to the winds, he put out his arm and gathered her to him.

'You poor, poor, poor little woman!' (p. 226)

Her response is equally revealing:

She did not resist; even nestled closer.—And lying there, her head on his shoulder, secure in his clasp, she felt like one of *her own tired children*, laid happily to sleep . . . [Italics mine] (p. 226)

Her confession of love, which follows, obviously fills Wagner with alarm. He manages to 'choke back his involuntary: "I feared this, yes, I feared it". He *could* not so wound her' (p. 227).

What puts an end to his confusion and reluctance is her total commitment to his interests, which is what he demands from all who associate with him, but which no woman has so far accorded him. So he decides 'to take the thing on which no value has been set' and refuses to call the taking a crime. Nevertheless, in the beginning he remains as sceptical of her as he has always been of women:

'Oh, please don't be afraid, Richard. Trust me, it will be all right—I didn't come here to make difficulties for you,' she added, with the small fine smile that just touched the corners of her lips. Oho! was Richard's mental comment on these words. Aloud he said and heaved an audible sigh: 'Well, as you say, child, fate. And who were we to struggle against it.—But no regrets, eh?' (p. 229)

Wagner's transformation from the lonely father-figure, taking what comfort he can get, into a Tristan-hero swept away by love is too perfunctory to be convincing. We are invited to see Cosima and Richard overcome by erotic passion in a context curiously devoid of it, in spite of its association with one of the most erotic of all musical works. Sexual passion is not the principal component of Cosima's emotional response to *Tristan*, after she has heard it at the dress-rehearsal in Wagner's presence. The dominant feeling, which fixes her determination to be honest, is possessiveness, aroused by jealousy. She cannot tolerate the thought that she had not

inspired the music of passion; she cannot tolerate the thought that anyone else in the future might lay claim to the genius and his work. Her attitude to love is indeed the reverse of Louise's: she loves Wagner less because he fulfils her ideal of a lover than because he is a genius even greater than her father, whereas Louise loved the lover and accepted the genius as his attribute. To see the erotic *motiv* as central, therefore, is even more unsatisfactory than to see the self-sacrifice theme as central.

The third and most influential view of the novel is that Cosima was motivated by the belief that genius has a moral claim transcending all others and that by acting upon it she was not 'sacrificing' herself, but performing a truly moral action. To have stayed with Hans would have been the 'sacrifice', would have been 'immoral'. There is no doubt that Cosima rationalised her behaviour by invoking this imperative; but how far the reader is expected to assent to it is another matter. It is difficult to assent to the over-riding claims of genius, unless one is first convinced of the genius, and the argument that we must take Wagner's claim to be a genius on evidence outside the novel is specious. It is specious, that is to say, if we are expected to believe that the theme of the novel is about the difference between genius and talent and the superior claims of genius. If that is indeed the theme, then some way has to be found of conveying the feeling of genius *within* the novel. This is difficult to do, as has been said, especially if the genius happens to be a musician, but it is not impossible, and there is no excuse for not trying. Richardson's verbal resources are not of the kind to enable her to convey a musical experience, or in fact any intellectual sense of genius, and she never attempts to do so. The performance of *Tristan* which brings about Cosima's determination to be honest about her relations with Wagner does not evoke any sensuous impression of the music itself, or of the greatness of its creator. It is merely an occasion for clarifying Cosima's state of mind; we do not feel as if we had *heard* the music.

However, if the centre of interest in the novel is not the contrast between genius and talent, if it lies elsewhere than in the 'trade of music', then the author is quite justified in asking us to take the genius for granted, as she does in *Maurice Guest*; even more justified in this novel, where the genius is a matter of historical fact. And this is what she does ask. All through the book, Wagner's genius is asserted by other people rather than demonstrated through him or by the evocation of his music; we are never made

to feel it, either by the logic of reason or emotion, any more than we are made to feel the presence of passion. She is far more successful in fact in conveying Wagner's 'fatherliness', his essential warmth and kindness, so lacking in Hans von Bülow. Even Wagner's 'need' for Cosima has to be accepted as a fact, in the face of all the evidence presented to show he has no real need of women. His emotional resilience, indeed, is stressed right through to the end: as Hans says, 'his heart, like his genius, is in perpetual renewal', and his sudden discovery that he cannot get on without Cosima does not ring true. It is fear that he can manage without her, as he has managed without women in the past, that is the main cause of Cosima's flight to Tribschen. Neither passion, nor the claims of genius, are sufficient in themselves to explain Wagner's attraction for Cosima.

There is, however, a motivating force in the book, to which the others are subsidiary: it lies in Cosima's relationship with her father and provides the fundamental reason for her desertion of Bülow. Wagner was the perfect answer to Cosima's emotional needs, just as he was the perfect answer to Bülow's, when Liszt was no longer accessible to either of them. He satisfied Cosima's need for a father and her need to be indispensable to him; he also satisfied her need to *be* a father, that is, a 'creator', as Bülow could not. The remark of Peter Cornelius, that Wagner 'won't make old bones' and Cosima's reply, 'Oh, I know, only too well', have prophetic significance. Cosima's fulfilment is completed, outside the novel, when the death of Wagner leaves her fully identified with him, with his artistic offspring at her disposal.

The well-known passages on pages 300 and 301, in which Wagner and Cosima discuss love and genius and the divinity of genius illustrate Cosima's true state of mind. (Too often, however, the passage when quoted breaks off at the point which suits the 'aesthetic' critic best): 'Art? Let no one talk to me of art. There are times when I'm inclined to see it as a kind of bane: a curse laid on those unfortunates who are doomed to practise it. Quite certainly a species of madness. And none so mad as I!'

Cosima slid to her knees, and laid her cheek to the four clasped hands.

'But a divine madness, Master.'

'Maybe, maybe. But am I never to be allowed a taste of life's joys? Go to my grave solely as the vessel through which *it* pours?'

In silence she drew her lips over the back of his hand. 'Here, at the end of my days, I find the love and companionship I've dreamed of ever since I first knew conscious thought. Yet the daemon in me gives me no rest till I have turned you from me; sent you back to one who has never known how to value you and never will; though he'll look on your going as *his* right, *his* due! If this isn't madness, what is? And yet: *ich kann nicht anders!*'

'You wouldn't be my Richard if you could.'

'There speaks her father's daughter.—But I'm of the earth earthy; have a foot in both worlds . . .'

Whether, as has been claimed, Richardson endorsed Cosima's romantic concept of art as a 'divine madness' is doubtful. She had her share of vanity, as a writer long disappointed of recognition might be expected to have, but there is far more evidence of her hatred of pretentiousness and extravagance. Like Wagner, she had a foot in both worlds and it is much more probable that she regarded herself as an honest workman than as a god. Her most convincing studies are, in the last analysis, of humble men and women, not of geniuses.

Wagner in this passage next goes on to paint a harrowing picture of the lovers' coming separation, asks himself if art is worth it and suggests they run away from it all:

'A *mansarde* in Paris, eh, Cosel? You and I alone together, subsisting somehow, living only for each other and for our happiness. Come, what about it?' By now she was crying in earnest. Yet staunchly she shook her head.

'The *Meistersinger*,' she whispered.

What she is most conscious of, that is to say, is not her passion for Wagner but the fate of the *Meistersinger*; not the lover, but the creator and his creation. Particularly the creation, since it will satisfy her own creative drive.

Wagner, in fact, is the father-genius who replaces Liszt, denied to her by fate, by circumstances, by her mother Marie d'Agoult, and her 'step-mother' Princess Carolyne, and finally, by the Catholic church. Her feeling for Liszt is never in any doubt from the beginning of the book, where she discusses it with her sister Blandine:

Do you remember a sermon we once heard preached, by the Abbé Gabriel? . . . Well, in it he said that the life of a true woman ought

to consist wholly of self-sacrifice, she herself stand, for the 'sacrificial offering'. I never forgot that; the words seemed to burn themselves into me. At the time it was Papa I dreamed of dedicating myself to . . . Now, I know Papa doesn't need me; but poor Hans does; and if I can help him, and through him the greatest of all Causes—why, it seems to me a chance I dare not miss. (p. 42)

When Liszt is finally lost to her, when he takes orders after the last-minute failure to gain the Pope's permission to marry the Princess, the association with Wagner that had previously been distasteful to her gradually takes on a different aspect. Subconsciously she is seizing the opportunity of replacing Liszt that Wagner represents. Liszt's last visit to her on the eve of his departure 'for Athens', before his expected marriage to the Princess, reveals the nature of her feeling for him and lays down the clue to her choice of Wagner as surrogate:

Very early, and very cautiously, to avoid waking Hans: to avoid, too, a biting word; for, dear as Liszt was to him, she was dearer, and in spite of himself he chafed at her present absorption. (Particularly when, as the Protestant of the party, he was made to feel the outsider.) With due care then, she rose and crept out to accompany her father to the early Mass with which he unflaggingly began the day. And wonderful moments were those when, all else forgotten, she knelt by his side, praying with him and for him. There, the many barriers life had set up between her and this beloved being fell. Their souls met and mingled like two streams that by devious ways reach the same flood. Oh, *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* (p. 163)

After this 'mystical union', they are shown enjoying a companionable walk upon the common earth. Liszt tells her, more in the manner of an injunction than as a statement of his own feelings, how glad he is of her happy marriage (which we can well believe!):

'Yes, the assurance of your happiness makes up for much, child.'

'Yes, my father.' (How she loved the 'child' on his lips!) (p. 164)

Cosima has never had much reason to feel confident of her position as Liszt's 'child'; the assurance of his paternal emotion is what she most longs for, though why she longs for it needs further explanation. As Liszt finally recedes from her, it is no wonder she finds Wagner's combination of fatherly tenderness and genius irresistible.

This scene occurs immediately after the scene between Wagner, Cosima,

and Blandine, in which Wagner jocularly offers to adopt them as his daughters:

'So, from now on, *I* will be your *lieber Papa*.' (p. 156)

And he does, in fact, constantly address Cosima as 'child'. At their first meeting, he identifies father and daughter by informing her that:

'I love Liszt better than anyone alive, and you are his daughter!'

(p. 85)

The subsequent estrangement between Wagner and Liszt troubles her, presumably because it disturbs her sense of their identification, and the success of her effort to reconcile the two men is given extraordinary emphasis. After a long absence, Liszt returns to Germany and Cosima brings about a meeting between him and Wagner, thus merging the real and the surrogate:

The first rapturous greetings were over—Richard had danced, sung, laughed and cried in a breath—but Liszt still had his arm round his friend's shoulders, and, as he spoke, he put out his other arm and drew Cosette to him, including her in the embrace.

And Richard in his turn feeling for her hand, and pressing and fondling it, they stood, the three of them, linked as one, she and her two dearest. For a little while, she held it out. Then, freeing herself, slipped away to her own room. (pp. 234-5)

The peculiarly complex nature of this relationship is seen in the paragraph that follows; the father, through her agency, is to be a kind of fertilising influence on the lover:

There when, under Father Liszt's magic fingers, the opening chords of the *Meistersinger* were marching through the house, she, too, shed tears of happiness. Not only had she succeeded in bringing back to Richard the friend he had given up for lost. But, in that outer room, genius sat by genius: at Richard's side was a man of his own stature, the single one of his contemporaries himself great enough fully to understand greatness. From where she sat, she could hear Richard singing at the top of his dear voice, or breaking off to descant on what he sang. Oh, that the stimulus of Liszt's presence might inspire him to take up afresh and bring to an end this glorious, all-too-long neglected work!

If so, for the first time, she would have been of some use to him. (p. 235)

The identification of father, lover, and child could hardly go further. Cosima's disillusionment with Bülow is brought about as much by his inability to fill the role of the father as by his failure to satisfy her ambition; indeed the two failures are hardly distinguishable. Hans stands, as he wished to do to Liszt, in a filial relationship to Cosima, which Wagner half-humorously defines for her when she visits him in Hans's absence, with her two small children:

'And your biggest, most troublesome child you left at home, eh?'

(p. 220)

She had no real desire for children of any kind, or rather no desire to bear them, though there is evidence to suggest she might have cared to beget them: the identification with the father involves an identity of function. She speaks of Hans's lack of understanding of children or liking for them and admits that she shares it:

. . . the training of a child, however meticulous, did not fill one's life. Nor was it possible to exist forever on the infant level. And various odd jobs done for Hans . . . Cosette went to her writing table; where, she had to confess, the sight of pen and paper gave her a thrill the equal of any. Her work was nothing more high-flown than the translation of a friend's novel into French. But such as it was she enjoyed it . . . (p. 167)

Elsewhere she refers with regret to her lack of creative capacity:

In short, she began to have ideas of her own for the construction of a symphony, without, alas! the manly ability to supply a note of the music. (p. 98)

Earlier still, Blandine has observed to herself: '. . . and what Papa is, Cos must be, too' (p. 44), an observation which puts Cosima's problem succinctly enough.

The creative impulse indicated in the above passages was regarded by Cosima, following the fashion of her contemporaries, as masculine rather than feminine, and indeed has been so regarded by psychological orthodoxy until fairly recent times. Seen in this light, Cosima's temperament is not particularly feminine, in spite of her strong impulse to self-abnegation, which is usually regarded as a feminine characteristic, and was thought of as such by the Abbé who set her off on her chosen course. Cosima, in fact, wore her femininity, as Jacobsen wore naturalism, as an 'outer garment'! Her need to identify with the father is far more than the under-

standable need of the deprived child; her father, after all, was alive, and she had not been bereft of all contact with him, as she had of contact with her mother. The deprivation of the mother is part of the complex of motives, a fact of which Richardson is aware. She is also aware of the effect on Hans of his total separation from his father. Indeed, the conversation during their engagement between Bülow and Cosima, about their early childhoods, indicates pretty clearly the sources of their emotional difficulties:

These had been equally unhappy; and for the same reason . . . Cosette told of the summers spent as a child in the cloister of *Nonnenworth* [*sic*] on the Rhine. 'The last time we were there was the very last we were all together—my father, my mother, we children. Daniel was only a baby; but Blandine and I were old enough to know that something was happening . . . something dreadful. We used to put our fingers in our ears, or run away and hide, so as not to have to hear.'⁹ *They* thought we were too young to understand. And how our little hearts were torn. For our mother would snatch us to her and weep over us and rail against our father, our adored father, who had stormed out of the house, vowing that he would never return. As one day he did not.—Afterwards . . . well, I am confident he did what he thought best for us, and never would I presume to judge him. But how we missed our mother when she left us, no words can tell.' (pp. 71-2)

To be dragged away from the mother, and then detached from the father by a woman jealous of the mother would almost inevitably set up strong emotional currents in relation to the father, especially when the daughters felt insecurity about the father's affection for them, as Blandine suggests. Bülow gives Cosima a similar account of parental discord:

He and his sister, said he, had spent all their young days in an atmosphere of strife. Not the violent, passionate quarrels that blow over and clear the air; but an incompatibility of temperament so profound that the only possible end was the judicial separation that ultimately took place.

'I didn't blame my father; and no one was more glad than I that he found happiness in a second marriage. Of my stepmother and my little stepbrothers I'm exceedingly fond. But it has always been my

⁹ Like Cuffy and his sisters in *Ultima Thule*.

mother I've suffered most for. And I wish to God I could have given her a little of the happiness *she* deserves. (p. 72)

Bülow goes on to describe the oddities of his father, his radical opinions, and his love of freedom in such a way as to make them sound attractive, a way which reveals the incompatibility he has spoken of very clearly: 'Fixed hours or a settled way of living were anathema to him; and all his days he liked nothing better than to sling on a knapsack and disappear. . . . A difficult man, indeed. And yet, now that I'm older . . . Perhaps if I myself once dared to take my nose from the grindstone . . . But there! I mustn't make you afraid of what's before you.' (p. 73)

His words also explain the deep divisions in his feelings towards his parents and the mixture of characteristics they have handed on to him. His father's traits make it possible for Hans to thrive on the chaotic existence his sense of duty to others imposes on him; explain his mother's gibe of 'fahrender Künstler'. But when the crisis in his life comes, it is the stable mother-figure to whom he turns:

'Perhaps after all "*bei Muttern am besten*" as they used to say in Berlin,' he murmured to himself, hearing the door shut behind her [Cosima]. And was not far off weeping at his own words. (p. 304)

Liszt, Bülow, Cosima, and Wagner, then, represent a tangled web of relationships which it is the business of the novelist to display rather than justify. The early history of Cosima and Bülow, with its analogies to that of Richardson's sister and herself goes far to explain her interest in the outcome of their childhood experiences. The closeness of Cosima and Blandine, for instance, is a parallel to the tie between Richardson and her younger sister, and it existed for the same reason.

No glib Freudian clichés will unravel the complexities of the love which made the members of the Liszt quartet so necessary to one another. Liszt inspired great devotion, understandably enough, in all who knew him, and this devotion is what unites them, but although the other three are deeply emotionally involved with him, he remains curiously detached, above their battle, and Wagner finally succeeds in breaking the tie that binds Cosima to him. When he suggests she ask Hans for a divorce, and she hesitates because of the blow it will be to her father, he cries:

'My father, my *father!* The way you say it, he might be the Lord God Himself . . . Answer me this. Do you intend, your whole life long, to be domineered over and dictated to by your father?' (p. 318)

In the battle between Hans, Cosima and Wagner over the question of divorce, it is Liszt to whom Hans looks with hope and Wagner with fear that he will forbid it. Cosima, knowing full well that her father is in any case lost to her since he has entered the Church, is free to confess that she loves him better than anyone in the world—except Wagner; then announces her intention of turning Protestant, so that she can reconcile divorce with her conscience. Having Wagner, she has no more real need of her father. Wagner is father, lover, and genius all in one.

Liszt's refusal, or inability to get involved in all this drama is understandable: he had had enough to do earlier fighting to save himself from being devoured by his Princess; while as Abbé Liszt he could not afford to compromise himself.

Bülow's psychological situation is far more complicated than Cosima's and trite references to an Oedipus complex will not throw much light on it. His emotional ambition seems to have been to restore the parental harmony lacking in his own early life. He certainly married Cosima primarily in order to have Liszt for a father; it is the thought of his filial ingratitude to him that first sets him so strongly against divorce. But he also certainly needed the triangular situation which his love for Cosima and Wagner provided him with, as his relief at being with the 'guilty pair' at Triebtschen demonstrates. His real 'lover' no doubt is Wagner, although there is a strong admixture of the 'filial' in this feeling too; he certainly capitulated to him, as Cosima did, when Liszt detached himself from their lives, and he is torn as she is, between Liszt and Wagner. For example, after a mighty quarrel between Liszt and Wagner, Hans is 'shocked into a fierce denunciation of Wagner's lying ways':

But the personal pull survived even this. And directly a chance came of seeing Richard, of being with him, of answering the appeal for help which, disappointed of a meeting with Liszt, he now sent out: 'It's you, my Hans, I want—and you alone!' everything was forgotten. And so to Paris . . . Hans went. (p. 144)

What relation he wanted Cosima to be to him is less clear. Certainly not a wife;¹⁰ perhaps mother, or sister? Or better still a brother, preferably dead? His 'love' for Cosima is partly accounted for by the fact that she

¹⁰ Bülow was coldly analytical about his marriage to Cosima: 'My wife is a perfect friend to me—any other marriage would be disgusting'. See Eckart (in translation), p. 82.

provided a means of escape from his real mother, and for a time became a 'mother' whom *he* could dominate.

Wagner's attitude to Bülow is a curious compound of the erotic and the paternal; his interest in incest themes is clear enough from the operas, and it is not surprising that Richardson should seize on it. In his isolated splendour at Lake Starnberg, Wagner, meditating on King Ludwig's affection, on his own wife's, on Mathilde von Wesendonck, and the Mathilde who succeeded her, indulges in self-pity at his 'womanless existence'. Then:

But in the meantime?—Ah! he might feel the need of the good Mathilde; but the person he really wanted was another; was Hans, Hans, and again Hans! Hans, king of friends, who alone was capable of understanding the significance . . . of what had happened, and whose joy in it would equal his own. Yes, every nerve in him cried for Hans. (p. 217)

Hans is certainly well aware of Wagner's bisexual nature, with its leaning towards the homosexual; his knowledge of it enables him to aim a last shaft at Cosima as he demands that her presence in Tribschen must be kept a secret until the divorce:

'I haven't a doubt Richard's practical mind will see the advantage of this. For if the news of your . . . shall we say flight? . . . came to the ears of *le roi de Bavière* before they've been properly keyed up, I wouldn't put it beyond him to avenge himself by cutting off supplies.' And with a meaning laugh: 'Everything being fair in love and war.' To hear her own dread spoken aloud was torture. Hurriedly she rose, thinking to make her escape . . . But he was too quick for her.

'From all the portents, Madame de Bülow, I foresee that you will find it as difficult to get your neck out of the marriage-noose as once you did to struggle into it.—Still, whatever happens, I'm sure you'll be generous and give me my due. Will remember me in your devotions as the humble yet effective tool . . . that served you as a means to your end.' (p. 336)

Into this complicated emotional picture (which includes Hans's mother, as well as Cosima's 'absentee' mother), Cosima's brother, Daniel, and her sister Blandine have to be fitted. Both the latter die in the course of the novel, Blandine's death heralded by one of those premonitory visions which emphasise the close bond between the sisters. This bond, and

Bülow's intense attraction to Daniel are part of the pattern of incestuous and homosexual relationships which is the real concern of the book. It comes to life only at the points where this concern is uppermost; in comparison, the purely 'musical' scenes are perfunctory, factitious. One of the most highly-charged scenes is the interior monologue which reveals Bülow's response to the sudden discovery of Wagner's adultery with Cosima. The monologue is an astonishing mixture of the banal and the penetrating. Bülow's stunned surprise at the discovery of his wife's perfidy, his wounded pride at the injury to his name are natural enough; so are his anger and scorn, though the language in which these emotions are conveyed is in the highest degree stilted and strained. Then the real motive for the anger and scorn reveals itself as fear, and the monologue begins to become interesting. What he fears is Cosima's strength, which, he has good reason to know, is more formidable than the strength of any other member of the quartet. Here he once again identifies Cosima with her father, as he had done before he married her:

This was a streak of the father in her: the same unruffled endurance, the same passionless resistance had supported Liszt through trials that would have ground a lesser mortal to powder. (p. 277)

His fear then swings to respect for this strength, to a feeling of gratitude and unworthiness on his own part: the same sorts of feelings that his mother inspired in him, in fact. These in turn lead to self-laceration and acknowledgment of Wagner's superior claim on Cosima's devotion. The coupling of the names in his mind conjures up a picture which exacerbates sexual jealousy; this discharges itself not on Cosima, but on Wagner, until we come to the root of the matter: he is jealous because Cosima has supplanted him:

Oh, Richard, Richard! has *my* love meant so little to you? That you can let it go, give it up without a pang . . . for hers. (p. 278)

It seems plain that as long as Hans can think of Cosima as a woman, as a maternal figure yet subject to his authority, he does not feel himself really threatened by her, though convention expects him to be outraged at her conduct:

For with all his genius Richard was but a man; and weak as wax when it came to women . . . off he went, trumpeting his sufferings to the skies, and vowing that he was utterly done for. Whereas, having

thundered them out in a sublime work of art, he found his system cleared and himself as it were risen anew. (p. 275)

Bülow has a strong need to believe that Wagner holds the Nietzschean view of women as the recreation, the refreshment of the warrior, representing no threat to his serious concerns. While he can believe this, he can rest secure in the triangular relation which suits him. What really undoes him is his knowledge that Cosima's hold over Wagner might be more than the feminine one, that her strength, her 'man's stoicism' march, like Liszt's, with Wagner's essential masculinity (synonymous with his creativity), which Bülow regards as fully accessible only to him. He has had reason to be jealous of Liszt's hold on Wagner; what he is confronted with now is the combination of Liszt-Cosima, against which he has no means of competing. For when Wagner has had enough of the 'Cosima', the 'Liszt' will remain, a totally different state of affairs from his usual amorous relationships:

'For it's no use trying to deceive myself: of you the Master will not tire.' (p. 331)

What is banal about the monologue is largely the language in which it is couched, and the vulgarity of the language is the rock on which the novel founders. Structurally, the book has great strength and is in that respect the musical novel it is sometimes said to be. It follows the pattern of an opera in three acts. The statement and interweaving of subjects in the first 'act' is particularly skilful. From Bülow's passionate (and unsuccessful) desire to have Liszt for a father by marrying Cosima, all the rest follows, and we get the following progression of encounters, or duets: Bülow and Liszt; Liszt and the Princess (the 'sacrificial victim'); Bülow and his mother (the 'sacrificial victim'); Liszt and Cosima (the 'sacrificial victim'); Cosima and Bülow; Frau von Bülow and Liszt (the Mother and the Father); Cosima and Bülow. In this first section Wagner is heard only off-stage, a trumpet sounding: 'Marry and hang the consequences', from far way. With his entry on to the stage in the second act, the real complications begin, when the Tristan 'poison' begins to work. Significantly, it is Hans who is identified with Tristan rather than Cosima; he who is involved 'in bringing it to birth'; she resists its spell until 'Act III'. The real climax of the third act from Cosima's point of view is the union of Wagner and Liszt, the 'two Masters', symbolised by the triumphant performance of *Die Meistersinger* described at the end of the

penultimate chapter. The *Tristan* music is elbowed out by *Die Meistersinger*, as Hans is displaced by Cosima-Liszt:

The 'Hansian fire' found its vent in the re-creating of a music which its conductor ranked above even that of *Tristan* (oh, Richard, Richard, that you, in whom this divine fire burns, should have done what you have to me! . . .) (p. 309)

And Wagner

could not bring himself to believe that the choicest friendship he had known was petering out, a love on which he would have staked his life, dying, if not dead. (pp. 309-10)

But however admirable the architecture, however penetrating the psychological insight, the novel remains unsatisfying because the language of the narrator and the language of the characters have been confused. It is no use trying to justify the language on the grounds that it is vulgar because the characters are vulgar. If that is so, there is all the more reason to make a clear distinction between the language of the narrator and the speech and thought of the characters, since vulgarity easily becomes tedious. It is hard at times to determine the point at which the narrative line becomes the speech or thought of the character, or vice versa. Who is thinking in the following sentences, for instance, Richardson or Bülow? The opening sentence is clearly the narrator's; but the rest, whether Richardson's or Bülow's, shows a deplorable lack of taste, which seems uncharacteristic of Bülow:

Meanwhile he toiled over transcriptions and arrangements. Compared with the loathsome means by which he gained his bread, the drumming into more or less (mostly less) talented youths and maidens *the technique of the ivories* [italics mine], few things came amiss. While the business of converting the Berlin heathen to the Lisztian gospel, the breaking of stony ground for the advent of both Masters would to the end remain a labour of love. (p. 67)

To lack of taste is added a tortuousness of syntax which serves no purpose, as in the following words attributed to Wagner:

This summer in Zürich, however, the Master himself had gone back on an old suggestion—that of the *Oresteia*. And turning to her had said: 'I held it under his nose years ago, presented it to him free of charge. Who didn't reply, give me so much as a thank-you, was our friend Hans.' (pp. 96-7)

Does the cliché at the end of the following paragraph belong to Cosima or the narrator? Its only justification would be to demonstrate that Cosima thinks in clichés, but there is nothing in the context to suggest that such is the purpose. As a comment of the narrator's, it would have been better expunged:

Over this small private tragedy, life closed like water over a dropped stone.—For everyone but her. But she did not murmur. Or all too bitterly resent the rapidity with which those who had wept with her forgot, and allowed themselves to be caught up anew in the whirl, before the wreaths withered on Daniel's grave. *Life had to go on.*

[Italics mine] (p. 143)

It is unlikely that Cosima is thinking about 'wormwood' or 'biting the dust' in the following passage; if she is not, then the language used to convey one of her most painful experiences is that of a novelette. Cosima, remembering the music of *Tristan* heard earlier in the day, is suddenly struck with the thought that some other woman had inspired this music: And only now that herself she had lived through it, and been scorched by it, did she grasp all that this implied. The knowledge was wormwood. She went down under it, bit the dust. Burying her face in her pillows, heaping their soft down round and up and over her head, she surrendered herself to an anguish so acute, a resentment so bitter that her teeth chattered, her hands grew cold. (p. 257)

The same mawkish over-emphasis disfigures the monologue in which Hans broods over his betrayal, distracting the mind from its psychological truth:

Besides, the word duty sidetracked him. For he thought of the last time he had heard her use it—and the memory was too much for him. He broke into a laugh, a savage laugh, which went echoing and re-echoing through the woods. (p. 276)

There is no doubt that the following sentence, which needs no comment, is the author's:

The servant barging in, in rude Bavarian fashion, to say that he was wanted, caught the full brunt of his fury; and beat a quick retreat.

(p. 273)

One after another, worn phrases betray the fact that the writer is growing tired: 'Breath-taking views', 'sound hug', 'iron entered into his soul',

'gave up the ghost', 'den of lions', 'dogs of the press', 'Veils down' and, to crown all, the association of a 'Via Dolorosa' with a 'Sisyphus task'.

Why should a book full of psychological interest display such a lamentable loss of grip on the language? It is possible that Richardson allowed the idiom of the characters, expressing what she felt as their vulgarity, to permeate the style completely in order to increase the 'objectivity' of the book. But this device will succeed in holding the reader's interest only if some suggestion of ironic tone remains perceptible. And this tone hardly survives past the point of Cosima's disillusionment with her marriage. Another possibility is that the Victorian novelesque of the prose might have been intended to obscure the true nature of the subject-matter. It is dangerous, however, to rely on deceiving readers by adopting a style conventionally used for second-rate romance, or by expecting them to accept stereotyped views of romantic musicians. The adoption of the idiom of one's own characters can recoil on the writer.

The frankness with which similar themes are dealt with in *Maurice Guest* and the cloying reticence of *The Young Cosima* are explicable to some extent on practical grounds. *Maurice Guest*, whatever links it has with real life, is a work of fiction. *The Young Cosima* was published only nine years after the death of its heroine, and her grand-children were still alive, and no doubt capable of taking action if they felt offended; indeed, if the war had not intervened they might conceivably have done so.

In the first novel, the theme of homosexuality is important, but its importance is secondary. In *The Young Cosima* it is of primary significance and Richardson knew what she was saying. In a letter to Morchard Bishop in 1939 she alluded to the relationship between Wagner and Bülow thus: I shrank from using the word 'homo-sexual' in a book about that early date, but surely the fact is there for anyone with eyes to see.

In a second letter, a fortnight later, she wrote:

I ought not to have rapped out the word 'homosexuality' in my last letter. I'm apt to forget the jar it may give. My excuse is I read Freud and his works so early in life—before his name was even known in England—that his themes have become commonplace to me.¹¹

¹¹ See the collection of letters to Morchard Bishop in the National Library, Canberra (photocopies in the Mitchell Library, Sydney).

The account of her schoolgirl infatuation in *Myself When Young*, the fictional version of it in *The Getting of Wisdom*, Maurice Guest, the whole tenor of the stories in the second section of *The End of a Childhood*, the few hints given about her unfinished novel 'Nick and Sanny': all these indicate some kind of lasting interest in 'abnormal' sexual relationships. As far as an attitude to such relationships can be discerned in the work itself, it is one of dispassionate acceptance. If any interest was involved beyond the ruthless curiosity of the artist to see how human beings behave in all sorts of situations, it is almost impossible to infer it merely from her treatment of her subjects. A short story like 'The Wrong Turning', with its ambiguous title, may perhaps suggest regret that an unlucky accident should disturb normal emotional development, but the regret is quite detached. 'And Women Must Weep' arouses a feeling of intense sadness at an innate incapacity for a heterosexual relationship, but the author is not involved with the character. Even 'Two Hanged Women', a more overt treatment of the subject (and we must remember a man is supposed to be writing the story), gives no clue to the author's own emotional preferences. Nor does *The Young Cosima*, unless it can be shown that the weight of evidence is against her interpretation of the characters' behaviour and that she is therefore reading into it an explanation which it will not bear. The novel, considered purely as a novel, certainly supports it; if the novel is also considered as biography, Richardson's view of the characters' motivation commands respect as far as their emotions are concerned; evidence of the physical expression of the emotions would add little or nothing to the interest of the situation.

It seems likely that Richardson was attracted to the Cosima story by its similarity at certain points to her own: it is significant that Cosima prefers writing—even translation!—to child-rearing, for example. There are other more important points of contact, in addition to the difficulties of adjustment to sexual roles already pointed out. The familiar escape-from-bondage theme makes its appearance once more, though it is only one note in the orchestration. Even Bülow is tempted by escape, and his rackets life, lived at the beck and call of others, is a form of flight from self, as well as from the mother, to whom he returns in thought in the end.

But Cosima herself feels the marriage with Hans a real prison and longs

for freedom. When she goes back to Paris for a holiday, for once without Hans, she reflects:

Once back in the familiar place that still stood to her for 'home', Cosette found herself haunted by thoughts of escape. Blandine lost to her, her whole inclination was to remain with those who had best known and loved her sister. Her grandmother, too, besought her; Blandine's husband having generously offered to let her bring up Blandine's child. (p. 188)

The move to Paris is vetoed by Liszt when Hans consults him on the matter, but the notion of escape returns more plainly to Cosima's mind, especially when Hans's mother comes back to live with them. Heavy with the child that Hans does not want, Cosima is the constant source of disension between mother and son; and she is more and more driven to take refuge in her room:

Then, it was she, Cosima, who made her escape. (Escape: how the word haunted her!) To sit alone in her bedroom, heavy of mind and of body, and count the hours to her release. (p. 197)

Her marriage to Hans, though its dominant motive was ambition, was also a means of escape from a stifling environment and, following the usual pattern of Richardson's 'escapes', meant only the exchange of one bondage for another.

At a crisis-point of the book, the escape-*motiv* is heard in another form, this time in association with an equally familiar theme in Richardson's work: the relationship between imagination and reality, their indissolubility. Hearing the first notes of the Prelude to *Tristan*, Cosima, as so many other listeners have done, and as Wagner intended that they should, 'passed into another world':

A dream world, that was yet realer than any reality; that, by the sheer intensity of its dreaming, turned the real into the dream. A world in which appearances were unmasked, pretences seen through: where stark truth reigned. Where soul spoke nakedly to soul, stripped of convention's veneer.—A terrible world. For the harsh white light of truth that was its essence, shedding its beams on every hand, lit up one's own poor life with the rest; and, playing full on things one had hugged to oneself as virtues—compromises and concessions, pity and consideration for others—showed them up for the shams they were. And so remorselessly, that all one had hitherto endured, connived at,

made the best of, seemed suddenly to grow unbearable.—From the mirror here held up she would have liked to turn and fly; to put space between herself and the hideous reflection. Whereas she could not stir a finger, for fear of distracting Richard. (p. 254)

Then Wagner's inversion of the Schopenhauerian doctrine, which had so attracted him, his concept of desire as something to surrender to, not escape from, begins to work on her. Richardson refers to it, however, if she herself endorses it, in curious terms:

For she was listening to this daemonic work for the first time in its entirety; and little by little the poison worked . . . And as the death-music climbed and soared, love and death indistinguishably one, she felt a demon wake in her which till now, by every means at her disposal, she had fought to keep under. (pp. 254-5)

She conveniently forgets the terms on which Wagner's music offers the perfection of love, and to which she herself had earlier assented (p. 91), and Richardson does not remind her of them. It is difficult to determine from this passage whether we are to regard the Tristan 'truth', the affirmation of the sole reality of passion, as a 'poison' or not. And in the reflections that follow, it is not passion that finally carries Cosima away, as, considering her sexual life with Bülow, it might understandably have done, but something else, far less appealing:

. . . a still more ruinous thought insinuated itself. And this was that at some future time the same thing might happen again: still another come into Richard's life, and, playing upon his loneliness, his tenderness of heart, take the place that might have been hers. That should have been hers. That *was* hers; that she, and she alone, had been born to fill. And that no one, while there was breath in her body, should steal from her.—And with this, her foundering was over: doubts, guilt, compunction crumbled to dust. For she could not see it happen—and live. (p. 257)

This, once more, is not love, but possessiveness; the possessiveness that Richardson confessed in herself, and drew so often in her characters. It is compounded also with a romantic megalomania: a place 'that she, and she alone, had been born to fill'. The mystic ambition to become the God, through service to the God, that is characteristic of so much nineteenth-century German idealism is plainly at work in Cosima.

It would be rash to conclude that because Cosima saw Wagner as

divine he saw himself in this way. The view we get of Wagner in this book is that seen through the eyes of his adorers, Bülow and Cosima, especially when the ironic gaze of Frau Minna is removed. His vices are slurred over, therefore, as one might expect; but when his merely human virtues are presented, it is those with a special appeal for Richardson herself which are selected for treatment. Our first glimpse of Wagner indeed shows him as behaving with great sensitivity towards a cat. And one of the arguments about the competing claims of art and conventional morality between Cosima and Bülow takes place over an incident with a dog: Wagner befriends a dog, who, taking fright at his ministrations bites him on the thumb. The injury is a disastrous interruption to his work: Hans was beside himself.

‘Just *think* what this means! . . . with him only half way through the first act . . . God! is there no one who can hinder him from making such a blasted fool of himself?’ Cosette demurred. ‘He did it out of kindness.’

‘My dear good woman, a Richard Wagner has no *business* to be kind!’

‘But if you’re born with humane feelings?’

‘Humane tommyrot! What’s a dog—what’s the whole race of dogs compared with a single line of his work?’

Cosette felt unaccountably annoyed. ‘You don’t care for animals yourself, and so you’re not a fair judge—of someone who does.’ (p. 183)

This is not the only ‘dog’ episode in the book. After Cosima’s disastrous lapse of judgment in Munich, when her intervention in Bavarian politics so incenses the populace that Wagner has to flee once more, he leaves accompanied by an ‘old, sick dog’,

And he hadn’t so much as a look for anyone before, contemptuously drowning an official’s protests, he had seen this animal comfortably bedded on a carriage-seat. (p. 269)

It is interesting to compare his presentation in this respect with Schilsky’s. As an ordinary human being, Schilsky, unlike Wagner, has no redeeming features.

Richardson’s love for domestic animals is a trait which often takes obsessive proportions in women who have no inclination for marriage, or whose natural desire for children has been stifled or diverted. It is not so much what this particular inclination of Wagner’s reveals about him that

is interesting, as what selection of it for emphasis tells about the author.

It is evident by this time that *The Young Cosima* is more closely related to Richardson's psychological history than has been admitted and that this history was a complex one. But whatever her troubles may have been, she seems to have risen above them triumphantly by structuring her life in a certain way. Never, in her best work, do they interfere with her ability to see clearly. In her three earlier novels, the subjective element is controlled without faltering. In *The Young Cosima*, the control, for some reason, is unsure enough to confuse the reader's response. At some point along the way, particularly after the death of Frau Minna, the author ceases to stand back from Cosima and the reader is not sure how to take her. The detached irony with which Richardson viewed Cosima early in the book is not sustained, and whether the frantic language is supposed to colour our view of the Wagner circle as part of a satiric intention is not made clear. There may be quite a simple explanation for such uncertainty of control: first, as has been suggested, the risk of libel (though Richardson does not hesitate to refer on page 240 to Wagner's 'young lover, the King'); secondly, the fact that she was, after all, nearly seventy when she finished the book and that it was therefore the work of an old, unwell and tired woman. She had lost the companion of nearly forty years,¹² for whom she had written all her books, and could not profit, as Mrs Kernot pointed out, by his response to it as she wrote. Finally, she might have been more interested in the abnormal psychological situation of the characters than drawn to them as individual people—an interest at variance with her usual preoccupation.

The feverish nature of the prose, its reliance on cliché and hyperbole, on expletives, on little moans in brackets, on exclamation-marks, all suggest an effort to whip up a *feeling* for the people—apart from an intellectual interest—which is not really there. They suggest too an attempt to infuse life into the characters' speech that her inner ear had never really heard,

¹² It is interesting that Richardson should have dedicated *The Young Cosima*, which concerns the effort of three characters to restore their original family pattern through their marriages, to Robertson, who, she said, represented for her a whole family. 'N.' stands for the nickname 'Nubby' which she gave him. *The End of a Childhood* is, equally significantly, dedicated to him, the letters 'B.S.' apparently standing for another nickname, or a term of endearment. See P.R., p. 103.

though her eye had read the language of their letters. There is no doubt, judging by her own correspondence, that the book became a burden to her and that she had little affection for it.

Whatever feeling does exist in *The Young Cosima* has been imposed on it from outside; it does not well up spontaneously, as it does in *Maurice Guest*, from within the creator, compelling the act of creation. If there really is a novel in which Richardson stands in a clinical relation to her characters, it is this one, and not *Richard Mahony*. The interest of the novel lies below the surface of the language, in the clear-sighted perception of the characters' relationships to one another, not in the characters independent of such relationships. In concentrating on these, she has been less than fair to Bülow, Liszt, and Wagner. Wagner, in particular, was not the fool she makes him out to be, as his own voluminous and often misunderstood writings on politics and art reveal. But it is after all Cosima, the young Cosima, she is writing about, and the emotional, not the intellectual, calibre of the men to whom she attaches herself. It may be that Richardson's insight into these people as persons was so acute that it was enough to inhibit her as an artist. Sexual activities, either 'normal' or 'abnormal' are interesting to engage in, but tedious to read about at any length, especially if the writer is obliged to disguise them under a coating of sentimentality. One suspects strongly that when Wagner and his entourage were not making music, or perhaps writing about it, they were crashing bores; that Richardson grew weary of their personal lives knowing full well it was only music that made them permanently interesting, and that the weariness shows. She knew how to keep bores at a distance in her own life, and the woes of Cosima and her men do not move us very deeply. Nor should they, since they did not prevent any of them from fulfilling their proper function. The novel remains without tragic significance, therefore, and its brief excursion into comedy is unsatisfying. Perhaps it was too close to the bone for Richardson to remain long enough amused.

II

The interpretation of *The Young Cosima* offered in this chapter¹³ has since been substantiated by an examination of the source-material held in

¹³ First published in an abridged form in *Australian Literary Studies* (Hobart, May 1970).

the archives of the University of Tasmania. Only the main items in this material have been looked at, with the exception of Richardson's copy of Wagner's letters. To read through all the material in German would take more time than I have to give to it.

The most heavily annotated and underlined of the biographies is *Cosima Wagner: Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild* by Richard Count du Moulin Eckart, published in Munich in 1929 and dedicated to Wagner's first important biographer Houston Stewart Chamberlain. The first volume, as one might expect, is the most copiously marked. This deals with events in Cosima's life up to the death of Wagner; the second volume with her long widowhood. But though the marginal notes to the second volume are sparse, they are interesting, since they read as if they confirm Richardson's diagnosis of the character of the young Cosima. In this second volume, Richardson notes constantly Cosima's jealousy and her wish to organise everything, the most important of these comments being the one on page 398, where she translates Eckart's statement: 'As a child she wanted to be a Pope or a journalist', adds two exclamation marks to it, and comments: 'Yes, this explains her!!' Further down the margin appears the comment: 'Always in the background, but always in everything'. Then against the following paragraph on page 209 appears the comment 'C. herself at last!':

Dieses Jahr [1888] aber waren die Festspiele ein grosses und freudiges Erlebnis. Wahnfried öffnete seine Pforten und Frau Cosima, die oben im Festspielhaus alles lenkte und leitete, war hier wie dort 'die Herrin von Bayreuth vor der sich alles neigte'.

[This year, however, the Festival was a great and joyful experience. Wahnfried [Wagner's home] opened its doors and Frau Cosima, who, up in the Festival Hall directed and guided, was here, as there 'The Lady of Bayreuth before whom everything bowed down'.]

Other marginal comments are equally tart, e.g., page 81: 'Cosima in her element as boss'; 'what a manager!' Page 84: 'She had to have everything'. Nearly all the marginalia referring to Cosima are hostile in tone; the note of sympathy, which is on occasions patronising, is reserved for Bülow and Wagner. The comment 'Poor Hans!' or 'Poor old Hans' occurs very often indeed, as it does in the novel. There are frequent pitying references to Cosima's grown-up daughters who, she thinks, are under their mother's thumb.

In the first volume, Eckart's account of the life of the three children Blandine, Cosima, and Daniel arouses her pity when it deals with Liszt's attempt to detach them from their mother, Marie d'Agoult, and grapple them to himself. 'How they must have been torn!' Richardson writes in the margin of page 79—a comment which recalls her own bewilderment about allegiances in different circumstances. But a little later, the critical attitude to Cosima asserts itself and beside an account of her virtues on page 106 occurs the note 'What a prig for 18!'

On page 129 occurs the ominous note: 'Then she married simply from ambition'; on the next page occurs the comment, against the description of Cosima's desire that Bülow should be a composer: 'How awful to be driven thus if you hadn't it in you'; and on page 132: 'Should think she'd kill his creative power altogether. B. was to equal Wagner'; 'Wasn't going to have a stick-in-the-mud for a husband'.

Richardson's handling of the situation between Cosima and Bülow shows that she is fully aware of its similarity to that between Marie d'Agoult and Liszt. The likeness is pointed out by Eckart when he speaks of:

great intellectual demands made by the woman, or rather by her deep-rooted longing after creative artistic power in the partner of her life.
(p. 112 of Phillips's translation)

The marginal notes from time to time indicate the jealousy which existed between Liszt's two mistresses over his creative ability, and there is no doubt that Richardson takes the view that Cosima became possessive about Wagner's. Cosima's ambitions for Bülow arouse Richardson's contempt more than once: 'She chose his friends for him!' she notes on page 130, and again: 'the time-server!' On page 232, against the account of Cosima's bringing Liszt and Wagner together again, she writes 'One of the first of her masterings!' And on page 239 'Cosima a born manager . . . never to let go of Wagner's hand again!' Other comments of the kind include 'She was a born school-marm!' (p. 283), 'She who became the bossiest of bosses!' (p. 445), and against Wagner's comment that she was 'Die Kapellmeister seines Lebens', she writes, 'A good name for her!' She speaks of her interfering in Wagner's work (p. 597); of the 'hard streak in her', and against a passage on page 745 about Wagner's tearing up a letter when she interrupted his reading of it appears the note:

This throws an interesting sidelight on them. He does *not* always want to be managed by her.

Perhaps most revealing of all is the note pencilled beside the photograph of Cosima in her seventies, opposite page 608. The expression on her face has elicited the comment: 'Das Schwankleid?' an untranslatable noun, connoting jesting, farce, perhaps 'fake-sorrow'.

Towards the end are several marginalia referring to Wagner's wish to be left alone, to the increasing tension, as he became older, to Cosima's parroting of Wagner's ideas and to her wish to know everything in her zeal to manage.

The notes, in short, leave one in no doubt that in 'the young Cosima' Richardson found the seeds of the older Cosima; the Cosima who came into her own as the mistress of Bayreuth, who ceased to be the divided creature she had once called herself and found a sphere large enough for her talents. Of herself Cosima had written (p. 194) that she was: ein amphibisches Wesen, halb Künstlerin, halb passiv, eine gemischte Rolle zu der wir Frauen verdammt sind.

[an amphibious being, half artist, half passive, a mixed role to which we women are doomed]

Eckart informs us that her mother's ambitions for her were that she should be a concert pianist and that these were deliberately frustrated by Liszt. Richardson notes that she modelled herself as far as she could on her novelist-mother, but that she had a 'father-complex'. This 'complex' was probably due to her strict religious training which had taught her to obey her father blindly. By marrying Wagner and after his death appropriating his work, Cosima triumphantly reconciled the mother-father dualism in her nature. Richardson does not show this resolution in her novel, but she provides enough evidence for the reader to deduce it, and her marginalia in both volumes of Eckart's life leave no doubt about her own interpretation.

The marginalia referring to Bülow and Wagner make it pretty clear that Richardson saw Cosima as taking the initiative in entering into their lives. Bülow's love for Wagner is noted early, and so is Wagner's unwillingness to come between the young married pair, while towards the end of the first volume appears the note 'How Wagner really missed him [Hans]' and again 'Poor old Wagner—he wanted Hans. Hans and Liszt: they were the two he missed most', while in the margin of page 975 she

notes: 'He wanted Ludwig and Hans'. Richardson's comments on the accounts of the Ludwig episode are also revealing. On pages 294 and 295 occurs a letter from King Ludwig to Cosima, pouring out his passionate love for Wagner and his wish to serve him: 'I die when I have to live without him'. The marginal note runs:

Really funny this: Ludwig wants to abdicate to devote himself to Wagner . . . What would Cosima think of this, who had the same plans?

The note throws much light on Bülow's barbed hints about Ludwig's jealousy towards the end of the novel. Richardson comments more than once on Cosima's jealousy of Wagner's feeling for Hans and on Wagner's jealousy of hers for her father. The marginalia and other material suggest that there was something deliberate in Wagner's treating Cosima 'like a child'. Not long after their marriage Eckart quotes Wagner as saying that Cosima is 'Elizabeth, Isolde, Brünhilde and Eva in one person and I have married you'. Richardson comments:

Wagner says of her that she is saint (E) lover (I) daughter (B) and child (E) in one person. (Vol. I, p. 527)

Like Robertson for Henry Handel, Cosima represented for Wagner a whole family, a fact which she recognises in one of her last notes, on page 983:

No-one more of a family man than he. How he must have missed it in earlier life!

On this particular point, Richardson read and annotated Louise Brink's *Women Characters in Richard Wagner*, a Columbia University thesis published as a monograph in the *Nervous and Mental Diseases* series, No. 37, in 1924. The copy was presented to her by the author. Richardson's markings in this and other source-material suggest very strongly that she was still trying to understand herself,¹⁴ as well as her characters, and that

¹⁴ Cosima tells (Eckart, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 685) how she and Wagner once spoke of men, women, and love, and how she told Wagner he was the only man she had known who believed in love. Wagner replied: 'Den meisten Männern fehlt die Sammlung. Dadurch sind sie zu zynisch.' There is no exact English equivalent for *Sammlung*. Roughly translated the sentences mean: 'Most men lack the capacity to concentrate or commit their forces. Because of that they are too cynical.' The sense is that a woman can

even though she was critically detached from them, in some obscure way she identified herself with them.

The monograph takes as its starting-point Wagner's (pre-Freudian!) belief that 'the impulse towards sexual love between parent and child is fundamental to human nature' (p. 33), and the Ring Cycle is analysed to show how this belief is translated into art. The writer speaks of Wagner's unconscious longing 'to be a child again in love that precipitated [him] into the life-long misery of ill-mated marrying'. On page 58 Richardson marks passages about the father and brother fixations 'through which women have to pass to reproductive freedom'. These fixations are seen by Brink as being demonstrated in the relationships between Siegmund and Sieglinde, and Wotan and Brünnhilde; she regards Wotan and Alberich as the good and the bad side of the 'father'. The view fits in with Eckart's accounts. He remarks on the physical likeness between Marie d'Agoult and Liszt and refers to them as Siegmund and Sieglinde, implying that (in Brink's terms) they had not progressed to sexual maturity (Eckart, trans., p. 105). There is reason for thinking, then, that Richardson saw not only Bülow and Cosima, but Wagner also as attempting in their sexual arrangements to restore the family harmony and unity of their earliest days, not only the relationships with their parents, but those with their brothers and sisters. It is strange, for example, in view of Cosima's adoration of Wagner, to find her remarking on Blandine's death: 'I shall never love again as I loved her' (Eckart, trans., p. 148). None of these people, it seems, had 'progressed' to a full adult heterosexual love between equals.

Of the earlier biographies used by Richardson that of Julius Kapp, published in 1922, provides particularly interesting marginalia. She notes most of all Kapp's references to Wagner's loneliness and his inalienable pessimism. In a passage about his exile in Zurich she underlines Wagner's words:

organise her whole life around a man, but a man cannot in the same way organise his around a woman. In the margin, Richardson has written 'C(osima) on die Liebe and W(agner) on me'. Her remark seems strange in view of what has been said about her obsessionist attachments, but these are not incompatible with an incapacity for total generous giving in love, if they spring from a basic ontological insecurity.

An dieser lebentotenden Einsamkeit muss jemand wie ich endlich zugrunde gehen.

[In this living-death loneliness anyone like myself must perish in the end]

Against the sentence Richardson has pencilled the revealing remark: 'How well I know it!' The passage continues:

Die Stimmungen zur Arbeit kommen mir bei meinem öden Leben immer seltener, ohne alle und jede Anregung für meine Kunst werde ich es mit der Zeit nicht mehr durchführen können. Solange ich Bücher schrieb und Verse machte, möchte es gehen; aber für die Musik brauche ich ein anderes Leben; ich bedarf die Musik selbst; so aber gleiche ich jemanden, der Feuer machen will, und wohl das Licht, nicht aber das Holz dazu hat. (pp. 51-2)

[The inclinations to work come to me still more seldom in my isolated life, without any stimulus at all for my art I shall not be able with time to accomplish anything any more. So long as I was writing books and making verses, things were possible; but for music I need another life; I need music itself; so therefore I am like someone who wants to make a fire, and indeed light, but has not the wood for it.]

Richardson also underlines a passage on page 52, referring not only to Wagner's loneliness, but to his struggle against suicide:

Ich glaube nicht mehr, und kenne nur noch eine Hoffnung: einen Schlaf, so tief, so tief, dass alles Gefühl der Lebenspein aufhört.

[I believe no more, and know only one hope: a sleep so deep, so deep, that all feeling of life's pain ceases.]

It is interesting to reflect that she made little or no use in the novel of this significant material and one suspects that its meaning for her was personal rather than professional. Moreover, such material would have dislodged Cosima from the centre of interest.

Karl von Glasenapp's life, published in 1908, is also heavily annotated and again the stress is on Wagner's loneliness.

In *Hans von Bülow in Leben und Wort* by Marie von Bülow, published in 1905, the marginal notes frequently express pity for Hans and Frau Minna, Wagner's wife. The most interesting comment perhaps in view of what has been said in the chapters on *Maurice Guest* occurs on page 223. Against a remark of Bülow's beginning 'Die Kunst steht über alle Moral' [Art stands above all morality] is written 'Oh poor Hans!'

Out of context, the remark is ambiguous, but the general tone of the marginalia, as far as I have examined them, seems to me to indicate that Richardson did not subscribe unreservedly to this view and that she had strong reservations about Cosima's rationalisation of her actions. On page 433 of Eckart, for example, she heavily underlines and repeats in the margin Wagner's words about the death of Schnorr, the magnificent tenor who first sang Tristan:

Die Kunst ist vielleicht ein grosser Frevel und glücklich sind wohl die zu preisen, die gleich den Tieren nichts von ihr ahnen.

[Art is perhaps a great crime, and they are to be considered fortunate who, like animals, have no presentiment of it.]

Moreover, her marginal references to Cosima's lack of humour and to the ponderous seriousness with which the circle of musicians took themselves as artists reveal her doubts about a morality based on aestheticism.

Something remains to be said about certain important omissions Richardson has made in the novel from the facts she noted down in Eckart. She makes much, for example, of Cosima's bringing together of Wagner and Liszt, but nothing at all of her managing to bring about a meeting between her mother and father. The fact that Bülow was very friendly with Marie d'Agoult and admired her as a writer, under her pseudonym of Daniel Stern, is ignored. So is Cosima's friendship with Luise von Bülow, Hans's stepmother, who was gifted with 'second sight'. Richardson underlines, but does not use, a highly dramatic episode here. At the first meeting between the stepmother and the newly-married pair, Luise had a hallucination of another man's figure standing beside Hans!

Again, Richardson makes Frau von Bülow much more of a tyrant to Liszt's daughters than Eckart indicates. According to him, Frau von Bülow entertained regularly and the girls met Hans's friends at her home, which was frequented by 'all musical Berlin'. Richardson does not mention that Frau von Bülow was first attracted by the idea of a marriage between Hans and Cosima, though an inward antagonism developed later. She plays down the lighter side of Hans, who seems to have been a gay companion for the young girl, as well as the genuine motherly solicitude displayed by Frau von Bülow. She does not mention how Cosima held court in her own home in the Anhalter Street in Berlin; what is depicted is more a *solitude à deux*, as it was in *Richard Mahony*.

Eckart has Liszt hurrying to the bedside of his dying son; Richardson

has him reluctant to go until forced to by Princess Carolyne out of a fear that Cosima will deny Daniel the proper Catholic preparation for death. It is possible that on this point Richardson was correct; Eckart, whose father was a pupil of Liszt's, shows a strong tendency to deify him, which evidently irritated Richardson, to judge by her comments. She also accuses Eckart of muddling Wagner's letters.

The general effect of the omissions is to focus the attention on the relationships of the three central characters. Even Ludwig, who loomed so large in real life, is a shadowy, off-stage figure in the novel; we are never really brought face to face with him, and the love that Wagner felt for Ludwig is treated with less seriousness than that between Wagner and Hans. Yet, in spite of the critical tone which pervades the notes on Cosima from beginning to end, and which is also present in the early part of the novel, there is much about Cosima's thinking which would have been congenial to Richardson, however distasteful she found her personality.

Eckart quotes, for instance, Cosima's words to her novelist friend Alfred Meisser, on page 194 of the first volume, about the subject of pain; she regards it as the sole content of life and work the only anodyne: "Work is victory", said Emerson.' Richardson takes note of the opinion in the margin; similar words about pain must still have been ringing in her ears from *Ultima Thule*.

She also underlines, with the marginal note 'Cos. on Eternity', Cosima's words in a letter of condolence to a friend about the death of the painter Feuerbach:

I hope he has returned, to that peace whence he took his being, to the wonderland of Night, the world of non-being, from which he would not wish to return. To me, as to you, individuals are everything, and I believe of individuals that they are removed, redeemed from the eternal process of change and becoming. (p. 901)

This has none of the clarity and precision which characterises Mahony's vision, and though it has something in common with Richardson's own ideas it is not an exact parallel. Nevertheless the subject-matter would have interested her, though the robust common sense of Wagner's 'Thank God we know nothing of what comes after death', which she notes, would have appealed more to her undogmatic frame of mind.

One of the saddest of the underlined passages occurs on page 975 when

Wagner expresses to Cosima his longing for death. Richardson comments: 'Then the end of it all was bitterness!' She also notes Wagner's dictum on page 982 that, in order to exist in life, one must be dead.

In passing it might be noted that the gushing style of Eckart (and also that of his translator) has left its mark on the novel. Some phrases from Volume I have been incorporated almost intact, e.g., 'mit jenem leisen und feinen Lächeln' (p. 158) becomes in the novel 'with the small fine smile that just touched the corners of her lips' (p. 229). There is no doubt that Richardson read both the German original and Volume I of the translation very carefully.

The novel uses only a fraction of the material Richardson noted, but the notes as a whole support her psychological presentation of Cosima. What remains a mystery is the novel's lapse into sentimentality after Cosima has decided to be unfaithful to Hans, in face of the constant marginal noting of her sentimentality. The only explanation is that Richardson's head was in the book, but her heart was not. Or was it perhaps that her head was in the book when she began it, but her heart took over? Her intellect shines sharp and keen as she makes her notes. Why did its keenness desert her as she worked her way deep into the story? Was it because she understood too well Cosima's search for a composite father-figure who would leave her free to realise her mother's ambitions for her?¹⁵ Did she also understand Bülow too well: his terror of the physical side of marriage, as well as his tendency to dissipate his energies? Did she know Wagner's inner loneliness of spirit too well?—so that in the end she found it impossible to continue smiling at any of them?

To come to certain conclusions about whether her interpretations were impartial or not would take many years of work on the part of a scholar who is fluent in German and completely familiar with the vast Wagner literature. All that has been attempted here is to make sense of the text of the novel as it stands and to suggest that it is an important part of the total *oeuvre*, not a departure in a new direction.

¹⁵ A letter to Mrs Theis, for example, commenting on material given for an article on the novelist, reveals Richardson's preoccupation; the sentence 'My parents wanted me to study music' contains the word 'Mother' in brackets and crossed out. See *National Library Bibliography*, item 730.

Chapter 12

Death can work no change. The individuality is no more affected by it than by stepping from one room to another, or by the garments it wears.

HUDSON TUTTLE



The Outer Garment

I

ACCORDING TO Nettie Palmer, personal reticence was to Henry Handel Richardson a literary principle:

'I must have a mask to write behind,' she had said once, definitely, and had written behind Maurice Guest, Richard Mahony, Louise, or Cosima, working out their characters as if from her own being. (N.P., p. 176) Mrs Palmer's observation is true enough, as should by now be clear; the pity is that she did not herself follow up the consequences of it.

One of the most mysterious of Richardson's masks is the one she assumes in her last short story, 'The Coat', published in *Good Housekeeping*, February 1940, and consequently not included in *The End of a Childhood*. It was first published in Australia in *Southerly*, No. 1, 1963. The quotations are drawn from this source.

'The Coat' makes use of one of the most complex, far-fetched of Spiritualist beliefs, that of the gradual disengagement of the soul from its two envelopes: the outer garment, gross matter, what we are accustomed to call 'the body', and the second garment, or *perisprit*; this also detaches itself from the body and follows the soul, 'which thus finds itself always clothed in a garment'. An account of this process can be found in W. D. C. Denovan's *The Evidences of Spiritualism*, in which Part XIII contains a translation from the French of Allan Kardec's *Theory of the Physical Manifestations*. The translator is, as Denovan says, 'that devoted Victorian Spiritualist Dr C. W. Rohner'—the Dr Rummel or Barambogic in *Ultima Thule*. The following paragraph has relevance to Richardson's story:

. . . the refined matter which constitutes the second *enveloppe* of the spirit disengages itself only little by little from the grosser carnal body, and not by any means suddenly. Thus the bonds which unite the soul and the body are not instantaneously broken by death. This is the scientific explanation of the death-struggle, during which the disengagement of the soul from the body takes place; and the spirit does not recover the entire freedom of its faculties and the clear consciousness of itself until this disengagement is complete. Experience, moreover, proves that the duration of this disengagement varies with different individuals. With some it is wrought in three or four days, whilst in others it is not entirely completed after several months. Thus the destruction and decomposition of the body is not sufficient to effect the final separation; and this is the reason why some spirits say: 'I feel the worms gnawing me.' With some persons this separation commences before the death; they are those who, during this life, have become elevated in thought and purity of sentiment above things material; death in these finds only feeble ties between the soul and the body, and these ties are almost instantaneously broken. The more material life a man has led, the more he has been absorbed in the pleasures and preoccupations of his individuality, the more tenacious will, invariably, these ties be found; it would almost seem that the refined matter of the *perispit* has become identified with the compact matters of the carnal body, and that there exists between them a kind of molecular cohesion, on account of which they are only slowly and laboriously separated.

During the first moments which follow death, when there still exists a certain union of the body and *perispit*, the latter preserves much better the outlines of the corporeal form of which, so to speak, it reflects all the different shades and characteristic features . . . A man who had been murdered told us: 'Do you see the wound inflicted on me over the heart?' He thought we could see him. (pp. 665-6)

Richardson's story adapts some of the material of the kind described in Kardec's article; whether she read it or not is neither here nor there; the ideas, which can be found in Swedenborg, became part of the body of 'psychical' theory. Her constant use of the word 'garment' in relation to the body has been noted throughout this study.

The story concerns a woman whose life has been one long lie, and

who, in hospital after being run over by a bus, struggles during the death-throes to face the naked truth about herself and her marriage.

The theme is conveyed in terms of a simple domestic incident. The woman, Katherine, has promised to accompany a friend down from the country on a shopping expedition in London. The friend, Margaret, is the epitome of honesty:

Just the same old sobersides. The same old face, too; nature unadorned, not a touch of makeup; country from hat to shoes. (p. 52)

The friend is unmarried and well-to-do; she is also content with her lot. Katherine, therefore, motivated apparently by envy, has felt it necessary to build up for Margaret the myth that her marriage is happy, that her husband is successful and that their circumstances are prosperous. Although the November day is warm she is wearing a smart fur coat, which she hopes Margaret will take to be the symbol of the husband's devotion and generosity:

'He paid a ruinous price for it—he's a regular spendthrift where I'm concerned.' (p. 52)

The husband is supposed to meet them for lunch, but—'no Harry met them', and Katherine explains:

'It looks as if he hadn't been able to get off. He's quite an important person in the office nowadays, you know.' (p. 53)

Margaret's next question provokes a curious rejoinder:

'No children?'

What next! 'Good Lord, no! Harry's much too considerate. You've no *idea* what an old silly he is about me.' (p. 53)

The dryness, the lack of acceptance in Margaret's steady gaze make Katherine anxious to part from her:

'... it looks to me as if it's going to turn foggy. That's the danger of such fine mornings at this time of the year.' (The danger, too, that trains might not run, and she be forced to take Margaret home with her. Oh, *anything* but that! The 'charming bungalow', the 'spacious garden.') (p. 53)

Her anxiety makes her careless:

Still rattled, she stepped off the pavement just as the lights changed; and Margaret wasn't sharp enough. (p. 53)

At this point the story ceases to move in the realm of sober reality and takes on the quality of dream. Katherine looks back to see what Margaret

is doing and as she does so is run over by a great red bus. She is quite unaware that it is she who has been desperately injured and thinks her friend has disappeared or been hurt. The rest of the story is told through the semi-consciousness of the dying, or 'dead' Katherine:

She tried to call out; but no voice came. And even if it *was* Margaret, she couldn't go back. Accidents terrified her; the sight of blood turned her sick. And so, palsied with fear, her heart pounding fit to split her chest, she stood and watched the traffic pile up . . . Then, the bell of an ambulance, which, still walled in by people, loaded its fearful burden and drove off . . . Finding her voice, she turned to a man who stood by and asked if he could tell her who had been hurt. But he didn't seem to hear her. A kind-faced woman, however, gave her an odd look and a smile in passing, and, without being asked, said gently: 'It's all over. Don't be frightened.' (p. 54)

An interesting autobiographical point emerges again in the phrase 'Accidents terrified her'. Olga Roncoroni's allusion to Richardson's lack of sympathy for illness, to her horror of seeing a man or a horse fall down in the road has already been pointed out, and these traits have been traced back to her childhood experiences. On the other hand, if we can credit Olga Roncoroni's testimony about her behaviour at boxing matches,¹ the sight of blood in those circumstances did not turn her sick, presumably because she felt no moral responsibility.

Fear of being involved with Margaret and her accident makes Katherine's brain 'fumble with thoughts of escape'. Then she reflects that there might be a letter from her to Margaret at her country home and that she will be tracked down in any case. She begins to walk away: 'to follow, as if drawn, in the direction of the ambulance'.

The fog she had feared earlier begins to come down:

Still, she plodded on, in growing bewilderment: the coat alone remaining true to itself and making a labour of each step. (p. 55)

She sits down to rest on a seat and is joined by a strange man, who, when she tells him she has lost the friend she came out with, offers to help her:

'You? How, I'd like to know!'

'Well, if you would perhaps remove your coat . . .'

¹ See P.R., pp. 72, 73.

Under the impression that he is a thief, she fastens it more closely round her: But he made no move to attack her. And again some inner voice urged her to go on speaking. 'The very idea of me sitting here without it! I should be much too . . .'—'bare' was the word that presented itself, but she choked it back, it sounded so odd, and said 'cold' instead, though she was perspiring freely.

'As you will,' said the man. And evidently took the hint; for when she looked round next he had gone. (p. 55)

Another figure, dressed in bygone fashion, looms out of the mist, a woman, who also offers to help her. To her surprise it is her mother. Katherine rebukes her for being out in the fog with her rheumatism; the mother tells her not to worry:

'It's you we have to think of'.

Which was mother to the life. Always ready to belittle herself and her ailments. (p. 56)

(The characteristic, we notice, of Richardson's own mother.) Katherine begins to unburden herself of her worries about 'the accident, her own lucky escape, her fears for Margaret, her laming uncertainty':

But when she stopped speaking, in place of the expected sympathy, the sound, motherly advice, all she heard was 'But first take off your coat.' (p. 56)

And in response to Katherine's protest, the mother adds:

'You needn't mind being bare before me, little Katie.' There!—the word was out, and said not by her, but another. (p. 56)

The use of the diminutive awakens remembrance and she becomes panic-stricken: she knows her mother has been dead 'for years and years'. The mother succeeds in calming her and divests her of the coat:

. . . bringing to light in all its meanness, the shabby, out-of-date dress that was her sole wear. (p. 57)

The fog begins to lift, but she finds herself not where she thought she was, in Portland Place:

No old Lister with his sideboards, no rows of cars and taxis. Nor houses either: just a wide, open, desolate space, with a single seat planked down in the middle of it. (p. 57)

Then comes the open acknowledgment of that fear of death which is at the heart of all Richardson's work, from the conversation between Heinz Krafft and Maurice Guest onwards to this last story.

Again she was on her feet, went raging up and down, her bunched hands shaken convulsively, in defiance, in despair.

'I won't, I won't be dead, I tell you I *won't!*—Besides, it's preposterous, it's insane. Never have I felt so alive!' (p. 57)

The mother encourages her to talk on: 'You have many things to say to me'. The confession begins to come out, reluctantly, as the mother forces her to lay bare the motives for her actions, to drop all her pretences, until she finally admits her hatred for Margaret, her gladness that she was run over. During the confession, the sensations of dying, the singing in the ears, the humming, the wailing like the noise of winds are an eerie accompaniment which rises to a climax of a 'chorus of screeches' as she utters the words:

'Very well then, if it's not her, if it's me, and I'm dead, then I'll stop dead. And the dead don't talk.' (p. 58)

She has to shout the rest of her confession against the din:

'The only single thing I had better than her was my coat! . . . Though it nearly did for me. You were right, everyone of you, when you told me to take it off.' (p. 59)

Terror grows in her and a sense of urgency and, screening her face with her mother's dress, she strips herself naked at last:

'I'm a liar and—and a thief . . . Nothing I told Margaret was true. Harry never gave me this coat. He never gives me anything. He doesn't care a hang for me. Nor I for him. I hate him and despise him. I only took him because there was no-one else.' (p. 59)

She goes on to tell how she schemed and stole money from her husband's drawer to buy the coat:

'But surely as much for *his* sake as mine? That Margaret shouldn't know how mean, how despicably mean he is? No, wait, stop, that's not true. But at least I meant to sell it again after she went, and put the money back. Or didn't I? Oh God, I don't know, don't know any more what's true and what isn't . . . Oh, just one day more, *only* one, to put things right! . . .' (p. 60)

Her mother begins to disappear, and though Katherine clings to her, finds she is clinging to nothing. She tries to follow the figure into the mists: . . . and, as she did, caught her foot in the coat, lying on the ground. And some impulse made her stoop to this, pick it up and drag it after her, by one sleeve. (p. 60)

But it was too late. Only the echo of an echo of her mother's voice comes to her from far off: 'I shall be waiting for you . . . be waiting.'

The scene changes to the hospital ward, with the nurse watching, momentarily afraid that the shockingly injured woman might be regaining consciousness. But the next minute she is telling Margaret, who is waiting in the corridor, as gently as possible, that her friend is gone and that it is 'better so'. She repeats some of the fragments of sentences she had heard but couldn't make much of: 'I'm afraid you won't either':

But, on the coming face to face with the shabby careworn little man, of the sloping shoulders and the limp, uncertain movements, that was Harry, Margaret, deeply pitying, believed she understood. (p. 61)

The story is powerful and original in concept, and curiously haunting: Richardson's most overt use of a fusion of realism and fantasy. The transmutation of the coat image from a piece of realistic description to the universal symbol of mask or disguise, and of the discarded body, is skilfully accomplished without loss of relevance to the characterisation of Katherine. The story begins with the image, sombre and foreboding:

The train was late, and she shifted uneasily from foot to foot as she stood, the coat clinging and dragging like the water-logged clothes on a drowning man. (p. 52)

But the simile is explained perfectly naturally; the coat is a burden because the day has turned out unexpectedly hot; Margaret's comment: 'But isn't it rather heavy for such a warm day?' is quite matter-of-fact; simile and comment form a solid basis for what is to follow. The last glimpse of Katherine in her vision, picking up the coat and dragging it by one sleeve, is not only in character—it expresses her wish to reassume her disguise, her fear of death—but it also shows us the general reluctance of mortal men to put off the flesh, their unwillingness to discard the masks that they have to assume to make the flesh tolerable.

There are commonplaces of language in this story, but this time they do not jar. They are a means of conveying the mediocrity of spirit, the emotional niggardliness and commonplaceness of the character. To take a random example: the loneliness and mystery of the place that Katherine took to be Portland Place would be better conveyed, especially aurally, if the words 'planked down' had been omitted:

' . . . nor houses either; just a wide, open, desolate space, with a single seat [planked down] in the middle of it'.

But the words 'planked down' carry the tone of voice of the woman, its persistent resentment that things are as they are. It should also be said, however, that the words belong to Richardson's own vocabulary, if we are to judge this by the language of *Myself When Young* and some of the letters; even the note of resentment is there at times, but it is firmly under control; the writer had learned the art of self-deflation well before the age of her last-created character.

To speculate about the possible relevance of the story to her own life would be idle. If it has any meaning beyond that which the symbol of the coat indicates, it could be only a painful one, and the weight of the evidence at the moment is that Richardson did not have to pretend that her marriage was happy, even though in some respects it may have been curious. Nevertheless, one or two features of the story raise questions in the mind. First, the general presentation of a selfish, demanding wife, rationalising her selfishness as considerateness on the part of the husband, particularly in relation to child-bearing. Secondly, the uncertainty about whether the husband's failures were due to innate meanness or simply inability to meet the demands made on him in the circumstances of his life. The last paragraph of the story leaves the weight of sympathy with the husband. Thirdly, the recurrence, in Katherine's very last words, of the familiar *motif*, the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction: Oh God, I don't know, don't know any more what's true and what isn't . . .

Allotting blame to one or other partner in a real-life marriage is always a risky business. It is easy to surmise that Richardson felt guilty about her childlessness, but surmise is checked by the memory of the short story, 'The Professor's Experiment': it is just possible that the demands of scholarship played their part in the situation, that Robertson himself did not want children. On the second point, Richardson's own words at the time when Robertson was dangerously ill with influenza after World War I indicate that she was sensible of the efforts made by her husband to provide her with material comfort and emotional security; she was certainly aware that she owed everything to him, that she had every reason to be forever grateful to his unquestioned generosity. Yet there is something curiously forbidding about the terms in which she describes her decision to leave the London house after her husband's death. Writing to Oliver Stonor (Morchard Bishop) only about a fortnight later (13 June

1933), in what seems to have been a reply to a letter of condolence, she says: 'I am of course giving up this big house now that the one who provided the money for its upkeep is no longer here'. The notion of a *beloved* husband as a 'provider' is not usually uppermost in the mind at this stage of a bereavement. The letters written to Stonor during Robertson's last illness also disclose a note of petulance about the quantity of correspondence that has suddenly devolved upon her. As one ponders the matter, trying to fit the pieces into the official pattern of mutual devotion, Liszt's impassioned speech in *The Young Cosima* against self-sacrifice obtrudes itself. Is it possible that the burden of feeling eternally grateful became too much for her? Did Robertson perhaps, with his total commitment to scholarship, have reason to feel grateful to the kind of wife who made it possible? Superimposed on the vision of Liszt is the memory of the young Laura, unable to account for telling 'nasty tarradiddles about people who had been so kind to you'. And on that again, Richardson's pleasure expressed in a letter to Jacob Schwartz (11 March 1932) at the reviewer who:

actually discovered a little of what I meant in *The Getting of Wisdom*, even to the 'creative lie'.

And so back to Katherine who couldn't tell any more what was true and what wasn't about her married life. Can we be sure, in other words, where fiction ends in the letters and where fact disappears in the fiction? Did Richardson adopt a mask, not only when writing her novels, but also, like Katherine, when writing even to an intimate friend?

When the letters she wrote to Mrs Kernot are available for inspection, we may come closer to a full understanding of the woman. Judging by Mrs Kernot's replies, she seems to have revealed to her aspects of her inner life in a way she did to no other correspondent, though one cannot rule out the disturbing possibility that she was capable of writing what she thought Mrs Kernot might be interested to read, just as the young Laura went on telling her school-friends what she thought they wanted to hear. Still, there is a directness and simplicity about Mrs Kernot's replies, which make it unlikely that she could have been deceived for very long, and the correspondence after all stretches over a period of nearly forty years! The two friends met when Richardson visited Australia in 1912, and again in London later.

It is not surprising that Mrs Kernot was a favourite correspondent:

there is much of the sensitivity of the artist revealed in her own letters. These make it obvious that she kept up with the literature of her own day and her own country, without producing any sense of the solemn 'professionalism' of the 'woman of letters' that at times irritated Richardson in another correspondent. The correspondence begins after the publication of *The Getting of Wisdom*, with Mrs Kernot's detection of the real author. She seems to have been the original of 'Cupid' in the novel, if the occurrence of the word 'Infant' in her notes is any clue to her identity.

Once contact was established, she took great interest in the progress of Richardson's other work. During the writing of the trilogy she went to some trouble to check some historical details; later, a chance remark of hers turns out to have been the germ of the story 'Conversation in a Pantry'; and it was she, towards the end of Richardson's life, who suggested that she write her memoirs. In response, apparently, to a suggestion of Richardson's that she herself should write, Mrs Kernot replied: 'If I had had the training, I might have been the barren critic'. Her letters indicate that she would have been a sharply percipient and a just one, and the following little sentences from these letters suggest that she would have been anything but a barren one:

It is so still that a sudden bird-call is like a knife in your ear . . .

. . . a twenty-two stone German woman in a tight red jersey, making a dog-kennel with a tomahawk.

Clouds blot the forest out save for a few Japanese brushed-in saplings.

[Edith Sitwell] reminds me of some strange chintz—a medley of bright colours, but impossible to find out how the objects are related.

[Describing the death of an old lady]: so simple, just as a leaf dried by frost leaves the tree. I have been quite cheered by this simplicity and kindness of nature.

No wonder renewed intimacy with this friend of her schooldays brought great pleasure to Richardson and the kind of criticism that stimulated her with its shrewdness and wit. Mrs Kernot would have been quite capable of appreciating the latent irony in the title of the book she had suggested Richardson should write: *Myself When Young*, the first words of the stanza from Omar Khayyam, which ends: 'Came out by the same door as in I went'. The author might have directed the irony at herself, but an autobiography that left the reader with little more essential informa-

tion than he could glean from the novels would have appealed to Mrs Kernot's sense of humour, especially later when, urged by Olga Roncoroni, she herself made it impossible to write a biography of her friend until the year 1996.² Until then, one can only suggest that perhaps 'the creative lie' is a better guide to the author's inner life than the so-called facts.

Mrs Kernot certainly underestimated her own gifts.³ Her letters reveal her generous admiration of her friend's achievement, her confidence that it would last, and so indicate her perspicacity, but they do this without

² The question of the long-term restriction on the use of Richardson's letters to Mrs Kernot is a confused one. The copyright on these is vested in Miss Roncoroni, as literary executor and principal legatee of the novelist's estate. She objected to their unrestricted use when Nettie Palmer proposed to write a study of the writer and her work. Mrs Kernot made arrangements with the Mitchell Library to have four copies made of the letters from H.H.R., except for passages marked 'Private—not to be copied', one for the library, one for herself, one for Mrs Palmer, and one for Miss Roncoroni, undertaking to place *all* the originals in the Library, to be held intact until the people mentioned in them were all dead. It is not clear from the Palmer correspondence what the outcome of all this was, except that the passages marked 'Private' *were* copied, returned to Mrs Kernot in a separate envelope, and not sent to London.

Mrs Kernot's notes on Richardson's letters seem to indicate that the novelist was not particularly anxious for Mrs Palmer to write her biography, partly on the grounds that she could know nothing of her early life. Mrs Kernot tried to convey this point with admirable delicacy and tact. Mrs Palmer's study does contain a number of serious mistakes and misinterpretations, some of which could have been avoided if she had not been in such a hurry to get her book out as early as possible after Richardson's death. On the other hand, it should be said in all justice that her readings of the novels except for what she has to say about the deeper levels of *Richard Mahony* are in some essential points much more accurate than those of many critics who came after her, and that, when she quotes, she quotes passages that are really significant and not those of minor interest.

³ She made use of them in a limited way by helping to edit a magazine for the Junior Red Cross. Her sister, Philadelphia Robertson, was the first secretary of the Red Cross Society in Melbourne during World War I and published a tiny booklet of patriotic poems. Her first name is used for one of the characters in *Maurice Guest*.

any fulsomeness, without any feeling of breathless awe that she is in correspondence with a famous author. She never allows her own judgment to be overpowered, and there is a dignity and reserve about her writing, as well as a sharp intelligence, that can only command respect.

II

A chapter entitled 'The Outer Garment' seems a fitting place to deal with the vexed question of Richardson's style and with the narrative method which, like her master Jacobsen, she used to conceal her poetic intentions.

It is difficult to believe that the article on Jacobsen, 'A Danish Poet', contributed under her married name to *Cosmopolis* in 1897, came from the same pen as *The Young Cosima*. The sentences in the article are short, straightforward, and in tone authoritative. The prose is not marred by any of the lapses of taste, faulty syntax, and banal diction that so disfigure *The Young Cosima*, and the quiet assurance, the perceptiveness of the criticism are striking, when we remember that her literary education in any really organised sense of the word was only just beginning. Mrs Kernot's note that Richardson said she was 'guided into the art of writing by her husband's wisdom and learning' takes on great significance when the style and substance of this first article are compared with the style at least of *The Young Cosima* and with the style and substance of *Myself When Young*, both of which were written after Robertson's death. As Mrs Kernot herself commented in a letter (9 June 1939):

You can't help missing all the time the knowledge and judgement you have been used to in former years.

There seems little doubt that Robertson guided the hand that held the pen when 'A Danish Poet' was written. The tone is much more like that of his own articles for *Cosmopolis*, or of his book on *Goethe*, and so is the general rhythm of the prose. And so too is the level of the criticism; the language is that of the professional critic, not the tyro. Strangest of all, the writer is especially attracted by those aspects of Jacobsen's style which are least in evidence in Richardson's own writings. It is Jacobsen's thinking, the experiences of his characters, which leave such strong traces in her work, not his style. Nothing could be more different from the movement of Richardson's prose than the movement she describes here:

And his sentences swing along, sometimes half a line long, sometimes

half a page, but always full of music and often of a strange exotic beauty.

Occasionally Richardson's sentences are half a line long: she was addicted to qualifying clauses isolated as sentences, for instance, of the type: Which was mother to the life. Always ready to belittle herself and her ailments. ('The Coat', p. 56)

Sometimes the sentences are long, as for example:

Just because the span of the land was so narrow, those whose blood ran high could shove off on the unruly element from their very door-steps, and whether these looked north or south, faced sunrise, or sunset: the deep-sea fishers, the great traffickers, the navigators and explorers, the fighting men of the deep. (*R.M.*, p. 416)

But neither the short sentences nor the long could be said to 'swing along', or to be 'always full of music' or 'of a strange exotic beauty'.

Richardson—or Robertson over her shoulder—goes on to say of Jacobsen:

It is not, however, alone the rich originality of his language that carries us away. What more even than the verbal beauties of these pliant, sinuous phrases, gives colour to his phrases, is the wealth of imagery they contain. There is hardly a thought—and few modern books are more thickly studded with fine, stimulating thoughts—but Jacobsen throws it into plastic form. To him it rises up and becomes part of the great world of light and colour at which he never ceased to marvel, and he brings it home to us in a kind of picture-writing that stamps it indelibly on the mind. Does he wish to paint the triumphant progress of a great artist? His 'career on earth is like a Bacchic procession that sweeps triumphantly through all lands and scatters golden seed on every side—a genius on every panther.' Or the merciless fleetness of time? Time stands, like a fisher, 'out there in Eternity, immersed to the waist, hauling in the hours so that they glide past—twelve white and twelve black—incessantly, incessantly.'

Though *Richard Mahony* is as a whole constructed out of an image, the image of a miner delving for treasure in the earth of which he is made, Richardson's writing is not, in the sense that Jacobsen's is, 'picture-writing'. She disliked 'phrase-making' and, it is hinted, was critical of the literary style of Patrick White and Christina Stead because it drew attention to itself. Her similes and metaphors, her figurative language, where it can

be called figurative, are of the kind which anyone of moderate education might use, and they border at times on cliché. Now and again they cross the border, not only in the worst pages of *The Young Cosima*, but, for instance, in one of the most dramatic scenes in *Richard Mahony*. The moment at which Richard finally goes out of his mind, when we are consumed with pity and fear at the spectacle, might have been ruined by the intrusion of the totally inappropriate figure: 'the insane scream, which signified *the crossing of the rubicon* (*R.M.*, p. 931). Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, which meant a declaration of war on the Republic, was a deliberate decision made after hesitation and reflection. All Richardson means by the phrase is that Mahony has finally crossed the dividing line between sanity and insanity. There is no weighing of the pros and cons and then a deliberate decision to go mad! The clichés which follow, 'bestial cry', 'ox felled by a single blow of the pole-axe' are less irrelevant, though it is difficult to think of Mahony as he has been described just before that point—old, bent, thin-shanked—as in any way similar to an ox. This picture-writing, if it can be called so at all, is as far removed as can be from that which 'she' admired in Jacobsen, and, at its worst, it clogs the movement of the prose, sets up a kind of friction, which sometimes impedes it. Nevertheless, for a critic to single out the offending phrase alluded to here as evidence that 'she cannot write', while ignoring the surrounding context, is to act like someone who tells a woman her petticoat is hanging down as she is watching her husband die.

Where, in fact, Richardson's prose can be said to swing along, to have briskness and momentum is precisely in this article on Jacobsen, which bears what she thought of later as not her own name, but her husband's.⁴ And the diction and the rhythm in the passage quoted from it above seem fundamentally different from the diction and rhythms of *The Young Cosima* and *Myself When Young*. There appear to me to be strong internal reasons for considering 'A Danish Poet' as more in the nature of a collaboration than as an independent composition. *Cosmopolis* was a magazine whose contributors were highly distinguished writers of European reputation and for an unknown young colonial to insert herself among them, assessing an author whose work she had just come to know in translation was to take a great risk. Richardson's remark to Miles

⁴ Perhaps it is not too much to suggest that Richardson's basic honesty and modesty led her to use her married name for the article.

Franklin, in a letter dated 2 September 1933, may be literal truth: He [i.e. Robertson] was by far my most intimate friend; and has been at my side ever since I began to take my first uncertain steps as a writer.

Yet, if the *tempo* of the writing in the early articles suggests Robertson's rather than his wife's, it would be quite untrue to suggest that the prose of the principal novels is devoid of *any* musical quality. Whatever the defects of the literary education Richardson had received at school, she had absorbed thoroughly, if unconsciously, a sense of prose rhythm from learning numerous passages of the Bible by heart.⁵ This is the kind of training of which most modern children are deprived; indeed at a time when it is easy for them to absorb passages of fine poetry and prose, as squirrels store up nuts for future use, memorising is officially frowned upon by 'progressive' educators. It is somehow respectable to memorise the facts of history and geography and mathematics, but frustrating to 'self-expression' to learn the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians or the 'Ode to a Nightingale'. Richardson was spared that kind of nonsense, and there is little doubt that the cadences of Biblical language and of poetry appealed to her own innate feeling for rhythm. Olga Roncoroni has referred to her unerring sense of rhythm in dancing. This same sense of rhythm, especially in the use of cadences, as distinct from a feeling for individual words, makes itself felt in the movement of a sentence and in the shape of a paragraph: to test this assertion, one should merely 'beat time' without attending to the words.⁶ The instinctive

⁵ See *M.W.Y.*, pp. 66, 67. There is a curiously confused comment on Richardson's literary education in Leonie Kramer's *Great Australians* monograph:

What she might have gained from poetry and the best prose came to her instead through the rhythms and cadences of the Bible. It may be that the stylistic clumsiness in her own writings and her apparently weak ear for the rhythms of language can in part be ascribed to the aridity of her early training in literature. (pp. 8-9)

Is Professor Kramer claiming that the Bible is devoid of poetic and prosaic beauty, that one can learn nothing about the rhythms of language from it? What of Bunyan? As for Richardson's weak ear for rhythm, there is abundant evidence to show that her sense of rhythm was particularly strong. It is her vocabulary which shows weaknesses, not her sense of rhythm.

⁶ Flaubert is said to have planned the rhythms of his novels before writing the words.

grasp of cadence can be illustrated easily enough in the well-known passage from *Richard Mahony* (p. 90), beginning:
And then the bush, and the loneliness of the bush, closed round them.

The main stresses fall so as to produce a sense of foreboding, and Richardson isolates the sentence, quite rightly, to give the effect of a pause out of which good or ill might come, a musical silence, or 'rest'; one can almost hear a conductor counting three . . . Then:

It was the time of flowers—of fierce young growth after the fruitful winter rains. The short-lived grass, green now as that of an English meadow, was picked out into patterns by the scarlet of the Running Postman; purple sarsaparilla festooned the stems of the scrub; there were vast natural paddocks, here of yellow everlastings, there of heaths in full bloom. Compared with the dark, spindly foliage of the she-oaks, the ti-trees' waxy flowers stood out like orange-blossoms against firs. On damp or marshy ground wattles were aflame: great quivering masses of softest gold. Wherever these trees stood, the fragrance of their yellow puff-ball blossoms saturated the air; one knew, before one saw them, that they were coming, and long after they had been left behind one carried their honeyed sweetness with one; against them, no other scent could have made itself felt. And to Mahony these waves of perfume, into which they were continually running, came, in the course of the hours, to stand for a symbol of the golden future for which he and Polly were making; and whenever in after years he met with wattles in full bloom, he was carried back to the blue spring day of his wedding-journey, and jogged on once more, in the light cart, with his girl-wife at his side.

The passage opens out from the *pianissimo* of the first six words into what can only be called a little tone-poem of colour and sound, introduced by the three short trumpet-notes of 'fierce young growth'. The strong equal stresses are exactly the right balance to the lyrical run of the end of the sentence. Throughout the passage sense and rhythm march together in perfect harmony until the movement returns us to the physical discomfort of the present moment in the jogging monosyllables of the last sixteen words, merging this moment, as it moves relentlessly into the past, with the unknown future, which we see revealed many hundreds of pages later in the tragic drive into the bush at Barambogie. In the rhythmic

pattern, alliteration and assonance, intricate vowel-harmonies contribute to the richness; to get the full effect, one would have to analyse it in Saintsbury's manner.

The colour-harmony is significantly linked with the characterisation: as a comparative new-comer, Mahony would have been making constant comparisons between the English and the Australian flora (Walter Richardson certainly was). But there is more to it than that. For the harsh colonial red, purple and yellow contrasted with the green of an English meadow forecast the fate of the innocent girl-wife whose lover had promised himself to see that only lines of happiness were graven on her face. There is a shadow over this bridal right at the beginning, indicated in the contrast of the white 'ti-tree' blossom⁷ with the 'dark spindly growth' of the she-oaks, doubly contrasted with the orange-blossom and firs of the northern hemisphere. But the shadow is submerged, fittingly enough, in the sunlight of the wattle, and here at the centre the symbolism of gold takes charge; its appropriateness needs no comment by now. But one might point out that however naturalistic a piece of description 'the yellow *puff-ball* blossoms' might be, the choice of the italicised word contributes to the pattern of transitoriness, of evanescence, which is one of the book's great concerns. The note of hope with which wattle is associated in the novel is muted by the transition to the mood of reminiscence; nothing specific is said about the form the golden future is to take and the next paragraph opens ominously with the words, 'It was necessarily a silent drive', followed by a description of rain and mud. If ever there were a symphonic writer in prose it is this one; only a genuine artist could organise material in such a significant way and hold the threads together through an immense work. (It is worth remarking in passing that every one of Richardson's books except *The Young Cosima* has a reference to wattles and we know from Olga Roncoroni and from *Myself When Young* how she retained her passion for them throughout her life. There is no specific reference to wattles in her father's existing letters and the use of wattles as imagery points to the subjective element in the structure.)

⁷ It is interesting that Richardson used the common nineteenth-century misnomer 'ti-tree' for 'tea-tree' as is frequently done today. 'Tea-tree' is the proper common name for the *leptospermum*, varieties of which were no doubt plentiful in the Ballarat district. So much for her 'botanising'!

But there are times when the sense of rhythm is not at all as obvious as it is in this passage, and when it becomes almost true to say that if there is a choice between rhythmical virtue and other virtues, the latter are sacrificed to the rhythm. For instance, on page 103, correctness would demand the following order:

He also bathed the patient's sweat-soaked head and shoulders; then sat down to await *the return of the owner of the hut*. [Italics mine]

Richardson has written '*the owner of the hut's return*'. However the phrase might offend the eye and grammatical precision, it falls properly on the ear, first because the sense demands a sharply descending cadence, secondly because it avoids the awkward repetition of 'of the'. The sense of rhythm is vitally necessary to all the arts; it is quite indispensable to music and poetry. These were Richardson's chief loves and it is not surprising that their principal element is to be found in her prose. Those who deny it rhythm have simply not taken the trouble to analyse it, however justified some of their other complaints might be.

As for 'picture-writing', it is so easy to demonstrate Richardson's dependence on worn metaphors and similes that something should perhaps for once be said in *favour* of her use of clichés. It could be argued that she used them to keep her style transparent, preferring to convey emotion by rhythmical suggestion rather than by arresting metaphor, in order to prevent the reader's attention from becoming too much fixed on words as words. If so, she is in good company:

We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us—and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand into its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject.—How beautiful are the retired flowers! how would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, 'admire me, I am a violet! dote upon me, I am a primrose!' (Keats to J. H. Reynolds, 3 February 1818)

Keats was dismayed at the clamorousness of the language of his poet contemporaries; it is as well perhaps that he lived and died when he did!

If the passage referred to above describing Mahony's collapse into insanity is not detached from its context, if we are properly engaged, as we should be, 'with its subject', the mind slides over 'rubicon', 'ox' and 'pole-axe'; they are as irrelevant as the stage-lighting which has to accom-

pany the murder of Desdemona. Semi-consciously, the reader receives from the word 'rubicon' a dim sense of irreversibility, from 'ox' and 'pole-axe' a sense of helplessness; his consciousness is then left free, as it ought to be, to respond to the action with the pity and terror which are the emotions the situation demands.

Good prose, as George Orwell said, is like a window pane. One might add that highly figurative prose is too often nowadays like an ornamental grille over a window pane, distracting attention to itself from the view. Richardson's professed dislike of phrase-making is not simply to be dismissed as a rationalisation of her own incapacity for it. She is quite capable of throwing off a striking metaphor or simile if she chooses, but they do not stand out prominently from the context and they are nearly always of a homely kind or in character. For instance, describing the wounded miners at Eureka:

Two or three still heaved, the blood gurgling from throat and breast like water from the neck of a bottle (*R.M.*, p. 101)

His body was a very colander for wounds . . . (*Ibid.*)

And when, in passing a swamp, a well-known noise broke on her ear—that of hundreds of bell-frogs, which were like hundreds of hissing tea-kettles just about to boil—then such a rush of homesickness took her . . . (*R.M.*, p. 92)

He [Mahony] had sometimes wondered, on the voyage out, what his feelings would be, when he saw these familiar places again and knew that the pincer of the 'Heads' had snapped behind him (*R.M.*, p. 505)

As the last two figures show, Richardson's genius is predominantly dramatic, not lyrical as far as it means personal, and her symbolic vision reveals itself in the selection and structure of events and actions, not in metaphorical diction. Above all, her approach to characterisation is dramatic: it is the arguments between husband and wife that tell us most about Mahony and Mary; their activities, their gestures, not analysis or description. An example of a particularly effective, but quite simple piece of dramatic 'business', occurs very early in *Australia Felix*, during the wedding-journey already referred to:

The seat of the cart was slanting and slippery. Polly was continually sliding forward, now by inches, now with a great jerk. At last Mahony noticed it. 'You are not sitting very comfortably, Polly, I fear?' he said.

Polly righted herself yet again, and reddened. 'It's my . . . my feet aren't long enough,' she replied.

'Why, my poor little love!' cried Mahony, full of quick compunction. 'Why didn't you say so?' And drawing rein and getting down, he stuffed some of Mrs Beamish's bundles—fragments of the feast which the good woman had sent with them—under his wife's feet; stuffed too many, so that Polly drove the rest of the way with her knees raised to a hump in front of her. (p. 92)

Richardson, that is to say, reads people by what they actually do, not by what they think they are doing. This brief incident brings to life the essential Mahony far better than a whole page of authorial analysis, or stream-of-consciousness reflection on the part of Polly herself. And it is dramatic *imagination* which is at work, not 'historical reconstruction'.⁸ It may be that Richardson's mother once mentioned to her that she was so young when she married her feet would not reach to the floor of the wedding-cart, but that she saw all the psychological implications of the fact is in the highest degree unlikely. There is no evidence, of course, that she even told her daughter the fact and she was dead many years before it was made use of, if it was a fact.

Because her narrative method is for the most part dramatic it is difficult to say that Richardson has a distinctive 'style', since it varies considerably in each novel.⁹ Description and analysis form a larger part of *Maurice Guest* than they do of any other book, which is not surprising, since it was written so soon after she fell under Jacobsen's spell. Nevertheless, the analytic passages in *Maurice Guest* are in general far more dramatic than Jacobsen's; it is the character thinking whom we overhear, rather than the author thinking for the character. And the passages of dialogue are far more numerous and infinitely more skilled than Jacobsen's. The *tempo* of the prose is more energetic than it is in *Richard Mahony*, and this is to be expected in a novel about the passion and impulsiveness of

⁸ See Kramer, *op. cit.*: 'She was skilled in reconstruction rather than creation' (p. 29). Modern literary criticism is bedevilled by woolly thinking on the subject of 'creativity'. Alexander's essay, 'Natural Piety' (See Introduction) is a good antidote.

⁹ Penton seems to me to have caught its most constant characteristic: its faint note of resignation. The same note is heard under Pater's prose. See pp. 79 and 80.

youth. The prose of the trilogy is leisurely and deliberate until the final events demand a quickening of the pace. In *The Getting of Wisdom*, the style is simple and direct and slightly acidulous in tone. Although throughout the work as a whole there is great variation in the length of sentences, Richardson has a fondness for a particular kind of sentence, which, as far as bony structure is concerned, oddly enough reminds one of Pater's,¹⁰ though the diction is so different. It is a sentence assembled by accretion, which gives the impression of being thought out as the writer goes along; there are sometimes false starts, then a repetition of the opening; sometimes it begins, then swerves, then resumes, accumulates a parenthesis or two, a qualifying clause here and there, and winds without losing the thread to a triumphant conclusion. The Proem to *The Way Home* has a number of such sentences; in *The Young Cosima* they sometimes get out of hand. The mannerism of using an inversion instead of a conditional clause: 'Was he ever to attain to' instead of 'If he was ever to attain to' betrays the nineteenth-century origin of her speech; she was, after all, thirty years old when the century ended. Odd phrases here and there reveal the traces of a dialect that might have been her mother's: the expression 'proposed to give her little house a good red-up'¹¹ in its master's absence', for example.

If, to sum up, any generalisation can be made about the prose style at all, it can be said that it was a robust, flexible, serviceable style, with no nonsense about it, but capable at times of great purity, dignity and solemnity; never pretentious, and, except in her last novel, perfectly suited to the purpose for which she wished to use it. To condemn her, as has been done, for allowing her matter to do her work for her is to misunderstand her method altogether and amounts to convicting her of a virtue. It is to wish that Christ had stopped to describe the expressions on the faces of the thieves, or the colour of the Good Samaritan's garments.

It was the pressure of her matter that made her a writer at all and its weight brings her work, according to Pater's canon, out of the realm of good art into that of great art. She read very carefully, before writing of Jacobsen, Pater's article on Sandro Botticelli in *The Renaissance*. Writers

¹⁰ See, for instance, the 'vision' already quoted on pp. 314-15.

¹¹ Of Anglo-French origin, sometimes spelt 'redd-up', or 'redub': setting-to-rights, cleaning-up.

on Richardson might well ponder it before passing final judgment on her: Botticelli lived in a generation of naturalists, and he might have been a mere naturalist among them. There are traces enough in his art of that alert sense of outward things, which, in the pictures of that period, fills the lawns with delicate living creatures, and the hill-sides with pools of water, and the pools of water with flowering reeds. But this was not enough for him; he is a visionary painter and in his visionariness he resembles Dante . . . *the genius of which Botticelli is the type usurps the data before it as the exponent of ideas, moods, visions of its own; in this interest it plays fast and loose with those data, rejecting some, isolating others, and always combining them anew.* [Italics mine]

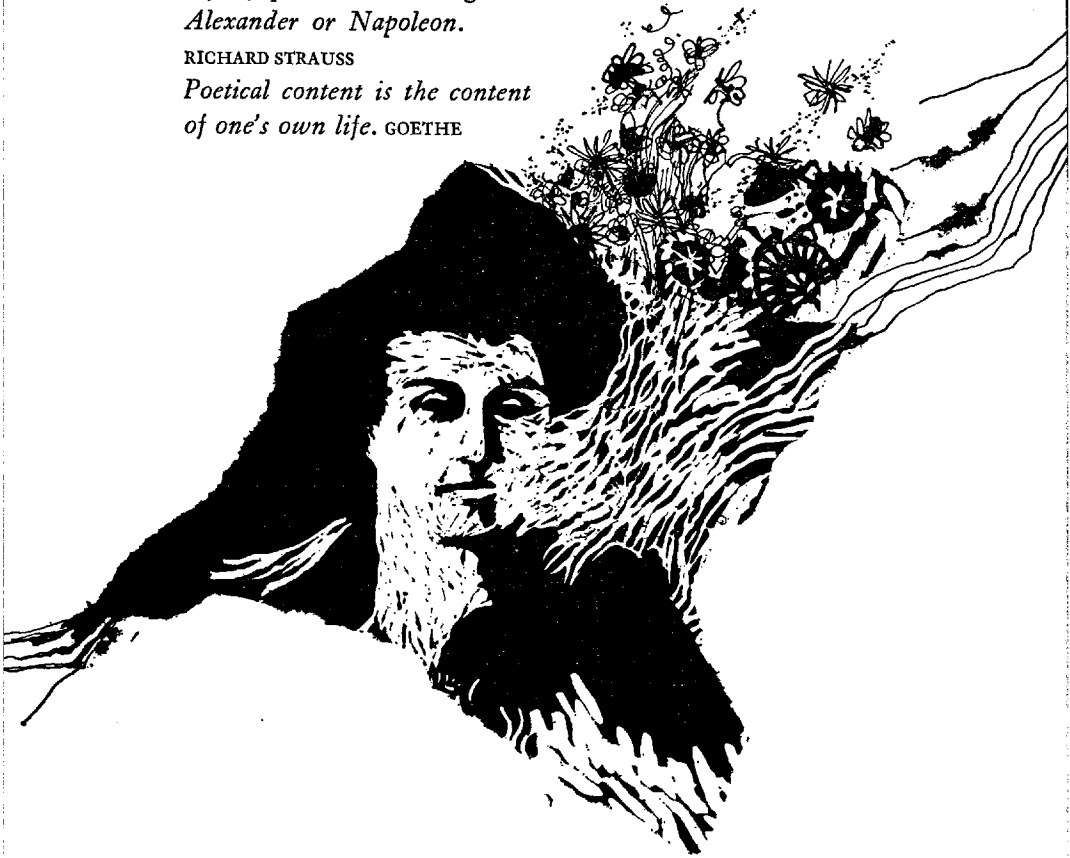
The italicised words exactly define Richardson's method and she has an honourable, if more humble place in the company of which Botticelli was an outstanding member.

Chapter 13

Do you know a composer who has ever composed anything but himself? Funny people those aestheticians . . . I find myself quite as interesting as Alexander or Napoleon.

RICHARD STRAUSS

Poetical content is the content of one's own life. GOETHE



The Woman and the Artist

ONE OF THE greatest dangers in the kind of examination undertaken in this book is the risk of its being interpreted as 'reductionist', of leaving the reader with the impression that a work of art is 'nothing but' an effort of psychological compensation, 'nothing but' a re-shuffling of the cards which life has dealt. It is true that these elements have a role to play in art but their exact relationship to the artistic process is a mystery and it would be foolish to imagine that even a credible psychological analysis of an artist could be regarded as an explanation of the alchemy of poetry. When Goethe used the words 'poetical content', he must have known the etymology of the Greek word 'poet': 'maker'. Nettie Palmer, in the first full-length study of Richardson to be made, certainly stressed unduly Richardson's adherence to 'the world of verifiable fact', but she did not make the mistake of claiming that this practice was either bad or unusual. She is alive to its artistic possibilities and places it in the tradition of naturalism which includes Stendhal, Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Conrad; the roots of this tradition, however, go far deeper than she suggests, and Richardson was aware of them through her husband. As it turns out, of course, Richardson invented far more than Mrs Palmer or anyone else suspected, a process for which the 'curate episode' in *The Getting of Wisdom* might have prepared the mind.¹

¹ H. M. R. Rupp, the son of the clergyman C. L. H. Rupp, from whom Richardson had lessons in Koroit, certainly suspected rightly. In a letter to E. Morris Miller, 8 August 1949, objecting to Richardson's picture of life and people in Koroit, he wrote: 'One cannot help wondering whether other

Continued on foot of next page

As for the psychological truths on which the work as a whole is based, no account of these can be more than partially plausible without full access to the diaries she kept about herself, or to the letters to Mrs Kernot already mentioned, or indeed to the numerous songs she composed, which presumably are still in the possession of Miss Roncoroni. The latter informed Nettie Palmer in a letter that Richardson would rather have composed first-class songs than books and Richardson herself wrote to Mrs Palmer: 'In fact I throw off a song where other prose-writers drop into lyrics'. It is quite possible that the words and music of these would shed more than a little light on the composer's state of mind. There is little doubt that she revealed much of it to Mrs Kernot. The discussion of *Maurice Guest*, for instance, runs like a thread through Mrs Kernot's own letters from 1911 to 1939. In one written in February of the latter year she says:

I can imagine the story of the writing of *Maurice Guest* must wait a while; you are not one who lays bare the soul of you to the world. The implication is that there *was* a story behind the writing of it and that her friend knew something of it. A careful reading of all the available biographical material in relation to the presentation of Maurice, Louise, Madeleine, and Krafft might suggest a hypothesis for such a 'story', but one glance at the Kernot letters might also at once make nonsense of the hypothesis. All we know for certain at the moment is that Richardson, like countless other men and women in her day, conceived a tremendous 'passion' for Duse and used her as a basis for Louise. What relation she bore, if any, to the Australian Louise Dufrayer remains a mystery.

Mrs Kernot in a letter to Nettie Palmer says that it was after Robertson's death and during the writing of *The Young Cosima* that Richardson's letters to her became most frequent, 'and I felt that I was a safety-valve': To me she could write of what she could not express freely elsewhere. Her sister's death (she was one of H.H.R.'s keenest critics) as well as her husband's shut two avenues of expression.

parts of her books are not the result of excessive imagination'. In a later letter the same month he wondered if there might not have been some 'mental kink' at work: 'How else would all that rubbish about our parents be explained?'

Mr Rupp's aesthetic theories are confused, but he is justified in his annoyance at the treatment of his parents, not in the novel, but in *Myself When Young*.

Both *Maurice Guest* and *The Young Cosima* have strong links with Robertson. There is not much doubt that in the Leipzig days it was Robertson who 'educated' Ethel Richardson, as Richardson notes in the margin of Eckart's biography that Wagner educated Cosima. Robertson's passion for Wagner's music remained life-long. A few months before his death he gave a series of lectures on Wagner as poet-musician, and no doubt he was much in his wife's mind as she wrote her last novel, for this reason alone, apart from the considerations alluded to in Chapter 10. The role that Robertson played in Richardson's life has never been sufficiently considered, and part of the purpose of this chapter is to do just that, though all that can be done at the moment is to try to fit together the scrappy information which exists on this and many other points.

In approaching the subject of Richardson's personal life, the first thing that strikes us is how different the second half of her life was from her girlhood and the early years of her marriage. Until the time she and her husband went to London, she was moved from house to house, one after another, especially during her childhood, until it must have seemed to her that life consisted of packing and unpacking. But for over twenty-three years before her husband's death she lived in one house, and for much of that time in one room behind a double door, except for an unvaried routine of exercise, an occasional visit to the theatre, a minimum of social life, and an annual holiday. The 'matter' of her books, and this includes *The Young Cosima*, lasted her a lifetime, and looking back over the life and work of both husband and wife, one begins to wonder whether this was a matter of choice or necessity! When she had exhausted its fictional possibilities, at the age of seventy or so, she began to use it as 'fact', that is to say, to offer to the world all that she was willing for it to see as 'scaffolding'. In Mrs Kernot's words (to Nettie Palmer, 14 November 1948):

As she went into the shadow she turns the full light on to all she had struggled to obscure. Still at the same time, I doubt the full light.

The experience of living 'under fire' throughout the war made creative writing impossible for her. She could not write fiction, she tells us, unless she followed an unvarying plan of life, secure in the knowledge that the household was running on oiled wheels while she 'worked'. The notion of dedication to 'work' is made prominent in all the biographical

material. It needs to be measured against her other remark about her eventual discovery that she liked writing:²

For my work on *Niels* continued to absorb me, and I felt that at last I had discovered what I liked best to do. To sit alone and unobserved, behind a shut door, and play with words and ponder phrases. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 126)

The word 'play', used as a synonym for 'work', is of some importance in the total psychological pattern, which will be seen more clearly when other more significant evidence has been brought together. For the moment it is enough to point out that the emphasis of her early life was on change and insecurity; that of her married life on routine and security.

It is important to notice that what security there was in her childhood life could have been associated only briefly in her mind with her father. When she was an infant, he was frequently away from home and any 'handling' of her in a literal sense must have been minimal, especially in a household able to afford nurses and maids. Then, to be dragged off round the world at the age of three and left in the care of relatives while the parents disappeared to the continent is an experience of dubious value to a very young child; so that even during the brief period she might remember of great wealth and comfort, Richardson must have formed some connection in her mind between her father and constant movement.

After he lost so much of his fortune, the feeling must have been intensified: he disappeared first of all for six months or more, when he returned to Australia ahead of his family in 1874. Only two years later he again disappeared, to Chiltern, for several months, before the family was able to join him; the pattern was repeated when he went to Queenscliff and, soon after, when he went to Cremorne and Yarra Bend. A few months later, and he disappeared forever. What Richardson would learn about men from observing her father would be that it would be unsafe to rely on their continuing presence: she could not have deduced from observing him (or her various 'uncles') that rock-like dependability could be a male characteristic as well as a female one, and would have been more likely to conclude that males were essentially untrustworthy, or at least unpredictable. This impression would have been reinforced by some dim apprehension of the notion, gained from heated discussions

² What she said to 'official' interviewers or acquaintances was quite different—generally to the effect that she had always been a writer.

about money, that it was the mother who was the source of food, clothes and shelter, of the visible, material necessities of existence. After the father died and she grew older, this fact would have become quite clear to her. For girls of her generation, unused to the spectacle of both parents working and sharing household responsibilities, the knowledge would have been a source of shock and shame, difficult for modern readers to understand, even though there is reason to believe that Richardson exaggerated the degree of the family's poverty.³ Confusion about the role of the male would have been, in the circumstances, difficult to escape, and it would have been compounded by the fact that her father was also a source of pleasure: the bringer of unexpected gifts of books which she treasured, of understanding, of gentleness. There is no doubt about his tenderness towards his children: it shines through all the letters of his last terrible years.

Making up her mind about her mother must have been equally difficult. Although a generally applicable theory of birth-trauma has been discredited in recent years, it is admitted by even so cautious a psychiatrist as Charles Rycroft that the birth-process demands of all infants 'a massive re-orientation of their whole mode of being'.⁴ In the case of such a difficult, painful, and prolonged birth as Richardson's, the physiological, if not the mental shock must have been greater than that experienced by an infant during a normal birth. According to her own account, she was under three pounds in weight, her mother was too ill to see her for a fortnight (or three weeks) and was unable to suckle her. It was unlikely that she was put to a wet-nurse: Mahony, it will be remembered, disapproved of the practice, and Dr Richardson's preference for natural processes is known from his publications. Whether she had a satisfactory mother-substitute to provide comfort and reassurance there is no means of knowing. Apparently there were feeding troubles: a sheet of paper exists in Dr Richardson's handwriting detailing the lactometer tests he made of the milk from various dairies round Victoria Parade and Collingwood in March 1870, some of which showed too much water content in the milk. Cow's milk, incidentally; Richardson in *Myself*

³ It is interesting to note that she changed the word 'poverty' to 'straitened circumstances' in the final draft of *The Getting of Wisdom*. Whether pride or honesty was the motive, the revision is more accurate.

⁴ See *Anxiety and Neurosis*, p. 31.

When Young says she was reared on goat's milk; perhaps the goat came later! Whatever the effect of these various difficulties on the child, the state of mind they engendered in the mother cannot be ignored. A deeply-concealed hostility to the baby who nearly costs the mother her life can operate in conjunction with the most devoted care of the child, an excessive care indeed, designed to conceal the feeling of guilt at the hostility. A history of difficult or ambivalent relations between mother and child in later years has frequently been found to disclose this particular birth-situation. Nor, as suggested earlier, should the fact that children came late into the tight circle of the parents' love be overlooked;⁵ there is always the possibility that Richardson and her sister felt as though they were intruders and needed to be reassured that they were not, if Cuffy's attitude has any basis in real life. Dr Richardson certainly did not allow the presence of a new, late-born baby to interfere with his own comings and goings. He spent a long holiday in Sydney on his own a few months after his first daughter was born and his references to her in his extant letters are humorous rather than sentimental. There is little evidence, at least in these letters, of the 'romantic mood' Richardson, in *Myself When Young*, attributes to her parents over the births of their children. Her father's journeys to Geelong, Ballarat, Sandhurst and other towns in pursuance of his Spiritualistic interests continued through the children's infancy; in 1872 he visited Hobart Town, probably to see his wife's brother. It is unlikely that Richardson saw her mother's comments, or her grandmother's, on the advantages of having no children, until after her mother's death, but they would have helped to reinforce the view she had developed for other reasons that she was different from other children,⁶ 'an outsider'. It is a view expressed through Cuffy, in *Ultima Thule*:

⁵ Richardson's consciousness of the fact comes out in the words she puts into Mary's mouth early in *Australia Felix*: 'Have you ever thought, Richard, how strange it will seem when there *are* three of us? You and I will never be quite alone together again. Oh, I do hope he will be a good baby and not cry much. It will worry you if he does, like Hempel's cough. And then you won't love him enough.'

⁶ See M. A. Clutton-Brock, 'Mrs Lins', *Southerly*, No. 1, 1967, for indications of the general background to the feeling of isolation. The mother's letter has been referred to in Chapter 5.

Oh, *why* had one's Papa got to be like this? Other children's Papas weren't. They walked about . . . properly . . . and if they met you they said: 'Hullo!' or 'How do you do?' (p. 919; see also p. 920)

Through her confusion, it is the dependence on and fear of the loss of the mother, who stood to her for stability, which stand out plainly, as well as resentment of the dependence. In the struggle to know what to think of either parent, on which one she was to model herself, or to form a model of a future mate, it would have been very difficult to come to a conclusion about what her real self was, especially her sexual self. Every father, says Jung, in his *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, has the opportunity to 'corrupt' his daughter and later on it is 'the educator, the husband or the psychiatrist who has to face the music'. He goes on to say:

For 'what has been spoiled by the father' can only be made good by a father, just as 'what has been spoiled by the mother' can only be repaired by a mother. (p. 182)

There seems little doubt that, in Robertson, Richardson found educator, father, mother, husband, and psychiatrist.

Not only was she (and her sister) faced with the difficulty of finding the right relationship to her parents, and therefore to men and women in general, but at the crucial time when both children were needing companions of their own age to sharpen their sense of their own identity, they were deprived of them: first by the period in Chiltern, when there seemed to be few 'suitable' companions; then by the increasing 'queerness' of the father at Queenscliff, which made them fear the ridicule of other children; then by their isolation at Koroit. Ethel's adjustment to school-life was difficult, and when she arrived in England as a young woman she found it hard to get on with her relatives. It is no wonder that the central figure in each of the novels—if Bülow is counted as a central figure—is, fundamentally, not an artist, but a person who longs for friendship and has no capacity for it. Compare the following quotations:

For him, Maurice, the opportune moment simply did not exist; he was one of those people who are always inopportune, come and go as they will . . . At this moment, when he was inclined to take the onus of the misunderstanding on his own shoulders, Maurice admitted, besides his constant preoccupation—or possibly just because of it—an innate lack of sympathy in himself, an inability, either of heart or of imagination,

to project himself into the lives and feelings of people he did not greatly care for. (*M.G.*, pp. 437-8)

(Louise's lack of 'friends' as distinct from 'lovers' should also be remembered here.)

In all the three years she had been at school, she had not got beyond a surface friendliness with any of her fellows. Even those who had been her 'chums' had wandered like shades through the groves of her affection . . . yet seldom was there a child who longed so ardently to be liked, or suffered more acutely under dislike. Apart however from the brusque manner she had contracted, in her search after truth, it must be admitted that Laura had but a small talent for friendship; she did not grasp the constant give-and-take intimacy implies; the liking of others had to be brought to her, unsought, she, on the other hand, being free to stand back and consider whether or no the feeling was worth returning. And friends are not made in this fashion. (*G.W.*, pp. 231-2)

And moodily pondering the reasons for his solitariness, he was once more inclined to lay a share of the blame on the conditions of the life . . . What was the use of troubling to become better acquainted with a person, when, just as you began really to know him, he was up and away? . . . But this was only a surface reason: there was another that went deeper. He had no talent for friendship, and he knew it; indeed, he would even invert the thing, and say bluntly that his nature had a twist in it which directly hindered friendship; and this, though there came moments when he longed, as your popular mortal never did, for close companionship. Sometimes he felt like a hungry man looking on at a banquet, of which no one invited him to partake, because he had already given it to be understood that he would decline. But such lapses were few. On nine days out of ten, he did not feel the need of either making or receiving confidences; he shrank rather, with a peculiar shy dread, from personal unbosomings. Some imp housed in him—some wayward, wilful, mocking Irish devil—bidding him hold back, remain cool, dry-eyed, in face of others' joys and pains. Hence the break with Purdy was a real calamity . . . Slow to take hold, he was a hundred times slower to let go . . . (*R.M.*, pp. 346-7)

To see the two of them happy together [Bülow and Daniel Liszt] made Cosette happy too. And sometimes, on the point of entering Daniel's room with a book or a nosegay of late flowers, she would turn away,

afraid of intruding. Or of disturbing Hans' flow. For all his volubility and surface frankness, Hans was by nature very chary of himself; kept his real thoughts and feelings under lock and key. Now, he tossed them out pell-mell . . . In him, grief brought out the rebel.

Embitteredly he railed: 'I need only to find a friend, a real friend, a brother in more than name, and he's snatched away . . .' (Y.C., pp. 135-41)

Only later did I realize what these expeditions cost her; and I asked her why she, to whom her work was so important that she sacrificed practically everything else in order to be fit for it, had undertaken this heavy task. [Of taking her friend to a clinic] She replied that she felt she had done little to help others during her life, and she looked upon my case as something given her to do in order to make good this omission. Be that as it may, she certainly was the kindest and truest friend I ever had, and I feel that few people are as fortunate as I have been in this respect. (P.R., p. 74)

(Olga Roncoroni also records on page 72 that Richardson asked her to keep a record of what 'transpired during the hours I spent on the "sofa"', and to keep a written record of her dreams, so that there was considerable self-interest even in this measure of self-sacrifice.)

The effect she had on most strangers distressed H.H., for she was really a very friendly person, with an almost childish desire to be liked. It had, too, the inevitable result that she withdrew even farther into herself. (Ibid., p. 78)

If one accepts the fact that Richardson fitted a portrait of herself into the framework of her father's life, as Mrs Kernot records, and as she herself admitted elsewhere,⁷ then the total effect of these quotations is to produce a picture of what Laing calls 'ontological insecurity'. The word 'schizoid' carries no necessary imputation of neurosis, but considering the horrors of that portion of her early childhood which she could remember, it would be extraordinary if her personality had not developed such tendencies in a fairly marked way. Her life makes it clear that she

⁷ The rough drafts of *M.W.Y.* make this admission much clearer than the final version. In these drafts, she denies that Cuffy was modelled on herself, but the denial does not appear in the printed version; in this the resemblance to Mahony's being a portrait of herself is moved from its original position and is far less emphatic than in the notes. See *M.W.Y.*, p. 24.

was excessively dependent on the reassurance of another's presence: her mother's determination to see her married, described on pages 132 and 133 of *Myself When Young*, her husband's request to Olga Roncoroni that she 'look after Henry' after his death,⁸ indicate an uneasiness on the part of others about her ability to tolerate solitude. Her account of her determination to break down Robertson's reluctance to marry without having a settled job has something relentless about it, even more in the rough drafts of *Myself When Young*, where Robertson's resistance to the idea is made very clear; so has her excessive anxiety about whether he would turn up for the ceremony:

How I overcame his scruples is my own affair. I managed it, bit by bit, though right up to the end I did not feel absolutely sure of him.

(*M.W.Y.*, p. 133)

I walked the dirty streets [of Dublin], with thoughts far removed. For now that it seemed as if the end was actually at hand I was haunted by a fear lest some accident should befall N. at the eleventh hour.

The night he crossed I sat at the window listening to the splash-dash of an excited sea, that might even yet swallow him up. (*Ibid.*, p. 134)

The association with the father-image,⁹ centred on the sea, is surely apparent here; while the following quotation reminds one strongly of Cosima's state of mind after the marriage ceremony with Bülow:

However none of my heated imaginings took shape, the boat neither went down, nor was he washed overboard; and, in due course, he and the friend who had come with him presented themselves at Clontarf parish church. Nor did any member of the congregation rise to show cause or just impediment. *We were married, safely and soundly married*, and the last of my grisly forebodings joined their forebears. [*Italics mine*] (*M.W.Y.*, p. 134)

⁸ According to Olga Roncoroni. It is clear from Miss Roncoroni's accounts of her relationship with Richardson, especially in its early stages, that she herself was extraordinarily dependent on the novelist, to the extent that Mrs Roncoroni resented it. Her letters to Nettie Palmer after Richardson's death reveal plainly that she found it impossible to cope alone with the crises of life. It may be that the two women found the perfect symbiosis of dependence, propping one another up. See P.R., pp. 69-71.

⁹ Her pleasure at being married in her father's birthplace is also evident in the account of her wedding.

The anxiety about her husband's whereabouts in the later stages of her married life has already been remarked on. The childhood puzzlement about the father's comings and goings, the childhood question: 'When mother went out, would she ever come back?' found in adult life a new object.

During the interval between her abandonment of music as a career and her marriage, Richardson gives us a picture of a disgruntled young woman who does not know what she is good for and who was apparently very difficult to live with. The situation of her future husband was also depressing in the extreme: he applied without success for post after post in Britain and apparently his parents made him feel that he was a failure.¹⁰ Richardson's strong determination to marry Robertson spurred her apparently to her first and only independent enterprise: the teaching of English to university students in Munich in 1894-5 in order to demonstrate to him that there was a living to be made and that if a tyro could do it, an expert would fare better. The gift of £300 from her mother—a considerable sum for those days—and the post at Strasbourg made the marriage possible and there is no doubt that from the point of view of mental affinity it was a completely successful one. What it meant to either of them emotionally and physically is a matter of speculation.

In all the published material on Richardson so far written at any length, John George Robertson has figured as a shadowy background figure whose function in life was to minister to the creative artist. One gets the impression that he was regarded as a fortunate man to have such a distinguished novelist for a wife, and it is hardly ever suggested that the novelist might have been exceptionally lucky to have such a brilliant and world-famous scholar for a husband. It must be admitted that some of Richardson's own remarks at times belong to the same conspiracy of silence about Robertson, especially when she is writing to literary people.

¹⁰ Cf. Robertson's account of Carlyle in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. XIII, p. 6. Goethe, says Robertson, solved Carlyle's problem 'What canst thou work at?' Robertson's remarks on Carlyle's forthcoming marriage are also of interest: 'for it was only a few weeks before the crisis that he had met Miss Welsh: and, doubtless, in a dim way, he felt that the problem of life was now, or would become for him, not merely what canst thou work at, but what canst thou work at with sufficient worldly success to allow of sharing thy life with another' [!]

In a letter dated 22 June 1929 to the journalist Alice Henry, for example, she does not mention her husband at all, except by implication when she says Richardson is her maiden name, and she goes on to say: I have not needed 'to starve in a garret', but might easily have done so *if I had not had a small income of my own* . . . Richardson is my maiden name and the only name I wish to be associated with my writings. [*Italics mine*]

The ungraciousness the remark implies, when one reflects that it was entirely through Robertson's efforts that she was left free to write, is difficult to explain, particularly when one contrasts it with the diary note already quoted written during Robertson's early illness just after World War I. The same repellent note is struck in a letter to Nettie Palmer, dated 26 December 1934, about eighteen months after Robertson's death. Referring to Vance Palmer's habit of steady 'work' she remarks: But then he has a wife to keep the troubles of living from him—I mean the petty worries of every day which I now have to face alone. This remark, made after thirty-seven years of total support, and in the face of what Robertson accomplished in his own career, implies an insensitivity to the achievements of her husband in public, if not in private, which is quite breath-taking, especially since she was not strictly 'alone'. The implications in respect of Nettie Palmer's function are also astonishing. Nettie Palmer had creative gifts of her own and there was no law of nature which required her to sacrifice them to her husband's. What Australian literature lost by her doing so it is impossible to know. It might conceivably be more than it gained.

In the face of all this, an extended note on Robertson needs little apology. For what follows I am indebted to G. P. Gooch's obituary notice in the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. XIX, 1933, which leaves one in no doubt about the calibre of the man and the scholar. My own glosses on the material should be clear from the context.

Robertson was born in Glasgow in January 1867, the son of a lecturer in the Glasgow Church of Scotland Training College. John Robertson later became headmaster of various public schools, wrote an English grammar with an enormous circulation, devoted his spare time (like Walter Richardson) to geology, botany and chemistry and regarded the publication of *Origin of Species* as one of the great experiences of his life. Gooch, who evidently had access to some of George Robertson's

diaries, tells us the father had an immense influence on his son, but that his intelligent and well-educated mother, Janet Duncan, 'lacked the gift of intimacy' and played little part in his life. As a little boy, George Robertson collected geological and botanical specimens and at school gave amateur lectures and edited a magazine. His favourite author was Scott and at fifteen he developed a life-long interest in music. When he went to Glasgow University at the age of sixteen, Jebb opened his eyes to the claims of the humanities and he began reading *Faust*, resolving to learn German. Besides his passion for Goethe, he developed an interest in Petrarch, and in French and English literature. By the age of eighteen he had translated Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* and was immersed in Heine. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* in 1883 introduced him to German thought in general and Gooch records his later comment that:

To *Sartor* and *Faust* I owe the deepest debt of gratitude, for they above all have moulded my life to what it is today and I hope will ever rule it.

(The comment has an important bearing on the subject of this book.) The young Robertson still believed, in spite of his private interests, that he would have to earn his living teaching science. He took his M.A. degree in 1886 and then began to work for his B.Sc., hoping to spend the autumn of 1888 in Berlin studying chemistry. Meanwhile he consoled himself by setting out to learn *Faust* by heart, by reading Dante, and with music and the theatre. He graduated as Bachelor of Science in 1889 and immediately began to learn Norwegian and Spanish! He translated *A Doll's House* and *Lady from the Sea* (so the source of his wife's ideas on translation later on becomes clearer). In the autumn of 1889 he went to Leipzig, and from this time, Gooch says, 'We hear no more of depression and ill-health'. Robertson became absorbed in Gothic, Middle High German, Anglo-Saxon, Old French, Old Norse, and elementary Sanskrit. (When Richardson wanted an example of an obscure European language for 'The Professor's Experiment' she would have had only to ask and Robertson would have produced the Oscan Declension for her.)¹¹ Robertson's philological studies did not take all his time; he developed a consuming passion for Wagner and began to study him with the same systematic thorough-

¹¹ The language of a people of ancient Italy, occupying Campania; originally that of the Samnites, written in an alphabet of Etruscan origin.

ness that he applied to his study of languages.¹² His passion for Wagner and the theatre was reflected in his choice of a subject for his Ph.D. dissertation. He was interested in the English influences on German drama and narrowed this down to a study of the criticism of Jakob Ayer, analysing its impact on English actors, who visited Middle Germany in the late sixteenth century, and on the poet Hans Sachs.

He left Leipzig with his degree in the summer of 1892, after ten years of university life, in Gooch's words, a 'ripe scholar of twenty-five'. By this time he had met Ethel Richardson, presumably become engaged to her, and was faced with the task of finding a position which would enable him to support not only himself but a wife. He could find no opening for his particular qualifications and kept himself by examining and journalism. Gooch speaks of friction at home, and its 'dulling, crushing effect', adding that 1893 and 1894 were the saddest years of his life. (All this throws some light on Ethel's apparent reluctance, hinted at in one of Robertson's letters, to visit his home, except in his company. Though she herself mentions her mother's distress at her daughter's abandonment of a musical career to engage herself to a penniless young man, there has also to be considered the possible attitude of the scholarly, cultivated and reserved Scottish family to their son's contemplated marriage with an unknown young colonial. One wonders moreover whether Robertson, at this stage of his career, wished, deep down in his heart, to commit himself to marriage.)

In 1895, in any case, he began his list of scholarly publications, two translations, and articles for the *National Review*, the *Fortnightly*, the *Saturday Review*, and later *Cosmopolis*. He went to Munich, according to Gooch, at the beginning of the year, which means, if the statement is correct, that he was there beside his future wife nearly a year before his marriage, a fact which is not made at all clear in *Myself When Young*. Certainly his residence in Munich during that year led to his very successful article 'Twenty-five Years of a German Court Theatre', published in the *National Review*. After his marriage the tide turned with his

¹² Robertson had no doubts whatever that he wanted to be a philologist—in the broad sense of the word. There may have been an element of 'compensation' in his choice, a wish to prove to his father that humane studies were as rigid a discipline as pure science, but it seems uncharacteristic. If the wish existed, he certainly realised it.

appointment to the lectureship at Strasbourg, and from then on Robertson's career is one of steadily rising academic success. Of the Strasbourg period Gooch quotes Richardson's description, part of which throws some light on her own physical prowess:

His main work was of course the *History of German Literature*. The magnificent Staatsbibliothek was only five minutes from where we lived and many hundreds of books were carried to and fro . . . We walked all over the Dolomites together, and the Bavarian Highlands and Switzerland.

The history, published in 1902, was the decisive event of Robertson's life. What an extraordinary feat it was to complete this work in five years seems to have occurred to no one. The book, which is still one of the best introductions to the subject,¹³ resulted in his being invited to occupy the newly-established Chair of German in the University of London. He had already turned down an invitation to occupy the Chair of German at Michigan, and if he had remained in Germany would certainly have been offered a Chair of Comparative Literature. In Gooch's words: Robertson's activities in London, which lasted until his death thirty years later, form an important part of the academic history of the new century.

When his London career began, German studies were a poor relation; when he died they had taken their place as 'an essential part of the curriculum of every British University', and there is little doubt that Robertson's example was largely responsible for the change:

His exact philological knowledge, [Gooch tells us] his unflagging industry and his inexhaustible kindness to his pupils helped to make London the chief centre of German studies in the British Empire.

Robertson founded the *Modern Languages Review* in 1905, edited it for the first four years, and until his death remained in charge of an editorial panel which included such scholars as Skeat, Bradley, Herford, Ker, Chambers, Boas, and Greg. He had, says Gooch, a remarkable gift for

¹³ Robertson's reputation as a scholar is indicated by the fact that his *History of German Literature* reached its fifth edition in 1966; his *Matthew Arnold and Goethe* was reprinted by the Folcroft Press, Pennsylvania, in 1970; his *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century* was republished in New York in 1962; and his *Lessing's Dramatic Theory* republished in New York in 1965.

organisation, in spite of his modest and retiring disposition, and his list of publications is formidable: three books on Goethe, contributions to the *Cambridge History of Modern Literature* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a small *Literature of Germany* for the Home University Library, a revision of his larger *History*, bringing in twentieth-century writers; a book on Schiller, on *Milton's Fame on the Continent*; a monograph on *Goethe and Byron*; a published lecture on *The Gods of Greece in German Poetry*, a *History of Swedish Literature*, Centenary Lectures on Ibsen, a published lecture on *The Reconciliation of Classic and Romantic* (reflecting no doubt his continuing interest in Goethe as the 'symbol of the harmonious synthesis we must endeavour to achieve'). In his later years, he revised some of his opinions on Goethe, maintaining that 'aesthetic values are independent of subjective interest and a work of art must stand or fall by its intrinsic merit'. Anticipating ideas forty years ahead of his time, he held that the fact that 'Goethe was in old age the wisest of men was no compensation for unwritten masterpieces'. His final *Life and Work of Goethe* published in 1932 was for many years the most authoritative of English biographies. Robertson was invited to Weimar as Britain's official representative at the Goethe Centenary celebrations, was the first of the foreign delegates to address the meeting, and was decorated by Hindenburg with the rare medal *Für Kunst und Wissenschaft*. (The Germans had no doubts about his contribution to art as well as knowledge.)

The Swedish and Norwegian governments honoured him for his services to Scandinavian literature. When Bernard Shaw donated his Nobel Prize money to creating an Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation, Robertson was asked to act as adviser. He introduced Swedish and Norwegian into the University curriculum, and succeeded W. P. Ker as Director of Scandinavian Studies in University College.

During his last eighteen months of life, he worked on Lessing and, according to Gooch, his book on Lessing is: a priceless addition to our knowledge of the German theatre and of Lessing's sources and it places his dramatic theory in historical perspective.

In Gooch's opinion, Robertson's most original and important book was his *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century* (1923). It arose from his tracking down of a queer version of Shake-

speare's name used by an eighteenth-century Swiss critic to its correct Italian source and led him finally to the conclusion that Italian critics rather than the British or the Germans were pioneers in critical theory in delivering European literature from the toils of pseudo-classicism. No other scholar, says Gooch, approached him in range of knowledge of the literary byways of eighteenth-century European literature.

All this was accomplished during a life of devoted teaching, and throughout it all he remained 'astonishingly modest', 'genuinely surprised when he was elected to the British Academy'. He was, in fact, incomparably more modest about his tremendous output than his wife was about her much smaller one, and only a curious kind of artist's arrogance would try to argue that such scholarship was of minor importance when measured beside original achievement, though no doubt Robertson, who was entitled to do so, might have argued in this way.

Gooch speaks, towards the end of his article, not only of Robertson's vast range and thoroughness, but of 'his delicacy of touch, gentleness of voice and manner, extreme refinement, generous helpfulness to pupils and fellow-writers'. He also remarks that he was 'a bad sleeper, often nervously upset', and quotes his wife as saying:

He suffered at times from a real Celtic melancholy and was always rather the solitary scholar than a good mixer. His happiest hours were spent among his books.

What the personal implications of these last two quotations are it is impossible to say; Richardson notes in her diary that her husband had a gloomy premonition that he would die in his fifties. It is obvious that they shared a certain emotional attitude to life which their chosen occupations did little to mitigate. The life of a scholar demands even more solitude, time, and concentration than the life of an imaginative writer, who, if he is to give vitality to his work, must to a certain extent invite his soul, spend time brooding, and mix with his fellow-men. The usual view is that it was Richardson, not Robertson, who chose to lead a secluded life, away from the world, with very little social relaxation, in order to 'devote herself to her work'. Looking back over Robertson's extraordinary career, it is possible to begin to doubt this. He was obviously dedicated to the scholar's life long before he contemplated marriage and it is probable that it would have followed much the same lines as it did if he had never married, though he was, by nature, more sociable than his wife. Richard-

son's career as a *hausfrau* pure and simple was a short one: it must have been plain fairly early that she either could not or would not bear children—or that Robertson was not particularly anxious to have them—so that some means of occupying her mind and energy while her husband led the life he had proposed to himself must have been seen as a necessity. The full burgeoning of his gifts once he went to London would explain in part why the life in England seemed so much duller to Richardson than the life in Germany: Robertson's new position made more and more demands on his time and energy. Nevertheless, one has to beware of adding up losses and gains in any marriage, the facts of which can be known only to the two partners concerned. What seems reasonable is the conclusion that a Rosamund Vincy type of wife, devoid of mental resources, would have been death to Robertson's interests, and that Richardson could hardly have organised the material that was in her in any usable form if she had been married to someone else. Robertson's crucial importance to her *Weltanschauung* has for too long been overlooked, but it will be more appropriate to deal with the point in the final pages of this chapter.

Meanwhile it is necessary to return to the period at which her life begins to turn inward and the carefree *Gemütlichkeit* of Strasbourg and Munich gives place to the silent London house, the thickly-carpeted stairs, the padded double doors, the sacred routine.

Richardson's conflicting attitudes to children have been mentioned before: she is spoken of as having been fond of them and as understanding how to relate to them. She could also write testily about having relations in the house interrupting her 'work'; and she herself alludes to motherhood as a waste of a talented woman's time. Mary Clutton-Brock's account of the exchange of letters between the sisters during Lilian's pregnancy almost tempts one to think Lilian undertook it in order to give her sister a vicarious experience of it:

If you don't love it after all the trouble I've gone to, woe betide you!
It may be that Richardson was afraid of passing on some hereditary weakness to a child; according to Vance Palmer, she had a fear of inheriting her father's insanity. If the decision not to have children was really hers and not Robertson's, then I am more inclined to think she used this fear as an *excuse* not to have them, since they would have competed with her for dependent status.

Her sister, depicted in the novels and the autobiographical material as

much more 'weepy' and emotional than herself, seems in fact to have been much more independent than she, more physically and mentally robust. At least during the war, while she was separated from her husband, she earned her own living; she was highly intelligent and interested in current ideas; she had no fears about changing her life-style completely; she married for the second time a man much younger than herself, and until she was an old woman, contributed much to the enterprise on which he was engaged. She was also a militant suffragette, while Ethel's nervous state permitted her only to be a sympathetic onlooker. Nettie Palmer and other writers of reminiscences have built up the picture of Richardson as an aloof, dignified, stately lady very much in control of herself, able to see through the pretences of others, completely sure of herself and her opinions, with a hatred of 'side' and hypocrisy. Much of this is undoubtedly true. Much of it seems also to have been a 'false self' which she created (as Laura created a 'brusque manner') because of her uncertainty about her real one. Just as there is an element of 'panic' as much as love in her feeling for her mother, panic at the thought that she might disappear, so there is an element of panic in her relation to her husband, both before marriage and after. Her chasing him from college to college, in the car, when he was unaccountably late, is an example of it. She seems to have had no real certainty who she was if she was alone. Penton's impressions of her draw attention, not to the forcefulness of her opinions, but to her need to be reassured about them, even to be reassured about her conviction that her husband was a great scholar.¹⁴ Her 'reality', in a sense, depended on his. The quietness, the dignified silence that were intended to impress the visitor as covering great depths, could just as much be a mask, assumed by an effort of will, to cover uncertainty.¹⁵

There is no doubt about her will; it was indomitable, as those who came within her orbit, and nevertheless loved her, have testified. There is no doubt either that her husband was aware of her inability to support

¹⁴ This hesitancy may have another explanation; for instance, in the streak of vanity and jealousy which she undoubtedly possessed.

¹⁵ Arnold Gyde, William Heinemann, Robert Hichens have all emphasised her 'shyness' in social encounters, her reluctance to talk. Even the adoring Nettie Palmer speaks of her preference for 'letting the conversation come to her'. Nothing memorable is recorded of her conversation, at least with acquaintances.

solitude, or else that he was conscious of the fact that he could not spend as much time with her as perhaps he ought to have done. It was he who advised her to invite the unknown picture-theatre pianist, Olga Roncoroni, to keep her company when she was on holiday and he was detained in London; and in later years he gave Miss Roncoroni the task of accompanying her on her travels, which he himself disliked. The picture Miss Roncoroni draws of the upheaval that ensued over dressing when Richardson was invited to Australia House to be presented with the Australian Literature Society's gold medal in 1929 does not square with the portrait of the calm, self-possessed woman beloved of Mrs Palmer. She left her maid in a state of complete exhaustion over the choice of dresses, piled high about her bedroom, and herself retired to bed for two days after the ceremony to recover from the strain! Mrs Palmer's Richardson would have gone in whatever garment came to hand and 'be damned to them'; the real Richardson was completely undecided about what exterior she was going to present in public and anxious to hit on exactly the right one.

Olga Roncoroni's description of the nervous strain involved in signing her name on presentation copies of her Christmas carol is also interesting, and like that of the other episode, is confirmed by references in Richardson's own letters. Her over-reaction at the misuse of her name, especially if it was her husband's name, is another symptom of 'ontological insecurity' rather than of identification with the father. She was dependent on her husband to such an extent that she had to demonstrate continuously that her writing life was separate from his. This fact explains why she was so lost without him when he died; the impression one gains from the letters and diary notes is not one of grief in the normal sense of the word, as of resentment that he should leave her to cope with everyday life, though it would be futile to deny that grief was not part of the complex of feeling. Her attempts to get in touch with his spirit and the change of mood that accompanies what seems to have been success in doing so are an inevitable corollary of the feeling of being lost.

Her husband had in effect taken over the role of both parents; and she had been all her life groping for a sign from both parents, not fixated on one of them. If she had, as seems probable, incestuous fantasies, these were designed as a protection against being alone, rather than as sexual gratifications. The letters make it quite clear that her parents were happy in their roles as husband and wife in all senses of the word; but one

does not get the impression anywhere in the material about Richardson herself that she felt fulfilled as a woman: 'Real spirits in prison. Maurice himself the chief of them. (C'était moi)'. What her husband did for her that probably no other kind of man could have done was to give her familial protection in which she could discover at her own pace, even if it took years, exactly whence she came, who she was and what manner of person she was, through Carlyle's gospel of work and Goethe's use of confession.¹⁶ This process meant, inevitably, not running away from her childhood fears and torments, her adolescent confusions and failures, but bringing them out into the light of day and facing them squarely. Children usually begin the process of self-identification or self-differentiation through play, first in solitary play, then gradually through group play. Of the latter kind, Richardson never had enough until she went to school and by that time was too old for the play of self-discovery. Her husband in a sense enabled her to go on with her solitary childhood play, and for a long time the bond with the sister, which had satisfied her need for company, remained unbroken. Confident that all was safe around her and that she had an attentive ear always at hand, she continued the game of making up stories that had so comforted her in her distressful youth, creating for the many selves she might have been and for those who impinged on them, four totally different, wholly credible worlds. What indeed is so remarkable about her achievement is the variety of music she produced with a handful of notes. Unless one is aware of the biographical background, one could never accuse her of writing the same novel over and over again. There seems to be little connection on the surface between the Laura 'who hated men and always would' and the Louise who could not exist without them, but underneath both is the being who could not exist without a blind, all-consuming attachment to one person; the being who feared the engulfment that normal heterosexual love seemed to demand ('Wait till I'm grown up and I'll show them what I think of them—the pigs!'), and the passionate being that longed to give itself completely, so that all sense of separateness might disappear. For such a divided self, the meeting with Robertson, a devotee of *Faust*, a man able to offer maternal tenderness and paternal protectiveness *and* the oppor-

¹⁶ One is reminded inevitably of Montaigne: 'I have no other end in writing but to discover myself—who also peradventure shall be another thing tomorrow.' Cf. also *Religio Medici*.

tunity to 'avoid the odium of the single life' (*G.W.*, p. 246) must have been the greatest single stroke of luck that ever befell Richardson. No wonder she was devoted to him, and lay awake at night if he were ill wondering what would become of her if he died. No wonder she wrote all her books for him—as Cuffy offered his best sea-shells to his mother. No wonder she was able to continue to write without need of public approbation; his approval alone was sufficient satisfaction; what came to her over and above it was a bonus, and she had no financial need to seek public favour.

What he gave to her as a person by allowing her to become dependent on him in more than one sense of the word is less important and less easily determined than what he contributed to her art. This contribution now seems to me to have over-riding importance and every other influence to be derivative from it. It is a consequence of Robertson's devotion to Goethe and his passion for *Faust*, which he most probably mentioned to Richardson at the beginning of their acquaintance. In *Myself When Young* she describes herself reading it during a rough crossing to Norway, on holiday. This was the occasion when Robertson had asked a favour of her: to try to find him a copy of Ibsen's *Catiline* in Christiana. What is particularly interesting about Richardson's account of the incident is the manner in which it turns the reader *away* from *Faust*:

... an inquisitive old German, came up to me and asked, with truly German condescension: 'And what are *you* reading, mein Fräulein?' I held the book out for him to see—it was a little volume of *Reclam*, entitled *Faust*. He took one look at it, ejaculated: '*Ach, du mein Gott!*' and lurched tipsily away. Roughly and rudely rendered, his words did duty for '*My Gawd!*'—and, nowadays, I should be of the same opinion. (p. 113)

She could of course be hitting at a young girl's intellectual snobbery, at her priggishness in reading a masterpiece while everyone else was seasick. But she leaves the paragraph unqualified, without any indication of what the book might have meant to her later when she came to understand it, and even more significant, without any indication of what it meant to the end of his days to her husband. The passage forms a small strand in the general pattern of dissociating her husband from any specific connection with her life as a writer, though she at times acknowledges to friends a generalised obligation.

Throughout this study it has been argued that Richardson suffered in a particularly acute form from 'the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion' and that this conflict in some shape or other forms the 'Grund-thema' of her work. The temptation to permanence of course provides the tension in *Faust*, and permanence means extinction. In terms of the plot, Faust is to be damned, his soul forfeit to the devil if he ever feels satisfied with things as they are, if he feels that any moment is worth his uttering the words:

Verweile doch, du bist so schön!

[Stay awhile, thou art so beautiful!]

The Second Part of *Faust* exhibits in sometimes bewildering, but in fact in a poetically logical fashion the complexities of this conflict between permanence and transience; its biological, psychological, aesthetic, moral and metaphysical truth to life. Robertson, with his careful scientific training and family background, his passionate addiction to literature, must have grasped very early the positive and tonic aspects of Goethe's thinking and would have been able to recognise easily enough the signs of the destructive tendencies of the 'zwei Seelen' in his future wife's personality. Perhaps he knew what he was doing when he gave her *Niels Lyhne*, a book more easily digested than *Faust*. From it she would have learned in simpler form Goethe's concept of *Streben*:¹⁷ that Faust is saved, in Robertson's words, 'by his restless striving'; and that it is this very striving that is a definition of life itself, though the purpose of the striving is not clear to the forms of life engaged in it. The complexities of Goethe's thought are distilled in Richardson into the simplicities of everyday life, and we get the progression from Heinz Krafft's 'the best of things is wishing for them', to the young Laura's anticipation of the 'exciting perhapses' that might be cut off if one married and settled down, to the full deployment of the theme in a bourgeois Victorian setting in the trilogy. Richard Mahony, like Faust, would have been 'less happy still if he had nothing to be unhappy about' (*R.M.*, p. 370), and his fate enacts

¹⁷ Goethe's 'striving' was the manifestation of fundamental force governing all existence, 'becoming', animating everything else. It has something faintly in common with Hobbes's 'motion' and Schopenhauer's 'desire', or 'drive to exist', but Goethe identified his force with love, by which man comes to be what Nature intended him to be; the 'purpose' of *Streben* was Absolute Being, Life in its fullest sense.

his own perception that '*panta rei* is the eternal truth, *semper idem* the lie we long to see confirmed'. Like Faust, Mahony is 'now elated, now dejected, but always unwilling to accept stagnation'.¹⁸ His interior monologue, in which he nerves himself to decide to leave Ballarat, has strong affinities with Section 6, *Studierzimmer*, in the first part of *Faust*. And Goethe's 'grandiose concept' of *Werden* (Becoming) runs like a thread through Mahony's religious and spiritual history. (Goethe's own interests in the occult, in alchemy, in Swedenborg and Paracelsus should not be forgotten here, nor the relationships between the 'development' theory and Spiritualism.)

The treatment of the theme of failure in the novels is Faustian in conception, though hardly any Australian critic has discussed it except in terms of 'worldly' failure. Faust, in Part II, does in fact succumb to the Mephistophelian trap: he is seduced by the feeling of satisfaction at his own *caritas* (the Mary Mahony temptation). Finding his moment of supreme happiness in securing the happiness of coming generations of men, he utters his fatal words and dies. But at the same time as he fails in his intention, his soul, his 'wayward vagrant spirit' is saved: his 'obscure aspiration' bears it aloft, because, paradoxically, he feels satisfaction with the flux itself:

He only earns his freedom and existence who
daily conquers them anew.

Mephistopheles in willing Evil has worked Good and led Faust unwittingly to a synthesis, and so loses his wager with God.

Mahony, faced with a very different form of the temptation to permanence, the escape from pain through suicide, puts it aside,¹⁹ resumes his characteristic attitude of 'striving', and in so doing gains his fleeting sense of divine harmony and love. Both figures are linked with a woman who embodies the bourgeois virtues, who are their direct opposites in temperament, women who fulfil themselves in service to others, and whose chief characteristics like those of 'the King in Thule' are devotion and loyalty. With both, through every kind of vicissitude and temptation, the

¹⁸ See Introduction to *Goethe's Faust*, ed. Heffner, Rehder, Twaddell, mentioned in the Bibliography, an immensely useful guide to the poem.

¹⁹ Cf. also Sir Thomas Browne: 'It is a brave act of valour to contemne death, but where life is more terrible than death, it is the truest valour to dare to live . . .'

basic link with the woman—a fundamental commitment to ‘activity’—however differently it expresses itself, remains unbroken.

There is even a crude Mephistophelian figure in *Richard Mahony*, in the shape of his *alter ego*, Purdy Smith, the epitome of restlessness for its own sake, the ‘evil’ side of Mahony’s self, the disturber of whatever outward harmony he ever achieves. Like Mephistopheles he is an opportunist, erratic and contradictory, basically ‘selfish and unproductive’.

Traces of Goethe’s influence appear also in the use made of the ideas of Fate and Chance in the novels, particularly in the trilogy. Goethe’s attitude of ‘resignation or fatalism in the matter of abstract philosophical theory’, his ‘optimism’ about what lies within the area of exact observation and of faith in order, find their attenuated form in *Richard Mahony*; they were certainly part of the view of life which Walter Richardson discloses in his *Commonplace Book*. Goethe was saved from philosophising by his awareness of the ‘unique pattern which each individual carries within himself from the time of his birth’,²⁰ an intuitive perception of what biology was later to call the genotype, and of what Maudsley meant earlier by the ‘tyranny of organisation’, the ‘fate’ which no man could escape, but which he could frame his will to deal with.

The concept of Chance is the element of the unpredictable which Goethe sometimes calls the ‘daemonic’, the sudden moment holding within it the ‘possibility of productivity or destruction’. This ‘moment’ occurs throughout the novels again and again and examples of it have been given often enough to enable the reader to test the point further for himself. An extended semi-comic illustration of it is Mahony’s account of the fatal meeting between his susceptible brother-in-law John and the woman who is to be his third wife, on pages 567-9 of the trilogy; an account which ends with the by no means comic allusion to the impossibility of knowing whether what one is doing is ‘good’ or ‘evil’:

If only I’d let well alone that evening . . . he’d probably never have set eyes on the woman. It is certainly a lesson to mind one’s own business—even when it’s a question of doing a kindness . . . or what one thinks a kindness—

It is not only through his work on Goethe and Carlyle, however, that traces of Robertson’s scholarship can be discerned in Richardson’s fiction. What aesthetic theory she had is likely to have been ultimately his: in

²⁰ Introduction to *Goethe’s Faust*, p. 120.

fact the very notion of a formal aesthetic no doubt came from him, and all the reading in Flaubert, Pater, Brandes, the German and Russian realists, Maudsley (who glances at the subject) and the rest is likely to have been consequent upon, not antecedent to, what Robertson told her of his Ph.D. dissertation and the inquiries which followed hard upon it. His *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century* was first published in 1923, but the 'spade-work', he tell us, was done long before, probably around the turn of the century or even earlier. He was certainly looking into Swiss aesthetics in 1903. The book shows a first-hand and encyclopaedic knowledge of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century literature, especially critical literature, in English, French, Italian, Spanish, 'Swiss', German and Dutch, but what is interesting for our purposes is the constant recurrence of the theme: the truth of fact and the truth of fiction. Robertson's main thesis is that at crucial stages in European literary history, Italian thinkers were the initiators of new growth, especially in sowing the seeds leading to the long, slow, intricate life of the idea that imagination was of primary importance in artistic creation, rather than reason, and that the two were inextricably related. He finds these seeds in the work of Gravina and Muratori, who were stung into formulating their aesthetic theories by French criticism of Italian bad taste. The effects of what Gravina has to say about 'dreaming with open eyes' (p. 38), about the combination of inventions with historical facts (p. 40), of Muratori's discussion of the relationship between reason and fantasy, of his notion that the unreal might be the vehicle for a deeper, more essential truth are traced through the labyrinth of eighteenth-century European aesthetics to Bodmer and Breitinger in Switzerland and thence to Germany. Breitinger's Chapter VI 'Of the Miraculous and the Possible' in his *Critische Dichtkunst* (1740), the substance of which is given by Robertson on pages 278 and 279 of his own book, brings us closest to Richardson:

The miraculous is the highest stage . . . of the new. Novelty . . . may be at variance with our ordinary experience; but it does not exceed the limits of the true and the possible. The miraculous, on the other hand, throws off all pretence to truth and possibility; it appears as frankly false and contradictory of our experience; it disguises the truth in a strange mask in order to make it more ingratiating to our mind. But this falseness is a matter of appearance rather than reality; for

the miraculous must always be based on real or possible truth, if it is to be distinguished from pure lying. Were it not so, the most blatant liar would be the best poet. The miraculous is in reality merely a disguised 'probable'. The mind is only accessible to what it can believe; hence the poet must set before it what has, at least, some semblance to truth. He is confronted by a dilemma: if what he describes is too wonderful to be probable, it leaves us cold; if it is too probable, it ceases to be wonderful, and again has no interest for us. Breitingger now investigates the nature of the 'poetic probable' . . .

It is the business of the poet to represent the true as probable and the probable as wonderful.

It is difficult to believe that what Robertson was thinking and writing from 1903 onwards about the theories of Italian and Swiss aestheticians has not passed into *The Getting of Wisdom*. The poet's dilemma described above is the dilemma of the young Laura trying to impress the members of the College literary society, first with an effusion which is met with vociferous incredulity, secondly with a piece of reporting which bores them stiff. Her conclusion is that of Robertson's eighteenth-century theoreticians:

Whereas, as soon as you put pen to paper, provided you kept one foot planted on probability, you might lie as hard as you liked: indeed, the more vigorously you lied, the louder would be your hearers' applause. (*G.W.*, p. 227)

The relationship between truth and fiction is not the only one Richardson apparently picked up from Robertson. His discussion of Bodmer, on page 264 of his *Studies*, seems to have been made use of in the short story 'Succedaneum'. (It is interesting that the last word of the story, 'surrogate', is a word which crops up again and again in Robertson's book; it is not a word which belongs naturally to Richardson's vocabulary.) Quoting from Bodmer's treatise *Von dem Einfluss und Gebräuche der Einbildungskraft* [On the Influence and Uses of the Imaginative Faculty] (Zurich, 1727) Robertson writes:

'The human mind' he says, 'is never so satisfied, as when it is occupied with something which gives it a good opinion of its capabilities' . . . and the highest pleasure of all comes from the artist's consciousness that he possesses the god-like power of creating.

Again, on page 272, writing of Breitingger's concept of the 'Logik der

Phantasie', he quotes him as saying that the impressions of outward things stored up in the imagination are the materials of poetry; and with them 'the logic of the fantasy' has to deal, grouping and comparing them, and thus rendering them suitable vehicles of ideas. This concept, like Muratori's idea that 'it is in the silent gaps of history that the fictitious may be built up', certainly lies behind Richardson's practice, and so does Bodmer's notion of poetic enthusiasm, which, he is quoted as saying, is 'nothing else but the very strong passion for his theme by which the mind of an author is engrossed and filled'. If ever the mind of an author were engrossed and filled it is Richardson's in *Maurice Guest* and in *Richard Mahony*.

One remarkable feature of Robertson's book is his passion for Vico, long before he had become fashionable in English literary circles. He described his *Scienza Nuova* (1725) as 'one of the strangest, as it is one of the deepest works of the eighteenth century':

No work of its century contains more that is now effete, but certainly none contains more far-reaching truths.

He groups Spinoza and Vico as the two minds in modern Europe who have the best right to be called 'enlargers of the kingdom of the spirit'. What attracted him to Vico was probably his revolutionary attempt at comprehensiveness, his attempt to press through to a conception of human history which would be universally applicable, and above all his grasp of some sort of evolutionary complexity in the story of mankind. It is in writing of Vico that Robertson uses an image from his own scientific experience; speaking of the influence of Grotius's dream of universal harmonious law, founded on the study of the past, as crucial to Vico's development, he writes that Grotius's *De jure belli et pacis* 'was to Vico's mind like the crystal that brings solidification to the super-saturated solution'. Robertson never forgot his own early training and it gives a solidity to his work which is too often lacking in literary studies.

He praises unreservedly the place that Vico gives to the imagination in his 'wonderful cosmogony', not only as a function in man's spiritual life, but as the embodiment of an epoch; an active, creative force which not only provides the materials with which genius works, but is genius itself.

Faint traces of this influence can be discerned in his wife's work: Vico's notion that there is a 'poetic wisdom' distinct from other wisdoms, for instance, and his grasp of the infinite complexity of human development.

This was a point on which Robertson himself, like a true evolutionist, always insisted, and it is his own attitude to life, as much as those of the thinkers he studied, that must have had the most steadying effect on Richardson's divided mind. He warns that there is a manifest danger in the ineradicable instinct of our minds to classify and systemise:

We love our antitheses: classicism-romanticism; idealism-realism; collectivism-individualism. But with fuller knowledge comes clearness that such antitheses are inherently unreal; the evolution of thought shows no such sharp contrasts, no such hard and fast lines. Nature makes no leaps; and the progress of human ideas, far from being a geometric progression, is an infinitely complicated organic growth, where one thought passes into its antithesis imperceptibly like a dissolving view . . . To understand, not the antithesis of classicism and romanticism, but their synthesis, is the way progress lies. (pp. 290-1)

The thinking in these last two pages, though it concerns literary history, lies behind Richardson's concept of characterisation. It is impossible to draw any hard and fast lines round her characters: they are 'organic growths', and however much they seem to be in opposition, we are all the time kept aware of what it is they have in common; we have, as has been said already, constantly to be revising our opinions of them, in the light of what we learn about them later. That synthesis 'is the way progress lies' is certainly the message of *Richard Mahony* and *The End of a Childhood*.

Robertson's style in this book is, as always, clear, simple, vigorous, and direct. He has an immense gift for marshalling a huge bulk of unwieldy material and reducing it to order, a gift for keeping a firm hold on a central theme, while seeming to immerse himself in a mass of detail. But neither he nor the reader are ever in danger of drowning and one comes to the end of a voyage over unfamiliar seas, with some firm sense of the route one has travelled and the port at which one has arrived. How far did he impart his skill in organisation to his wife? Is the theme of *The Young Cosima* wavering and uncertain because the novelist no longer had the benefit of his criticism?

What is at least discernible from a reading of Robertson's work is that she depended on his ideas far more than she cared to admit and that at the centre of his ideas, no matter how far or deep they ranged, stood Goethe, in whom all false antitheses fell away.

Robertson set out a few years before he met Ethel Richardson to learn *Faust* by heart; it is not recorded whether he succeeded, but being the man he was it is likely he succeeded as nearly as possible. Gooch ends his account of him as a man in the following words:

In his attitude to the deepest problems of life he stood nearest to Goethe whom he often described as an optimistic fatalist. If happiness in the fullest sense is self-realisation his was a happy life. For he could say in the words of his master, which he often used to repeat: 'Was man in der Jugend wünscht hat man im Alter die Fülle' [What man wishes for in youth, he has in abundance in age].

'He stood nearest to Goethe . . .' It is impossible to believe that he did not communicate some of this nearness, in all its fullness and complexity, to the 'unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised' who linked her life with his, especially after he perceived in her and in what she must have told him of her father, the signs of the two souls dwelling in the one breast. His single-mindedness must have been a stay and prop to one whose 'mind was easily dissipated', his own Celtic streak of melancholy a reassurance that there was a remedy for melancholy. Why Richardson never fully acknowledged the real extent of her debt to her husband is difficult to understand: her creative achievement is not diminished by admitting it, since all the nourishment in the world will not make an artist out of a journeyman apprentice, any more than a supply of tools and wood will make a carpenter. One suspects that a trace of jealousy was involved in this omission (we have noted her jealousy of her sister) and that it grew upon her as her husband's academic successes and honours multiplied in contrast with the slowness of recognition which was her lot. Certainly there is an enormous difference between the relief with which she signed her name on the marriage register, for 'as I thought, the last time' and the implacable refusal to associate her husband's name with any of her work once *Ultima Thule* had brought her fame. She was far more interested in 'honours' than the material published about her so far reveals: the 'feelers' put out to Nettie Palmer about the Nobel Prize (suggestions which Mrs Palmer followed up with unselfish devotion) contradict to some extent the more general idea of the disinterested artist working away in monastic solitude without thought of reward. This idea is not false, but it requires some modification. The letters quoted by Nettie Palmer and Miss Roncoroni are always edited to put their subject in the

most favourable possible light. This fact is all the more strange in view of Richardson's wish that a woman—Mrs Palmer for instance—would write about George Eliot and tell the whole truth, blemishes and all.

To regard the situation between George Eliot and Lewes as an exact parallel with that between Richardson and her husband would be a mistake: Richardson, however much she and Mrs Palmer like to think so, was not a George Eliot. But certainly, as far as we are able to judge, Robertson was intellectually the ideal life-companion for Richardson, as she was perhaps for him so far as he needed a companion. He provided her with the stability and security absolutely necessary to her existence, released her creativity and showed it the channel to flow in, and at the same time made no demands on her, left her free to come and go as she liked, to form what friendships she chose. Free, perhaps, as long as his scholar's peace was not invaded? For the thought that insists on intruding itself, in spite of the impressive evidence to the contrary, is that it might not have been she for whom, alone, the domestic routine was as it was, but that she had to fit her life to his, as Professor Triebel hinted.²¹ If it were not for the odd little comments in Richardson's letters, one of which shows a certain petulance about being urged to get on with another book, the diary note already quoted in which she compares herself with a spirit in prison; if it were not for her constant nervousness, her over-insistence on the fact that she *chose* to have no social life, her fits of depression, then the accounts of her personal history could be taken at their face value. As it is, the feeling remains that she did the best she could with it,²² that she struggled to deserve Novalis's opinion, quoted by Maudsley, that a 'character is a completely fashioned will'.

It is unlikely that we shall ever know the full extent to which a reading of Maudsley affected either Richardson or her father, but sentences such as the following would surely have made a lasting impression, even though the novelist must have known that her fears had no basis in fact: In every nerve-cell there is memory, and not only so, but there is memory in every organic element of the body. The virus of smallpox

²¹ See his essay in *Fisher's Ghost*.

²² One of the saddest sentences in Richardson's writing occurs in *The Getting of Wisdom*, p. 271: 'In Laura's case, no kindly *Atropos* snipped the thread of her aspirations: these, large, vague, extemporary, one and all achieved fulfilment; then *withered* off, to make room for more' [*Italics mine*].

or syphilis [the two diseases which Walter Richardson was to link together] makes its mark on the constitution for the rest of life. (*Body and Mind*, p. 19)

Syphilitic disease of the brain or its arteries lands one person in the asylum with mental symptoms predominant, another in a hospital with sensory and motor disorder predominant. The same cause produces different symptoms, according to the part of the brain which it particularly affects. (pp. 41-2)

The morbid conditions which affect the motor nerve-centres in one generation seem to concentrate themselves sometimes upon the sensory or ideational centres in another . . . capriciously skipping one generation to appear in another. (p. 68)

The insane neurosis which a child inherits in consequence of its parent's insanity is as surely a defect of physical nature as is the epileptic neurosis to which it is closely allied. (p. 75)

. . . the foundations on which the acquisition of education must rest are not acquired, but inherited. No man can escape the tyranny of his organisation, no-one can elude the destiny that is innate in him . . . (p. 75)

A patient under my care, who suffered from general paralysis had lost sensible and voluntary power of one side . . . Were a sane person to wake up some morning with the cutaneous sensibility gone, or with a large area of it sending up to the brain perverted and quite unaccountable impressions, it might be a hard matter perhaps for him to help going mad. (p. 101)²³

. . . the integrity of the mental functions depends on the integrity of the bodily organisation . . . we must acknowledge the essential unity of body and mind. . . . (p. 109)

Passages such as these, outside their context, might seem to have a depressing effect. But Maudsley's passionate insistence on the folly of attempting 'to rear a stable fabric of mental science without taking a faithful account

²³ Cf. *R.M.*, p. 903.

of physiological and pathological inquiries into its phenomena' was ground for hope, not despair. Given the essential unity of body and mind, it was possible to believe that progress in understanding and treating bodily infirmity would eventually be beneficial in what was usually thought of as the separate area of mind. His equally passionate insistence on the fortifying role of the will—though he did not forget that his logic demanded a physiological basis for moral toughness—would have tended to nerve a proud nature to rise above itself. It is not inconceivable that if Walter Richardson really did feel at one stage a temptation to suicide, Maudsley's appeal to the strong nature not to bow to circumstances might have given him courage to resist it.

Maudsley's work points in the direction of non-dualism; Richardson's reading, especially in Eastern religion and philosophy, no doubt would have reinforced his views. But in spite of what her work implies at times intellectually, her private notes, such as they are, do not give the impression that she ever quite succeeded in *feeling* totally at one in body, mind, and spirit. There is an element of over-insistence about her sense of inner harmony, as about other points. Her interest in psychical research is not, fundamentally, based on the impulses which moved her father and the thinkers of his generation: the disinterested desire to think well of the Creator, in spite of the dilemma into which the theory of evolution by natural selection had plunged them. Richardson's real horror was of her own dissolution, born of the horror of witnessing dissolution: a subject she returns to again and again. Her interest in Spiritualism originates partly at least in her 'attempt to preserve a being that is precariously structured'. Nevertheless, the fact that she had a deep psychic need to believe in the continuity of existence has no bearing on the truth or falsity of her belief. She might, as H. L. Mencken would have said, be right! She certainly possessed, to some extent, as both novels and biographical material reveal, the characteristics of the schizoid personality as described by Laing: The schizoid individual fears a real live relationship with real live people. He can relate himself only to depersonalized persons, to phantoms of his own phantasies (imagos), perhaps to things, perhaps to animals. (*The Divided Self*, p. 77)

Compare with this the friends who 'walked like shades through the groves of [Laura's] affection' and the obsessive passions for cats.

Again:

No one feels more 'vulnerable', more liable to be exposed by the look of another person than the schizoid individual . . . every pair of eyes is in a Medusa's head which he feels has power actually to kill or deaden something precariously vital in him . . . (Ibid., p. 76)

The reader is reminded that Richardson claimed it was the fear of being stared at that put an end to her thoughts of a career as a concert-pianist: . . . what did for me, and utterly, were the eyes, the thousands of eyes . . . (M.W.Y., p. 121)

This fear she transfers to Richard Mahony, whereas the real man had no objection at all to being stared at and was much sought after as a 'reader' of prose and verse, as a lecturer, and a chairman.

Laing describes how the schizoid personality swings between feelings of zest and power and a conviction of aridity and lifelessness:

This emptiness, this sense of inner lack of richness, substantiality and value, if it overweighs his illusory omnipotence, is a powerful prompter to make 'contact' with reality. The soul or self thus desolate and arid longs to be refreshed and fertilized, but longs not simply for a relationship between separable beings, but to be completely drenched and suffused by the other. (*The Divided Self*, p. 91)

The comparison with Maurice, and even more with Louise, with the young Laura during her passion for Evelyn, and with Richardson herself, in describing this passion, is obvious enough. She has transferred the state of mind to Mahony and sublimated his longing for suffusion by the other into a quest for mystic one-ness.

What is really important, however, is not that Richardson had, in some greater measure than most of us have, any or all of these characteristics, but that she learned to control them and to put them to productive use. Anxiety is not in itself neurotic: indeed, human beings unable to feel anxiety would hardly have survived as long as they have done in this harsh world, and the more intelligent a human being is, the more he is capable of feeling anxiety, without being paralysed by it; idiots are not anxious. Moreover, the whole question what constitutes a neurosis, a 'sick' personality is, except at the most obvious extremity, an open one: to be 'well adjusted' to certain conditions in a modern military-industrial-commercial society could well be regarded as a sickness, a crime, or a wanton capitulation to savagery.

There is little doubt that Richardson 'disliked' her heredity, the geno-

type the fates had dealt her, though she took a pride in some of its aspects. But without this heredity and what it made of her, by acceptance or rejection, she would not have become the artist she was, would not have contributed her distinctive note to the cosmic harmony. The really admirable, even noble, quality about Richardson is her early recognition of her personality difficulties and her attempt to structure an existence for herself which would enable her to understand them, while at the same time contributing this understanding to the human store of self-knowledge. Early in her writing life she drew a portrait of a mind that was easily dissipated, in Maurice Guest, Laura Rambotham and her classmate Inez. She took care that it should not be with her as it was with her fictional selves and lashed herself to the mast of duty to her 'work'. If this work was play in the sculptor Maillol's sense ('Je ne travaille jamais, je m'amuse'); if it was play in the sense postulated by the authors of *Man-Child*,²⁴ we have reason to be grateful that Richardson was free to amuse herself. One of the charms of her novels, as compared with other novels of the period, and indeed with many of those of our own day which have designs upon us, is the absence of earnest didacticism. If she was preaching, it was only to herself, and the reader is left to pick up the message or not, as he pleases. She took to herself perhaps the words of that psychiatrist of genius, whose work has been so unjustly overshadowed by Freud's, but there is no evidence in the books that she was offering it to anyone else:

the individual who cannot use circumstances, or accommodate himself successfully to them, and in one way or another make them further his development, is controlled and used by them; being weak, he must be miserable, must be a victim; and one way in which his suffering and failure will be manifest will be in insanity. Thus it is that mental trials which serve in the end to strengthen a strong nature break down a weak one which cannot fitly react, and that the efficiency of a moral cause of insanity betrays a conspiracy from within with the unfavourable outward circumstances. (*Body and Mind*, p. 107)

Her father's fate was, for physical reasons, beyond his power to control, but it was a challenge to her and she rose to it. Her life is a vivid demon-

²⁴ See David Jones and Doris Klein, *Man-Child: A Study of the Infantilisation of Man* (Cape, 1971), in which it is argued, without apology(!), that the writing of books is a playful activity.

stration of the efficacy of the human will in making 'circumstances further [his] development', and from the resulting work all sense of the author's own private psychological and moral strain is absent—a statement which cannot be made about Lawrence's work, for example.

Mahony's irritated question to the unadaptable Tangye: 'Pray, does it never occur to you, you fool, that *flowers* may spring from you?' is as characteristic of his creator as is Tangye's clear-eyed acceptance that life is basically a struggle for food. Like her father (as he most truly was), Richardson saw that there were two sides to every question.

Out of her uncertainties and anxieties, her doubts and divisions she created two major and several minor works of art and if the facts of her life had disappeared from view as successfully as Shakespeare's we should never have known where her own experiences touched those of her characters. As an artist, she is ruthlessly honest; as a chronicler, a historian, she reserves the right to equivocate.

Most important of all, her work transcends not only the personal and particular, not only the national, but out of its passionate particularity speaks to all men. Its preoccupation with permanence and change is a preoccupation built in to the human condition the whole world over: biologically and psychologically all men have to come to terms with the 'mother', the desire for permanence, and the 'father', the desire for change, in their particular selves, reflecting as they do so a process common to all substances, organic and inorganic. Richardson's psychic aims, more urgent than those of most of us, became fused with her artistic aims in the process of achieving this harmonious co-habitation of opposites and what began as 'a saving occupation' ended as 'an engrossing pursuit'. But the figure with the engrossing pursuit interested her only marginally. What really aroused her, as it aroused Jacobsen, was the figure who aspires to, but to whom Fate has denied, the will to seek the consolations of an engrossing pursuit, denied the capacity for fulfilment in love, art or work. One after another her characters ask why this should be so, and perhaps, like her favourite poet Hardy, whose temper and tone hers so much resembles, and one or two recalcitrant modern scientists, like Chargauff and even oddly enough, Julian Huxley, she was moving towards some more satisfactory concept of the phenomenon of Chance, which plays such a decisive if unobtrusive role in the novels. Her particular religious belief absolves her from the charge of pessimism so often levelled at her, though

she dramatises the objections to Spiritualism with dispassionate accuracy. Nevertheless, if what she felt about the relationship between life and death should chance to be true, it might please her to know that her work will have played a part in keeping alive, or helping to restore in a more acceptable form an old image by which men once oriented their lives. The ancient symbol of the Great Chain of Being stretching from God down to the dust took many centuries in dying, and Darwin, the biologist, seemed in 1859 to have given it the final blow. But men need an image to live by if they are not to fall into confusion and biologists are now engaged in the urgent task of restoring a sustaining image to our consciousness. The new word for it is 'ecology', and it runs the risk, as the other image did not, of being vulgarised by over-exposure in the press. But vulgarisation and the arrogant ignorance of politicians cannot affect the truth of this metaphor: the new chain of being is the food-chain which links all organic life, as well as what we think of as inorganic, in a vast web which embraces all that is. This is the ancient wisdom made new, as Spiritualists, in spite of the eccentricities and absurdities of their rank-and-file, were well aware. Richardson's work, a heroic endeavour, is part of that wisdom, as the Proem to *Richard Mahony* alone makes clear, and if Australia forgets to prize it at its true worth, she will by that act impoverish her spiritual and so her physical heritage.

John George Robertson declared that 'To know *Faust* is one of the most elementary and obvious duties of modern culture even if our knowledge of Goethe begins and ends with that work'. One might adapt his opinion and state that to know *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, thoroughly, is one of the most elementary and obvious duties of Australian culture, even if our knowledge of Richardson begins and ends with that work. But to read it is not only a duty, but an unforgettable experience of the profundities that sustain the simplicities of existence, an experience that shakes and then strengthens the reader who yields himself to it, and which endows the common dust with a tragic grandeur.

Richardson's achievement in both life and work is epitomised in the one piece of her music which is at present available to us: her setting of *Christkindlein's Wiegenlied*, the words of which unite the domestic with the sublime. The music begins in a minor key; it ends in an unexpected major key, still haunted by the minor tones of its origin.

Appendix A

Walter Lindesay Richardson and *The Harbinger of Light*¹

AT THE Cavendish Rooms in London on 27 July 1873, Dr Walter Lindesay Richardson delivered an address on 'Spiritualism in Australia' to an admiring audience of English Spiritualists. His exordium is of particular interest to readers of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*: its confident tone, the speaker's sense of identification with the colony, are not characteristic of the irritable, moody, 'spoilt child' of the latter part of *The Way Home*:

I come from that far country where, according to Mr Gathorne Hardy, the result of disestablishing religion is that no-one speaks without swearing and almost everyone gets drunk; from that country at your antipodes where every free man has a voice in making the laws that govern him; where the labouring classes have earned the right to work eight hours, to rest eight hours and to re-create themselves eight hours; from that land where every honest and capable man can really sit under his own fig-tree. There the Teuton and the Celt and the Anglo-Saxon are founding a new republic and there the great wave of modern Spiritualism is spreading over the length and breadth of the land. It is sapping the foundations of ecclesiastical Christianity; it is splitting asunder corporations based on self-interest and human authority; it is, with you, labouring to solve the problem as to what is to constitute the Church of the future, what is to be the confession of faith and formulated creed. It is, amid much ridicule and

¹ Extracts from an article printed in *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 1, 1970, under the title 'Walter Lindesay Richardson: The Man, the Portrait and the Artist'.

denunciation, proclaiming the brotherhood of the human race and the absolute and unconditional freedom of each immortal soul.

Richardson illustrated his general remarks on the virtues of the country he had just left by enumerating the progressive measures in which it had anticipated the mother country: the abolition of public execution, the institution of the secret ballot, of free, secular and compulsory education and the legalisation of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. He explained that there was no state religion in Australia and therefore no state aid to sects, since 'the state was the common parent of Christians, Chinese, Jews and Mahomedans'. The courageousness of his opinions is further demonstrated in the following sentence, though the sentiments would hardly have commended him to his former patients in Ballarat or to his future patients in Hawthorn, Victoria:

Among all sections of the Churches that profess to be followers of him who was once a free-thinker and a communist, dogma is losing hold of men's minds, and superstition and authoritative religion are being gradually cast off like old garments.

Richardson's main subject is the formation in 1869-70 of the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists, of which he was the first president. He praises the part played in its formation by the Reverend John Tyerman, who was dismissed from his living because of his beliefs, and by B. S. Nayler, author of *The Unity, Duality and Trinity of the Godhead*, the book which Ethel Richardson in *Myself When Young* tells us she dipped into as a child. In his final sentence he exhorts his hearers to imitate Christ 'whether in Australia or England' and to live 'as nearly as we can in harmony with the divine natural law'. His lecture was printed in the English Spiritual magazine *Medium and Daybreak* and a report of it was given in *The Harbinger of Light*, the Melbourne Spiritualist journal from which these quotations are taken. According to F. B. Smith, 'Richardson's bearing, knowledge and superb speaking voice so impressed the English Spiritualists Association that they tried to retain him as an official lecturer'.

Readers of *Richard Mahony*, of *The Way Home* in particular, will find some difficulty in reconciling the portrait with its original model. Mahony is seen for the most part as he might have appeared to womenfolk unsympathetic to his intellectual interests; the real-life Dr Richardson, as he appears in his contributions to *The Harbinger*, or in his medical

writings, is a far more impressive figure. The part which he actually played in the Victorian Spiritualist movement was outlined briefly by Dr Smith in 1960 in his extremely valuable thesis 'Religion and Free-thought in Melbourne, 1870-1890', and I here gladly acknowledge the debt I owe him for indicating the short-cut to the goal of my own inquiries. . . .

Walter Lindesay Richardson . . . was one of the 'hard reading' colonials referred to by Dr Smith, with very little to learn from the visiting overseas lecturers who bestowed their favours on them from time to time. Richardson's interest in the continuity of material and spiritual existence, in fact, dates back to his student days in Edinburgh. It was originally as much scientific as religious and arose from the profound passion for truth which appears to have been his dominating characteristic, if his published writings represent him truly. His home training no doubt accorded the spirit central importance, but he attended a university which was a leading centre for the study of physiology, animal magnetism, phrenology, and mesmerism, interests which reflect its openness to new ideas and its willingness to investigate them. Edinburgh University indeed was a radical and progressive element in nineteenth-century thinking; its relationship with Germany and the influence of its graduates on the intellectual life of Australia and New Zealand need some kind of systematic investigation.

A deep and lasting effect on Richardson, for instance, to judge by the fragments of writing which survive from the period just before his final collapse, was that of William Gregory, Professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh, and of Karl von Reichenbach, who explored the nature of creosote and paraffin. Gregory, one of Liebig's favourite pupils, translated Reichenbach's *Researches on Magnetism, Electricity, Heat and Light in their Relation to Vital Power*, in which Reichenbach postulated a force which he named Od, intermediate between heat, light and electricity and recognisable only to the nerves of sensitive persons. This force, he claimed, explained the phenomena of animal magnetism and mesmerism, the latter of which he regarded as quackery. Gregory, in 1846, published an abstract of Reichenbach's *Researches*, which had originally formed a supplement to Liebig and Wöhler's *Annalen der Chemie* (1845), one of the standard journals for scientists and medical men of the day. The edition sold out rapidly and Gregory was pestered for a new one, which was published

in Edinburgh in 1850. His own *Letters to a Candid Engineer on Animal Magnetism* were published in 1851. Walter Richardson graduated in 1849 and would have had ample opportunity therefore to become acquainted with these ideas before leaving for Australia.

Many medical men besides Richardson, according to Dr Smith, came to Spiritualism through their interest in animal magnetism. Spiritualism, setting aside its sensational and trivial aspects, argues that (in Wallace's words):

the world and the whole material universe exist for the purpose of developing spiritual beings—that death is simply a transition from material existence to the first grade of spirit life—and that the happiness and the degree of our progress will be wholly dependent upon the use we have made of our faculties and opportunities here. In short, it extended the 'development' theory of Spencer, Darwin and Huxley and insisted that the law of cause and effect was as operative in the invisible as in the visible world. . . .

The history of Spiritualism in Victoria is part of the history of free thought, as Dr Smith has shown, and Walter Richardson's contributions to *The Harbinger* support his findings. His great passion for facts, his reverence for truth above all things, are revealed in his writings on Spiritualism as well as in those on medical subjects. No doubt he wrote at a time when the wish was particularly strong to be convinced that Darwinian materialism with all its cruel implications was not the sole explanation of life. But there seems also to have been some extremely personal motive behind Richardson's entry into the movement, which is not yet clear.

There was a good deal of sporadic interest in Spiritualism in Victoria during the early fifties, only a few years after it had come to the surface in America, but it was not until 1869 that Spiritualists in Melbourne began to organise themselves, at a meeting held in the home of Dr J. B. Motherwell, a well-known doctor. The following year the group had an official title and access to a journal. Earlier in 1869 Richardson had been elected to the Medical Society of Victoria and was an extremely active member, respected by scientists. He was therefore far from being the somewhat woolly-minded recluse pictured in *The Way Home*. The first published mention of his interest in Spiritualism is an advertisement in the October issue of *The Harbinger* from his address at 139 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy:

Dr Richardson, being desirous to investigate the reality of the stated facts and philosophy of Spiritualism, will be glad to hear from anyone capable of bringing forward evidence that spirits can and do communicate.

In July 1871, he contributed a long article to *The Harbinger* entitled 'The Present Tendency of Liberated Thought' which reflects the eclecticism of free-thinkers and their insistence on the sanctity of the individual conscience, as well as Richardson's own sturdy independence of thought, his devotion to truth and his width of reading, particularly in Biblical scholarship. 'Authority', he writes, 'is not the soundest basis on which to erect belief', and he points out that the right of private judgment had already been asserted by Huss, Luther, Calvin and Socinius. He continues: The Royal Society, the microscope, telescope, vaccination, life assurance, fanners for wheat, chloroform, secular education, the science of Geology were all declared to be atheistical inventions of Satan and subversive of the Christian faith.

The characteristic of the present age, he declares, 'is a veneration for truth and a fearless search after it' and as seekers after truth he names Huxley, Tyndall, Lyell, Wallace, Darwin and Lubbock. He refers to Huxley's *Lay Sermons* and quotes his remark:

In the nineteenth century, as at the dawn of (modern) physical science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the orthodox.²

Richardson's article is most probably the origin of the same reference in *The Way Home* (p. 556) in the passage describing the progress of Mahony's philosophical inquiries. The interesting point is that Walter Richardson's quotation is made in a context of approval of Huxley's point of view, whereas the passage in the novel shows Mahony as beginning to turn from science and to question Huxley's opinion. The connection between fact and fiction is therefore not exact. Moreover, 'The Present Tendency' was published a year after the birth of Richardson's daughter Ethel; in the novel the reference to Huxley occurs some months before the birth of Cuffy. In real life, then, Richardson in 1871 was still a 'scientific' evolutionist and for him, as for Huxley, 'open enquiry was

² Quoted from Huxley's article on Darwin's *Origin of Species* in *The Westminster Review*, April 1860.

his bosom friend', as his quotation from Tyndall's address to the British Association in 1870 shows:

Fear not the evolution hypothesis. If it be of God ye cannot overthrow it; if it be of man, it will come to nought.

The heroes of nineteenth-century science indeed were at this time equated in his mind with those of religion and philosophy in bygone ages and the possibility of a synthesis of the three was one of the attractions of Spiritualism:

Light has always shone through a Confucius, a Socrates, a Plato, a Jesus, an Alfred, a Swedenborg.

For him the search for truth is a never-ending struggle manifested in different lives in different ages. Now, he says:

The liberated mind is everywhere rejecting antiquated ideas and is appealing to facts . . . Science is pressing Theology and saying: 'Stand aside, our facts are God's words and are more plainly read than your texts!'

One of the most poignant features of Richardson's history is the struggle made by his clouded mind in the last year of his conscious life to assert that 'a fact, of whatever nature, is a divine disclosure'. The origin of the habit of mind of Richardson's daughter is plain enough; what needs stressing is the imagination at the root of it.

In November 1871 Richardson gave the first annual address of the President of the V.A.P.S., which was published the following month. Outlining the origin and the progress of the association, he remarks that the members felt that hypocrisy was a greater burden to bear than the charge of infidelity and that moral persecution of members still existed, 'some having suffered in their business relations in consequence of their connection with Spiritualism'.

He speaks of the opposition of the Church, which must have been one of the reasons the association decided not to make its proceedings public the first year, and goes on:

Many think it is now our duty to announce our services and to invite the poor, the doubting, the dirty and the immoral to the gospel offered here without money and without price and to the salvation free to all without bargain.

He points to the need for a children's Lyceum, or Sunday School, quoting in support of his proposal Huxley's opinion that 'It is a most

unfair and unjust and abominable thing to implant in a child's mind what would by and by be removed with difficulty and grief'. The account given in *Richard Mahony* of the children's religious training reflects the principle. Henry Handel Richardson's reference in *Myself When Young* (p. 53) to her own early religious training or the lack of it is an interesting commentary upon excessive reticence.

If the heterodox views expressed by Richardson in Melbourne and London became widely known, as is more than likely, it is not very surprising that when he set up practice at Hawthorn in 1874, after his financial disaster, the practice was slow to move. Mary's early fears for Mahony in the Ballarat days of the effect of infidelity on a doctor's reputation were most likely realised in real life during the Hawthorn period. Nor would his stated opposition in 1874 to compulsory vaccination have tended to commend him to parents hounded by the law to have their children vaccinated. The vaccination issue was certainly the rock on which the practice at Chiltern foundered, though by that time Richardson was a very sick man.

In 1872 he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Are These Things True? and if so, What Are The Logical Inferences?* It was published by W. H. Terry at sixpence a copy and according to the advertisement in *The Harbinger* was written in a 'masterly style'. The pamphlet was based on eight letters Richardson sent to the *Ballarat Evening Mail* in answer to an attack on Spiritualism in a series of articles by Mr David Blair, M.L.A.

The pamphlet possesses at times incisiveness and eloquence, but its organisation suffers from the fact that it is a refutation step by step of Blair's articles and necessarily follows the pattern, such as it is, of his argument. Richardson disposes easily enough of Blair, but his underlying assumption that all men prefer truth before all things leaves him open to the kind of attack he himself was making on those who appealed to the argument of authority.

The wide scope of his inquiries and the way in which he kept in touch with advanced ideas can be seen from the pamphlet as well as from his letter to *The Harbinger* in June 1872, which shows him as a reader of *Nature*, founded three years before. His letter comments on Wallace's lectures on Spiritualism reported in the February number of *Nature* and provides a typical example of his prose style:

It will be seen that the Spiritualists of Victoria are in good company,

as, having reason and truth on their side, they can afford to despise the sneers of the sciolist, the denunciations of the interested, and the oburgations of the superstitious.

The Harbinger for 1872 and 1873 makes it clear that Richardson was extremely active in the Association, travelling a good deal on its account. From other sources there is evidence of his practical interest in matters connected with his own profession, and the picture presented in *The Way Home* of the ineffectual solitary who shunned the scenes of the past is not an exact parallel with the facts. He visited Castlemaine to test the genuineness of the famous medium Mrs Paton; he chaired meetings at Geelong and Ballarat for the celebrated visiting American lecturer Dr J. R. Peebles, who spoke later of his harmonious relations 'with the Richardsons'. They by this time were on that triumphal journey to Europe, which ended so disastrously. The accounts of his doings which Richardson sent in his monthly letter to *The Harbinger* are extremely interesting, showing him in close touch with current events, as well as with the activities of British Spiritualists. He chaired a meeting in Bristol for the famous healing medium Dr Monck, and compared the riotous behaviour of the British mob unfavourably with what he had seen in the colonies. One of the most interesting of his letters is dated 2 February 1874, and published in May, describing séances he had attended at the home of Mrs McDougall Gregory, widow of his former Professor of Chemistry. The séances at Mrs Gregory's were not without friction, and Richardson's concern for factual truth frequently runs counter to his enthusiasm:

I asked to see the medium and Florence (the spirit) at the same time, but consent was not given . . . I cannot deny that I was much distressed at the intense resemblance of the face shown as Florence to that of the medium when I looked carefully at her after the séance and that I desired more complete evidence as to the distinct and separate individuality of Florence, the reputed spirit and Miss S. the medium, and a more complete assurance that the entranced medium was not consciously to herself shown at the aperture.

The voice of the genuine scientist cannot help making itself heard in the final sentence:

We know so little of the science of apparitions that the most philosophic course is to observe and record.

His scepticism was banished seemingly at the fourth séance '... for the tying of the medium with tape and the sealing were entrusted to Mr. Herbert Noyes, B.A. and myself'.

In April, however, the scientific conscience was uppermost again at a private séance with the same medium. Richardson's request to be allowed to mark her face with charcoal and chalk was refused. He writes: I asked the materialised spirit if she had bones? She said 'yes' and on her retiring behind the curtain we heard noises which she said 'were her bones creaking'. I should have liked of course to have examined her anatomically, but I was met with a cold refusal when I even requested to see her tongue and feel her pulse. He was somewhat reassured by measuring the manifestation and finding her six inches taller than the medium:

The monthly letters to *The Harbinger* cease after one posted in June on 'Spiritualism in England', published in the August number. Presumably by this time he was on the Continent, or on the way home.

The record of Richardson's association with *The Harbinger*, however, does not end with the reports of his successful visit to London. It continues in fact until the July issue a month before his collapse, and his contributions provide a valuable but pitiful record of his gradual deterioration and the tenacious hold of his early training.

His last organised contribution is dated from Melbourne in October 1874, not long after his return, and appears in the November issue. It is of central interest for the student of the trilogy, and throws light on the controversy which broke out three years later in the *Chiltern Federal Standard* over Richardson's resignation from the office of public vaccinator.

Richardson's article is entitled 'The Position of Anti-vaccinators' and it reveals that he had followed closely and carefully the arguments in the *Lancet* from 1866 onwards on the compulsory vaccination issue and that he was well aware of the history of vaccination on the Continent. His article pays due respect to Jenner's achievement and the necessity of his procedures in certain circumstances, but Richardson's view is that small-pox is 'a consequence of ignorance and filth' and that compulsory vaccination tends to encourage neglect of 'the real hygienic measures to abolish small-pox and other zymotic diseases'. His main concern in the letter is to point out how careless and ignorant vaccination procedures

can spread other diseases, particularly syphilis. His statements are carefully documented and cautiously expressed and his conclusions are irreproachable:

That the safety of the operation depends 1st. On the freedom from disease of the child vaccinated from. 2nd. On the freedom from disease of the person to be vaccinated. 3rd. On the skill and judgment of the vaccinator.

Dr Alan Stoller and Mrs Emmerson have put forward elsewhere what seems to be the most likely explanation of Richardson's disease, so far as this can be ascertained in the absence of blood tests. If the diagnosis which appears on the certificate of his admission to Yarra Bend Asylum was correct, then there is no doubt that Dr Stoller's conclusions are correct. Richardson's article suggests strongly that he had the misgivings about his condition that might be supposed in so competent a medical man . . . By the time he wrote, moreover, he had read Maudsley's *Body and Mind* and it is evident from his last pieces of writing for *The Harbinger* that it had made a profound impression on him. Syphilis was apparently on his mind and he was concerned, as his article states, about its origins and its effects.

Dr Stoller has assumed his disease originated, in the most likely way, from infection by a prostitute on the goldfields. The novel allows for this possibility in accordance with historical realism by providing Mahony with an *alter ego*, Purdy Smith. . . .

Yet, though the possibility of infection from a prostitute is embedded in the novel, such an origin for Richardson's disease in real life seems out of character and cannot in any case be proved. The possibility that he was infected as a medical student cannot be ruled out; unhygienic conditions prevailing at the time either in Edinburgh or in Ballarat or on board ship would have provided sources of infection unlikely today. One would like to know also whether or not Richardson had been vaccinated before his visits to England (the number of them is not certain) in 1867 and 1873, or before leaving England for Australia in 1868. Vaccination in Victoria was a lively issue and was rigorously enforced, so that whether his children had been vaccinated and from whom and by what vaccinator are serious questions. Syphilitic infection could have been and was spread by careless and ignorant vaccination procedures in Richardson's day. If his daughter knew of her father's views on the sub-

ject, and if she had been vaccinated, the knowledge must have contributed in some degree to the fear of inherited insanity that Vance Palmer attributed to her, even though she must have known that the fears were irrational.

About the time he wrote on this vexed question Walter Richardson would have been beginning to establish himself at Hawthorn. His views on vaccination and his continued participation in Spiritualist activities would not have tended to do his practice much good. But his motive for abandoning it and moving to Chiltern is complicated by another consideration.

The Doctor Rummel of the novel, from whom Mahony took over, is almost certainly Dr C. W. Rohner, a noted Spiritualist and a regular contributor to *The Harbinger* and the *Chiltern Federal Standard* on Spiritualism. It is not hard to understand why in his enthusiasm for his cause Richardson fixed upon Chiltern when he decided to throw up his Melbourne practice. There was an active Spiritualist circle in Chiltern and in a letter to *The Harbinger* printed in August 1877, Richardson says he had been invited to join it by the spirits themselves. The medium he describes as a young engineer employed by the Chiltern Valley Gold-mining Company. He comments in passing that at a former sitting 'they have been annoyed by larrikins shouting outside their house'. To judge by the tone of the editorials of the *Federal Standard*, there was a hard core of scepticism in the town and Dr Rohner was still zealous in counteracting it even after he had left the area.

Richardson's letter from Chiltern is the first of his contributions to show signs of falling off in the writing. It has a naïveté, a thinness, which are not characteristic of his former incisive, logical style.

He began well at Chiltern, joining the Athenaeum Association as its vice-president soon after his arrival in June 1876, taking part regularly in its meetings, giving readings at its concerts, and making gifts of books to its library, which were gratefully acknowledged.

In December he is reported as having attended an accident and performed a post-mortem on a woman who had poisoned herself. His deposition in court is perfectly clear and reasoned. In February 1877 we find him chairing a lecture for the Reverend R. K. Ewing of Beechworth, on the poets Moore and Campbell. During this period the *Federal Standard* had printed several articles on Spiritualism, including one by

Dr Rohner, and since some members of the Chiltern Spiritualist Circle were also members of the Athenaeum Society, it is obvious that Richardson's interest in Spiritualism was not an isolated eccentricity, as it is made to appear in the novel.

The day before Bishop Moorhouse arrived on 3 May 1877 on his visit to Chiltern to consecrate the church, a letter from Richardson appeared in the newspaper praising Australian wines, in particular the local varieties. He complains of having been sold a case which turned out to be vinegar. There is no mention of his having been host to the Bishop, as Mahony is in the novel, although in one of his letters to Mary, Richardson suggests that the Bishop's visit has been postponed because she is away from home. In June, Richardson is in court again in Wangaratta over what became known as the Flanagan affray—a public house brawl after which one of the brawlers died in circumstances which gave rise to some argument. The day after he is reported as having given 'capital readings' at an Athenaeum concert. The newspaper of 14 July mentions him as reading at another concert.

The first hint of any trouble brewing is the announcement of his resignation as public vaccinator, which is hostile in tone.

His reply to this is printed on 25 July and explains the difficulties of the position. What he has to say in his letter about the practice of vaccination is the substance of what his earlier letter to *The Harbinger* had contained, but his manner of putting it this time would not have been enlightening to simple country people without a knowledge of the issues involved. Moreover his remarks about the health of children and adults in Chiltern are inconsistent and represent a further decline in the logical precision which once characterised his writing. At this distance of time, one may hazard the surmise that the hidden cause of all the trouble about vaccination was the lack of proper refrigeration. Supplies of lymph had often to be brought from Melbourne because of the difficulty of obtaining it locally; the source, Richardson said, was pure, but for some reason the vaccine frequently did not take. The local inhabitants put the fact down to his incompetence; the cause was more likely the limited life of the vaccine under trying conditions of transport in hot weather.

Richardson's letter, however, ends with a surprisingly tasteless and tactless remark which, taken together with his letter about the wine, must have given rise to the innuendoes in the newspaper, and to a

hostile reply to his letter, amounting to a campaign against him until his departure. Whether Richardson was drinking more than necessary, as apparently was believed, there is no means of knowing; his previous history and his connection with Spiritualism would make it unlikely. It would however have been perfectly possible for a casual acquaintance to misinterpret some of the symptoms of his real illness for drunkenness—a circumstance which is hinted at in *Ultima Thule* (pp. 830-1).

An editorial attack on him for leaving the town without notice is answered by his wife in a letter dated 29 August and printed on 1 September. It is a simple and dignified refutation and is signed 'Marie Richardson'. His house and furniture were sold on 22 September, 'an important sale', according to the *Standard*, and on the day of the sale it was reported that his successor, Dr Frank Haley, who had settled in Chiltern, had swallowed by mistake a dram of aconite and had to be treated by two doctors from neighbouring settlements! The irony lurking in this statement is not the subject of comment by the editor.

In spite of his troubles in Chiltern, Richardson's connection with *The Harbinger* continued. His next piece (presumably from Queenscliff) has no date or signature and was published in April 1878. The editor introduces it thus: 'A medical gentleman residing in the country sends us the following'. It can be identified by its subject matter and corroborates Dr Stoller's statement that 'the content of delusions relates to the educational background of the afflicted person'.

The letter describes his visits to Professor Gregory's widow and a comparison of this account with the one written in 1874 makes sad reading. It reveals how deep and lasting was the impression made upon the young student by his Chemistry professor. A further letter printed in May shows him losing control of his sentences and contains a last mention of Gregory and his researches into quartz. The June issue carries, without date or place of origin, a contribution headed 'From My Commonplace Book'. One of these items is particularly illuminating, since it is a quotation from Maudsley's *Body and Mind*. The end of the quotation is a jumble of disconnected phrases, as a comparison with Maudsley will show, though it is possible the editor might have had trouble with Richardson's handwriting:

No-one can escape the tyranny of his organisation, no-one can elude the destiny that is innate in him, which unconsciously shapes his

ends even when he believes he is determining them with great skill and foresight. The treatment of crime is a branch of psychology. Crime is a disorder of the mind having close relations to Epilepsy, Dipsomania, Insanity—and other forms of imperfect organs of speech, club-foot, cleft palate, harelip, deafness, paralysis, suicide, mania.

The discussion of crime in *Body and Mind* precedes by several pages the first sentence given above. The progression 'paralysis, suicide, mania' does not appear in the book in that order. There is no doubt, however, that Maudsley's discussion of the hereditary nature of disease, his connection of syphilis with insanity, his insistence on the inexorable laws of cause and effect, had made a deep impression on Richardson's mind.

In the July issue of *The Harbinger*, there is a final item, unsigned, with the same title as the last, of which nothing need be said. Early in September Walter Richardson was in the Cremorne Private Asylum and in November he was committed to Yarra Bend. On 1 August the following year, the anniversary of his graduation as a doctor of medicine, he died. . . .

What Richardson's writing reveals most clearly is the hold he kept on the question that had occupied him since his student days: the search for an answer to the riddle of existence. . . . There is something heroic about a struggle which continues until the final mental breaking-point is reached and references to Mahony's 'petty defensive pride and empty ambitions', to his 'shabby-genteel notions of *noblesse oblige*' certainly do not apply to the picture of Walter Richardson given by Dr Stoller, or to that disclosed by the history of his association with Spiritualism. . . .

The novelist has complicated the whole issue by grafting her own psychological history on to her father's, but though the clinical veracity of *Ultima Thule* causes a certain dislocation in the narrative line, it does not break the thematic line. . . .

Appendix B

When this book was in the final stages of printing, Miss Olga Roncoroni, Richardson's former secretary and literary executrix, deposited in the National Library, Canberra, a collection of Richardson's personal papers which had been in her possession for twenty-seven years. They arrived too late, obviously, for me to make any extensive use of them, but some account of those that have a bearing on this study seems obligatory.

Among the most interesting items are H.H.R.'s diary for part of 1887, kept when she was seventeen; her diploma from Leipzig; an account of her wedding in a Melbourne periodical; fragments of her early attempts at fiction; notes made by her on her mother's last illness and death; lists of books she read during 1898 and 1899, and miscellaneous notes from diaries or private notebooks from 1903 to 1943. There is also a copy of a letter from T. E. Lawrence to Jacob Schwartz, containing some exceptionally shrewd criticism of her short story 'Death' ('Mary Christina'). Letters from Frank Frost, the owner of Lakeview (H.H.R.'s childhood home at Chiltern, since restored by the National Trust of Victoria), in 1930 and 1931, lend support to part of my argument in Chapter 9. Six early diaries belonging to H.H.R. for the years 1897 to 1902 are a useful record of what she was writing and reading, but indications of her state of mind are restricted to scattered hints, and she does not comment on what she reads. Of interest also is the correspondence concerned with the libel action (settled out of court) threatened between H.H.R. and P. D. Wanliss, former owner of the *Ballarat Star*, over the statement in *Australia Felix* that the newspaper had changed its politics overnight.

Only one of J. G. Robertson's diaries—for 1896—survives in this

collection, and much of the material he jotted down for use in a study of H.H.R.'s life and work if he survived her is almost illegible. The handwriting of the author and her husband, indeed, presents something of a problem on its own. Robertson's, at the beginning of the 1896 diary, is small and neat; as, presumably, he gets busier, it becomes more and more indecipherable where it is intended for his own use—not an uncommon phenomenon with scholars. Moreover, most of what he writes is intended for publication, and has obviously been composed with a reader in mind. At some crucial points—where he is discussing the impossibility of starting a family, for instance—the writing is illegible and a page is missing. Some of his notes contradict statements made in the biographical sections in *Myself When Young*, or else further confuse the reader. In these sections, put together by Olga Roncoroni from his 'rough jottings', much is made of the contrast between the happy German days and the life in London:

On all these things our little Strassburg circle could talk, and discussed them with similar interest. Of this there was little or nothing in London; and she felt spiritually isolated. Also she found no congenial friends interested in music. Thus her life became, unfortunately, more solitary, and the 'living alone' only increased with the years. (*M.W.Y.*, p. 150)

These phrases do occur in Professor Robertson's jottings, but there are also many references to 'outings' throughout the period covered by the notes. There is also a specific reference to the 'busy social life at Hampstead', and to the fact that one of H.H.R.'s best friends, Matilda Main (later Mrs Freund), had come to live nearby. This friend certainly shared her interest in music. Just how solitary and isolated was Richardson? It becomes clear as one reads, that this biographical material is far from complete and that the more one knows about her, the less one knows.

The impression of happiness given on page 147 of *Myself When Young* by the following passage is also misleading: 'H.H.'s diary in 1902 has few entries until September 9th, when she wrote: "No diary kept: because from July 22nd on I was too happy and too *unbewusst* to think about it."' In fact, the 1902 diary begins on 7 March with the notes "Tried to work; work bad". The entries are sporadic, but those for July form a marked contrast to the one quoted by Miss Roncoroni. 'Not well'; 'Bed. Long, dull day, cold and fever' are noted on 12 and 13 July, with the added informa-

tion that her husband and his friend Thackrah were away at Vogesen and Baden. Dr Thackrah was a life-long friend of Robertson's and they went on many walking tours together, sometimes accompanied by Richardson. On 17 July, she notes: 'v. cross and tired', and on 18th: 'Began to pack. Very cross.' On 20 July occurs: 'Left for Munich. Otto (i.e. Dr Neustatter) and Thack met me.' The next day she notes that she left with Mat (Miss Main) for Marquartstein. The entry quoted above from *Myself When Young* is the next to occur. Apparently, Robertson joined the party later at Marquartstein and returned with them to Munich. He left for Strasbourg three days before his wife. The entries in the diary not long after their return soon begin to refer once more to crossness, tiredness and sickness. In fact, there is more than a faint neurasthenic tinge running through these half-dozen diaries, sparse though their entries may be. And there is an obscure reference to periodical 'outbursts', said to be marked in the diaries by a minute cross. The crosses occur in the 1896 diary begun by Robertson, particularly during the time the article on Jacobsen was beginning. The question who wrote this article is more puzzling than ever. Robertson, it is clear, used this diary as a record of his work and his correspondence. He was accustomed to entering such matters as 'Began Romantic Movement'; 'Finished translation of *Fisherlass*'; 'Letter to Bank', and so on. On 27 August 1896, he notes: 'Art. on Jacobsen' and these references go on until 16 September, when they cease. The Jacobsen article next turns up in H.H.R.'s diary for 1897, on 6 January, and the last reference is on 20 July: 'Jacobsen finished and sent to *Cosmopolis*'.

Early in November of that year, H.H.R.'s mother became ill and died at the end of the month. The possibility arises: did Robertson begin the Jacobsen article and later let his wife take it over, or revise it, to take her mind off her grief? Or did he make entries about his wife's work? Or did his wife make entries in his diaries? There is no doubt that she began to model her handwriting on his; where his is neat, it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart. Stylistic considerations, as argued in Chapter 12, would persuade one to think Robertson had a great deal to do with this article. So would commonsense; it is difficult to think that anyone could write about Jacobsen with such authority, and with the 'feel' of European literature behind her, who did not begin to study Danish until 1911, and who had made no systematic study of literature at all.

One thing that Robertson's diary makes quite clear is that Richardson

was not out of touch with Australia and Australian friends, as the biographical material so far published would tend to make one believe. In 1896 she and 'Evelyn' (Mrs Bulteel) were writing frequently to one another, and Mrs Graham, the widow of Dr George Graham, then living near Dublin, was a constant correspondent. Her mother's brother, Samuel Bailey, wrote regularly from Melbourne and sent her copies of the *Argus*. Indeed, when Richardson married, a long and fulsome account of the wedding was published in a Melbourne women's periodical. The wedding reception was held at Mrs Graham's house, Lyndoch, which had been the name of her Melbourne house; the dresses of the feminine guests were described in detail and a list of wedding-gifts was published, of which five were cheques, including one from an aunt, Mrs Bailey, of Bendigo. The account referred to a 'sumptuous champagne breakfast', 'costly and beautiful presents, numbering two hundred', 'Professor' Robertson, and the 'happy pair'! The bride, we are told, wore 'a tailor-made costume of Austrian blue military cloth, a seal toque, and bright tan shoes and gloves'. The description of the wedding suggests neither straitened circumstances nor a narrow circle of friends. If we consider also the fact that Samuel Bailey was sending his niece regular sums from the 'estate' in Melbourne, it is difficult to believe the Robertsons were as picturesquely poor as the autobiography makes them appear, in spite of Robertson's exiguous salary. Richardson, incidentally, would have appreciated the coincidence apparent in this account of her wedding. On the verso of the page is a paragraph referring to the social activities of the Kernots in Melbourne!

In 1897, part of the summer holiday, according to H.H.R.'s diary, was spent in London. On 16 September, she notes: 'Called on John Stretch'; in spite of the fact that on page 59 of *Myself When Young*, she says: 'Once he had left Maldon I never saw him again. And for news of him had to depend on stray scraps of gossip picked up from others' talk.' Her diary for 1887, however, alludes to the fact that the Stretches called on her mother, who was then living in Melbourne. Whether there is anything significant in the fact that, the day after calling on John Stretch in London, Richardson retired to bed, a habit when nervously strained apparently, there is no means of knowing.

The 1897 diary confirms Richardson's interest in Duse. As early as May, Lilian sent her two photographs of Duse and two more are mentioned for

February of the following year; in March 1898 she made a journey to Italy, visiting Florence, Pisa and Genoa, before the trip to Bordighera, that is to say, which Olga Roncoroni mentions as the first time the Robertsons were separated. H.H.R. herself laid great stress on the fact that her visit to her mother's sick-bed in Munich was the first time she had been separated from her husband. In October 1900 she saw Duse play in *Cameliandame* and *Hedda Gabler* in Frankfurt, and wrote to her (perhaps to congratulate her on her performance?). The following year she was reading Rasi's *Life of Duse* and Blennerhassett's *D'Annunzio*. She had already re-read *Il Fuoco* the previous October and then read it again with her husband in November. No wonder the language of *Il Fuoco* creeps into *Maurice Guest*. The diary for 1900 also notes the reading of the *Inferno*, and of books on Wagner, who figures so largely in *Il Fuoco*. She must have read the *Inferno* in translation, as she notes her first Italian lesson as 11 December. She saw Duse again in 1905, in *Heimat* and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. George Eliot's name crops up frequently in the Strasbourg diaries: by April 1898 she had read *Felix Holt*, *Adam Bede*, *Romola* and Dowden's book on Eliot. She would have had a firm precedent for the use of a masculine pen-name.

A curious entry for 19 June 1898 refers to the reading of 'red letters'; and on 28, 29 June to 'old letters'. There is a further reference in November to 'old letters'. By this time she would probably have been in possession of her parents' letters, which her schoolgirl diary suggests she read surreptitiously in 1887. Her published references to these letters all tend to diminish their importance for her.

The diaries for 1901 and for most of 1902 are full of references to seediness and peevishness. During 1901, a friend or colleague of Robertson's named Sackur shot himself and Robertson attended the funeral. The diaries also reveal that the dead baby who was the model for Peterle Lüthy was the child of H.H.R.'s maid. Here again we encounter her obsession with her own name: in the first draft of the story he is called 'Richard'le'! 'The Professor's Experiment', it seems clear, was an early story. What is evident from even this meagre information is that the life in Germany was not unadulterated bliss, and that Richardson's statement late in life that she wrote out her heart-aches in *Maurice Guest* may cover more than we assume it to cover.

Certainly her first attempts at prose fiction in 1896 evoke a mood of

intense depression. The first fragment begins by describing a 'gloomy London day'. It tells us 'the tragedy of Eternity was in such an evening—the tragedy of eternal annihilation'. She goes on to describe two prints hanging on the walls of her hero's room, one of Beatrice Cenci, and the other the photograph of a dark-eyed Southern woman. The description of the latter strongly resembles the later portraits of Duse-Louise. The author then comments: 'Had this woman been forced to Beatrice's act, she would have met the consequences unflinching, firm in the conviction of her own innocence'. It is striking, to say the least, that the notion of patricide should occur in Richardson's first piece of fiction. The conflict of feeling associated with the father-figure in *Richard Mahony* and *The Young Cosima* seems to have been deep-seated.

The sense of solitariness also sounds a familiar note: 'As a child, he had been happiest alone.' The hero is a painter (like the Erik of *Niels Lyhne*). He is full of the fear of losing his gift, and conscious of his limitations as an artist—another recurring theme. The piece breaks off abruptly, but before it does so, the painter encounters a figure which he first takes to be that of Death, but which turns out to be a woman. He is struck by the hopelessness of her expression: 'A shadow of the great world irony was in her eyes.' Here, right at the beginning, is Richardson's essential note: the conviction of 'a certain grief in things as they are', the fundamental paradox that to be born is to be condemned to death.

The mood of these pieces echoes that of the diary contained in an exercise-book in 1887, the last year of her school-life. Pages have been removed from it, but enough remains to show that the year was not a very pleasant one.

Over the top of the entry for 20 July, Richardson wrote fourteen years later: 'The mood of tonight, July, 1901.' The early entry is melancholy in tone. The school-girl speaks of being 'lonely and tired tonight' and continues: 'Money is an object in life; only when one is so tired of it all, nothing seems of much value.' Later on: 'I'm weary of all before, afraid of the after. Still, anything would be a change. The monotony makes one desperate. Oh, if only I could find the reality. I doubt if it is to be found.' The source of the moods of Louise, Maurice and Mahony is not hard to find. The mood of despair runs right through the book: 'It's too much bother to live; I'm so tired of it all.' Whether the mood was enhanced by the reading of sentimental novels and weeping over them, it is hard to say.

But there is more than one reference to differences with her mother, and another to a 'terrible piece of news'. There are also references to differences with Connie ('Evelyn').

The diary strengthens the conviction that it was Richardson herself, rather than her father, who had suicidal fantasies. In Walter Richardson's day, and indeed until quite recently, suicide and attempted suicide were felonies. Walter Richardson would have known the law on these matters, and if he had wanted to commit suicide—as distinct from being willing to die—would have done so surely in a manner less public than the one described in the novel. The presence of the police in that scene would have laid him open to the charge of attempted suicide, a point which has been quite overlooked. And the concern which he undoubtedly felt, as his letters show, for the financial security of his wife and children would surely have prevented him from jeopardising his life-insurance policy.

The school-girl diary contains also an indication of a naïve effort at self-discipline: 'Only a few things stir me up, I think; anything bringing back "twenty years ago" . . . I am cultivating a feeling which is impenetrable.'

The phrase 'twenty years ago' may be a cryptic reference to a recent emotional experience; it may also refer, of course, to early childhood, 'before the troubles', a state to which it seems clear she wished to return.

The entry for 27 May is of particular interest: 'Read a lot of father's and mother's letters. It's like reading a love-story of 30 years ago. I wonder whether anyone will ever be as fond of me as he was of her.'

As these letters were often very intimate, it is unlikely Richardson's mother gave her permission to read them. Elsewhere she notes a severe quarrel with her mother and then says: 'But she didn't know what I had been reading last night.' She may have been reading a forbidden book; but it is not impossible that she had been reading letters written by her mother and grandmother, referring to the good fortune of those who had no children to worry them; the effect of such remarks on a girl unsure of affection would have been extremely serious. Her published references to these letters are, to say the least, disingenuous, but the fact that she knew them longer than she admits and that the material was more extensive than she admits does not detract from her achievement. She used personal matter to a lesser degree than Tolstoy, after all; what is important is the organisation of it into a dramatic and symbolic unity.

A minor point in the diary is the indication that Richardson might have been a day-girl during the last year of her school life. Her mother, during the latter part of 1887, certainly bought or rented a house in Melbourne. There is also a hint that her sister attended P.L.C., but one cannot be sure.

Some of the pages copied out from *Kreisleriana* still remain, though these are fewer than the reference in *Myself When Young* leads one to expect. Richardson's memory of the *red* exercise-book she used for this purpose, mentioned in the drafts of the autobiography, is not correct. One of her school-girl worries—about her hair—seems to have persisted into the Strasbourg days. Her hair was very thin, it seems, 'quite bald', she writes, and this is why it was cut short when everyone else had long pig-tails. During the German period she kept it cut regularly and at one stage consulted a doctor about it when it was falling out severely. Laura's lovely hair is a fantasy.

The young girl and the old woman are linked in the two following passages, which strike the most familiar chord in the novels. The school-girl wrote in her diary: 'Goodness knows how changeable I am. Yet I don't think I am fickle. Everything changes, has changed and always will change. There is no such thing as truth or constancy anywhere.' In a private diary in April 1943, Richardson wrote at the age of seventy-three: 'How soon I am done with people. I suck them dry in no time and then need them no more. I ought to have innumerable fresh contacts. But each new one costs me a struggle'.

Louise's craving for permanent variety, Richard Mahony's whims and fancies: these are the daughter's characteristics, not the father's.

One of the most interesting documents is the collection of notes Richardson made about her mother's illness, referred to in Chapter 10. These confirm what has been offered as a hypothesis in this book that there was a good deal of sibling rivalry mixed up with her strong affection for her sister.

The notes are unfinished and the actual death is not described. Nor is there any reference to the event itself in Robertson's diary for the period, only a note on 2 December about funeral expenses and the fee for the *Leichenfrau*.

Richardson's notes state that she was 'far more cut up at the prospect of parting [from her husband] than at mother being ill, for the idea of anything serious would not fit into my mind'. After ten days in Munich at

her mother's bedside, she returned to Strasbourg because: 'It came over me with a rush that morning that I *must* see my Nubby.' In the course of the notes she complains about the callousness of the nurses and of Miss Main, the latter of whom she sees as playing the devoted attendant to impress the doctors. Elsewhere in the notes she gives due credit, however, to her friend's kindness, which surely could not have been in doubt. She describes her mother's suffering in great detail and the description suggests cancer of the colon, from which she herself was to die, rather than the appendicitis suggested by Olga Roncoroni (*M.W.Y.*, p. 142). She also describes her mother's appearance, 'her massive head, noble and beautiful'. The following passage, announcing her temporary return to Strasbourg, indicates the complexity of her feeling for her mother:

When the parting came, there were a few hard moments; but she looked at me with eyes that had her whole life of love and sacrifice in them, looked as she did that last Monday afternoon when I told her of my plans, looked as if she would never see me again. Thank God she did, but only once again was there all that love in them. They seemed to say good-bye to her elder girl, the child of whom she hoped so much, whose future she had planned out so many a time. And which she had to go without seeing realised . . . Best of all mother liked to have Lil beside her, and all her life it was the same. Lil's arm in hers—as they often walked—Lil's head on her shoulder, meant more to her than all my innate sympathy, and atoned for all Lil's selfishness and carefreeness. She was proudest of me, but she never forgot the touch of baby-fingers that Lil could give her. One of my clearest pictures of mother, is the two of them sauntering along together, arm in arm. . . .

The feeling of being the outsider in the most intimate area of human relationships is obviously deeply rooted. And it should not be forgotten that a fixation upon the mother is as serious an interference with later relationships for a girl as for a boy. The whole passage throws some light on the paragraph from Richardson's notebook headed 'Mors Janua Vitae', which she wrote after her husband's death (see p. 390). The pencilled version of this, however, is far more interesting than the version published by Olga Roncoroni. In the original Richardson wrote: 'In him I lose not only husband, but father, mother, sister and brother.' In the corrected and published version 'mother' and 'sister' are deleted. A final—and signifi-

cant—sentence is also deleted from the published paragraph: 'Yet of late years I left him much alone.'

It may be remarked here that not only is the matter of some of Richardson's apparently private reflections fiddled with, but also the style, and the question arises why she felt impelled to treat intimate and personal outpourings as though she were expecting someone else to read them. 'I wonder if anyone else will ever read this?' she asks in her school-girl diary. Did she hope so? Was she always, in some sense, writing fiction? Was she always, in some sense, constructing a new self for the world, and how much did her husband and her friend aid and abet her in this course? As Maurice felt with Louise (see *M.G.*, p. 410) that he could never get at her real self, so one feels about Richardson, the more one ponders the available material. It should be strongly stressed that the situation has nothing in common at all with the public image-making indulged in by modern politicians and businessmen. Its nearest analogue is the conviction of Eleonora Duse, when visiting Juliet's tomb in Verona, that she *was* Juliet. And underneath it lies the profound belief, so prominent in the letters of Richardson's grandmother, in the importance of the unseen.

The similarity in temperament between Richardson and her grandmother has already been noted; the likelihood that the child wished to emulate and surpass her grandmother's musical achievements cannot be discounted. The new papers make it more clear that music was of overriding importance to Richardson and that writing was something of a *pis-aller*. The Diploma from the Royal Conservatorium of Music in Leipzig, signed by Reinecke, among others, leaves no doubt about her talent. The Diploma (which gets her birth-date wrong) states that she was received as a student on 25 April 1889 and left 'with Honours' at Easter, 1892. It describes her as an outstanding student, an example to others, in all branches of the art, and, what is of great interest, describes her performance of the first movement of Beethoven's C Major Piano Concerto at her *Hauptprüfung* as receiving 'grosse und wohldienste' acclaim. Her mother would have had no reason to be disappointed about her daughter's career at the Conservatorium, and every reason to have entertained high hopes of her future. Robertson's notes on his wife strongly stress the point that she would have preferred to compose songs than write books, a fact alluded to in *Myself When Young* (p. 148). The notes also throw more light on the composition lessons given her by Ludwig Thuille,

while she was waiting for her nephew's birth in Munich. Richardson herself is fairly frank about these (see *M.W.Y.*, p. 100), but Robertson's notes add: 'Thuille poured cold water on her formlessness, and damped her ardour as a composer.' One explanation may be that Thuille disapproved of the Straussian flavour of her music; he and Strauss had earlier gone their separate ways. Richardson, it is clear from both published and unpublished accounts, was very much under the influence of Strauss. The diaries indicate she had a particular fondness for *Ein Heldenleben*; she notes being present at a performance in November 1901 and feeling 'miserabel' [*sic*]. She certainly attended the Strauss concerts in London in 1903. The episode in *Richard Mahony* describing the visit to Barambogie of Baron von Krause needs much more attention than it has been given. 'I will say music too, when I am big', says Cuffy; it is not unlikely that the reason Richardson conveniently forgets her early triumphs in music, in *Myself When Young*, is that she was diverted from following them up. One might hazard the guess that *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* was, for her, the literary equivalent of Strauss's *Domestic Symphony*; it is certainly put together with as much care for *leitmotiv* as any work by Wagner or Strauss.

It is highly regrettable that the hundred songs which Olga Roncoroni claimed to possess in 1957 (P.R., p. 76) are not among these documents.

It was as a musician, apparently, that Richardson saw Cuffy in the sequel to the trilogy which she abandoned. A few brief sketches and a trial paragraph or two of this project remain. Apparently Tilly Smith was to leave Purdy, buy a station property and bring up Cuffy. Purdy was to come home and have some sort of intercourse with the boy before his death. Tilly's ambition was stated to be to 'make a man of Cuffy'. It appears that Lucie was not to be permanently separated from her brother, as seems to be the case in 'The End of a Childhood', because the note appears: 'Always Lucie beside him. After his mother, the love of his life.' The note, in view of what has been said already, needs no comment. An interesting point is that, to prepare herself for writing the book, Richardson was reading C. E. W. Bean's War Histories.

Among other important items in this collection are Robertson's brief notes of the trip to Australia to verify the background of *Richard Mahony*. The party, consisting of Robertson, his wife, Lilian and her small son, left England on 2 August 1912. Robertson notes that on 16 September: 'Pif

[was] in Geelong'. 'Pif' was his nickname for his wife. They then visited Castlemaine, Maldon, and Ballarat in rapid succession, returning to Melbourne on 30 September. They spent two days at Mount Dandenong with Mrs Kernot, two at Queenscliff, and one more at Geelong. They travelled from Geelong to Koroit, staying at Warrnambool on 8 October, and returned on the 9th to Melbourne. On 12 October, the party went to Chiltern and back on the same day! They left Melbourne for England four days later. There is no mention of the mode of transport during their whirlwind visit; even modern motor-cars would have made it something of a feat for a woman of forty-two supposed to be delicate. However, in her account of a trip to Norway the previous summer, Richardson makes a point of noting that she 'outwalked them both', i.e. her husband and their male companion, Thackrah, who were celebrated walkers.

A curious item in the collection is an old exercise-book which Richardson used for making notes in during the last war, at Fairlight. It is signed E.F.L. Robertson, and dated 21 August 189-. In the back of the book she has evidently been experimenting with her signature, trying out flourishes to make it more distinguished. It may have been in this period that her large, untidy school-girl scrawl began to resemble Robertson's early neat hand.

The letters of Mr Frank Frost from Chiltern have some bearing on what has been said about the town in Chapter 9. Of Chiltern in the 1930s, he wrote: 'The hostility of the seventies shows thinly veiled to any strangers with an alien feeling to the town, and we cannot seem to overcome that.' In recent years, the present writer was told, by those who know Chiltern well, of the continuing existence of a similar feeling. Richard Mahony's experience in Chiltern was not due entirely to his own temperament.

Among the scattered notes from later diaries (the books themselves have disappeared) are two of particular interest. The comment in parenthesis 'C'était moi', which appears after the reference to Maurice Guest, quoted on page 105 of this book, is not in the original manuscript. It appears in the typescript revisions, and the question again arises: why did Richardson revise her private notes as if she were revising fiction? Or did Olga Roncoroni add the comment, a somewhat unlikely proceeding?

The other note reads:

The sexual woman = Louise

The instinctive = Madeleine. No, the brave, strong, motherly woman.
Now I ought to do the intellectual.

There is also a comment on the objection of Maurice Guest, 'that Simple Simon', to face-powder, and on the fact that Louise did not smoke, though Richardson herself had been then and still was a fierce smoker.

Surveying the total pattern of the writing life, as far as it is possible to do so at present, one returns again and again to the statement Richardson made: 'My mind is easily dissipated'. If one looks dispassionately at Olga Roncoroni's description of the sacred routine, it is plain that Richardson's actual writing occupied at most three hours of her day, sometimes less. Her method of writing sentence by sentence, then having each re-typed and so constructing paragraphs would have the effect of spinning out the material over a long period, and this, the finished work tells us, is what happened. Long walks, long bicycle rides, tennis and music occupied a large part of her Strasbourg days, and reading seems to have occupied much of them after Olga Roncoroni joined the London household in 1920. There were also excursions and long holidays to interrupt the routine, and though the morning hours were normally kept inviolate, the actual *quantity* of work produced is far less impressive than that of many a writer less favoured by circumstances. The important point nevertheless is its quality; those who dispute the quality of *Maurice Guest*, *The Getting of Wisdom* and above all *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* must put up a better case than they have so far done.

And there this record must for the moment end, except to reveal what Richardson herself suggested might do for 'a final summing-up of *Richard Mahony*'. This was four lines from Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, which she copied into her private notebook in October 1943:

Fancy with fact is just one fact the more;
To-wit, that fancy has informed, transpierced,
Thridded and so thrown fast the facts else free . . .
I fused my live soul and that inert stuff . . .

To this one can only add Browning's final address to the British public at the end of his poem, especially the lines:

Why take the artistic way to prove so much?
Because, it is the glory and good of Art,
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least . . .

But here's the plague,

That all this trouble comes of telling truth,
Which truth, by when it reaches him, looks false,
Seems to be just the thing it would supplant,
Not recognizable by whom it left:
While falsehood would have done the work of truth.
But Art,—wherein man nowise speaks to men,
Only to mankind,—Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,
Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—
So, note by note, bring music from your mind,
Deeper than ever e'en Beethoven dived,—
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.

There is Richardson in a nutshell. *Ainsi, retournons à l'oeuvre.*

Selected Bibliography

The Bibliography entitled *Henry Handel Richardson 1870-1946* compiled by Miss Gay Howells of the National Library, Canberra, to honour the centenary of Richardson's birth, is indispensable. Most of the present book was drafted before its publication, but it has immeasurably lightened the task of checking details. It is referred to below as *N.L. Bibliography*.

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N.L.A. MS. 133:

Henry Handel Richardson Papers, 1896-1946. (See *N.L. Bibliography*, Item 730, except for the Letters to Mrs Mary Kernot, 1911-1946.)

Letters: The most important of these are contained in the Walter Lindesay Richardson Papers, 1854-1896, now in the National Library. These comprise 153 letters written to his wife between 1855 and 1877; several to his mother-in-law Elizabeth Bailey, 1868, to his brother Jack, 1868 and to his daughters, 1877(?). There are thirty-five letters from Mary Richardson (née Bailey) to her husband, between 1854 and 1868; ten to her daughters, 1896. Walter Richardson's mother, Lucinda Cheyne, wrote to her son, her daughter-in-law and her daughter Lucinda from Brighton, England; eighteen of these letters between 1857 and 1863 are preserved.

Seven of Elizabeth Bailey's letters to her daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Walter Richardson, survive from 1868 to 1869.

There are seventeen miscellaneous family letters dating from 1859 to 1942. In addition to the letters, the collection contains notebooks, journals, documents and photographs relating to the Richardson

family, including a family tree. See Item 731 in *N.L. Bibliography*.

N.L.A. MS. 1174:

Letters from H.H.R. to Nettie Palmer, to Alice Henry and letters from Mary Kernot, Olga Roncoroni, Edna Purdie, Arnold Gyde to Nettie Palmer about H.H.R. See *N.L. Bibliography* Item 732.

THE MITCHELL LIBRARY, N.S.W.

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Note: Some concepts, such as that of 'settler and nomad', are fundamental to the book. No attempt has been made to index these exhaustively.

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Mrs Green has published two volumes of poetry under the name Dorothy Auchterlonie—*Kaleidoscope* (Sydney, 1940) and *The Dolphin* (Canberra, 1967)—and a book of criticism, *Fourteen Minutes* (Sydney, 1950), with her late husband, H. M. Green. During the course of research for the present book she was instrumental in securing the valuable collection of Walter Lindsay Richardson letters and papers for the National Library in Canberra.



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