TRAGIC THEORY: A READING OF FIVE NOVELS

Ann Maree McCulloch

For Jack, Kate and Alexander

A thesis submitted for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
at the
Australian National University

January 1986
DEDICATION

For Jock, Kate and Alexander
Except where acknowledgement is made, this thesis is my own work.

Ann Maree McCulloch
ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

AP The Art of Poetry
Unn The Unnamable
FLW The French Lieutenant's Woman
MLC The Man Who Loved Children
Zara Thus Spake Zarathustra
BT The Birth of Tragedy
UTV Under the Volcano
HV Happy Valley
LD The Living and the Dead
AS The Aunt's Story
TM The Tree of Man
RC Riders in the Chariot
V The Vivisector
EOS The Eye of the Storm
FL The Fringe of Leaves
TA The Twyborn Affair

In each chapter, page references to the novel are included after the first footnote, in parentheses within the text. Where the novel cited is not the main novel under discussion in a chapter, page references in the text are prefixed by the relevant abbreviated title.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Australian National University for granting me a scholarship to study my subject.

It is customary to thank one's supervisors. I do this not for form's sake but because of the combination of encouragement and creative criticism received from Dr R.F. Brissenden, Dr. L. Dobrez and Mr G. Cullum. I thank Dr Dobrez for his reading of the earlier drafts of this work and his guidance away from false paths. I appreciate Mr Cullum's selection of reading material which provided highly relevant information for my research. I am grateful to Dr Brissenden for helping me with this work from its beginning to its end. Dr Brissenden read this thesis with meticulous care and through his insightful comments helped keep my faith alive in the project.

I thank Norma Chin for typing this thesis, for her skill, patience and intelligence.

Finally, I thank the following friends who gave generously of their time and intellectual skills by proof-reading the thesis and making helpful suggestions regarding the style and presentation of the work: Gaye Baldwin, Ann McDermott, Ron Vowles, Gregory McDermott, Joan Ritchie, Christine Chalmers, Prillie Idnurm, Mart Idnurm, Jock McCulloch, Alexander Air and Elizabeth Queane.
This thesis explores the reasons why, despite the efforts of writers, Tragedy was not created during the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century. The concept of Tragedy is understood to be necessarily related to its historical context. Consequently, Aristotelian's definition of Tragedy is seen to be subject to diverse interpretations by Tragedians throughout literary history.

In this work I attempt to isolate the elements of Tragedy that persist in literature, despite the continual changes in form and content Tragedy undergoes. There is an attempt to discover a new paradigm of Tragedy to accommodate what is recognized as a new form of Tragedy.

The emergence of this new Tragedy is seen to come about at the end of a certain non-tragic era, stretching from what is generally known as the Romantic Period to the Post-modernist period.

Beckett's, The Unnamable, and Fowles's, The French Lieutenant's Woman, are examined as examples of how modernist literature has become theoretical and symbolic/allegorical in such a way as to preclude the possibility of Tragedy. Although the Post-modernist and the Realist genres are seen to be antipathetic to Tragedy, Stead's, The Man Who Loved Children, and Lowry's, Under the Volcano, are shown to invoke both genres and, yet, they can be seen to dramatize in embryonic form a new Tragic Form.

Patrick White's novel, The Twyborn Affair, is argued to be an example of a new kind of Tragedy. The fact that this Tragedy emerges in the eighth decade of this century is shown to be related to certain historical realities and particular philosophical and scientific axioms endorsed by contemporary physics.
# Table of Contents

**DEDICATION**  
ii

**ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES**  
iv

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**  
v

**PRECIS**  
vi

**INTRODUCTION**  
1

**CHAPTER 1. TRAGEDY AND THE PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION**  
7

- Tragedy: Its Absence from Post-Modernist and Romantic Literature  
- Tragedy, the Novel and Romanticism: Strained Relations  
- Tragedy, the Novel and Existential Thought  
- Tragedy: Its Absence from Theoretical Literature  
- The Modern Age and the Loss of Tragedy  
- The Concept of Tragedy: Continuity and Change

**CHAPTER 2. THE CONTINUOUS ELEMENTS IN TRAGEDY**  
33

- Enigmatic Evil and the Incomprehensible Nature of the Universe  
- Suffering and Enlightenment  
- Tragedy: A Serious Theme  
- Tragedy - A Living Humanism: The Highest Form of Fiction  
- Tragedy in Action  
- Action and Order  
  - Humankind at Odds with Self and Society  
  - Allegory and the "New Subjectivity"  
- Modern Allegory  
- Modernism: The Split Between the Spiritual and the Material  
- Catharsis and Tragedy

**CHAPTER 3. ROMANTICISM, MODERNISM, POST-MODERNISM AND CONTEMPORARY PHYSICS**  
67

- Obsession with Self  
- Quantum Mechanics: Finding a New World  
- Types of Post-modernism  
- Theoretical Literature: The French Lieutenant's Woman

**CHAPTER 4. BECKETT: THE UNNAMABLE**  
93

- A Modern Allegory  
- Intellectual Literature  
- Literature of Exhaustion  
- The Literature of Silence  
- The Unnamable and the Literature of Silence:  
  - Search for Form and Anti-Form  
  - The Impossibility of Not Speaking
Controlled by Creators 102
Rejection of Words 102
Anti-Life 102
Rebirth in Fear and Hope 103
Without Hope, Without Tragedy 104
The Parody of Tragic Themes 105
The Tragic Person: Neither Free Nor Fated 107
The Tragic Character: The Ambiguity of His or Her Nature 108
Humankind: Glorifying in Its Humanity 109
The Will to Suffer and Knowledge from Suffering 112
The Gulf Between Desire and Attainment 113
The Tragic Protagonist and Action 114
A Shared Religious Vision and the Sense of Order 115
The End of Modern Allegory 116

CHAPTER 5. THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN 118
Sam's New Socio-Political Order: His Public and his Private Life 126
Sam's Ideology: Science and Morality 128
Henrietta: The Disintegration of Social Structure 132
Henny: A Dionysian Descent 133
Henrietta: Confrontation with Despair 134
Henrietta: A Source of Art for Louisa 135
Louisa: In Search of Form 138
Louisa: Zarathustra's Disciple 139
Louisa as Artist and Parable 145
Louisa as Artist-character 147

CHAPTER 6. UNDER THE VOLCANO 154
Setting the Theme of the Novel 157
Lowry and "Realism" 159
Action and Politics in Under the Volcano 172
The Serious Questions of Tragedy: Under the Volcano 177
Humanism: Hope and Love in Under the Volcano 181
Tragedy: The Enigmatic Universe 185
Suffering in Under the Volcano 188
A Labyrinth of Walks 190

CHAPTER 7. FROM ALLEGORY TO TRAGEDY REBORN 196
The New Form in Post-modernist Tragedy 209
The Rational Presence 211
The Realization of Values 215
Beyond Catharsis 217
From Allegory to Life 219
Symbolism 222
Expression of a Living Reality 222
Thought and Action 223
The Unfathomable Revealed in the Phenomenal World 224
Post-modernist Tragedy: A New Order? 226
Beyond the Metaphysical Void 228
The Absence of Aesthetic Resolution 229
Confronting Knowledge 230

CONCLUSION 234
The Contemporary Environment 234
INTRODUCTION

This book was written because of a need to explore certain questions. It began with an interest in the modernist, postmodernist fiction, in contrast to much of the previous work on realism and naturalism. I became interested in looking for something behind or beyond the surface level. Why are many modernist/postmodernist novels obsessed with representing inner feelings or mental states? Why are revolutionaries and post-revolutionaries both obsessed with the psychological relationship between art and life, and how interested, suddenly, in the question of the novel narrative often raised by the great tragedians?

These questions led to an interest in the genre of Tragedy. The way one starts to appreciate the nature of Tragedy as heard by its uninitiated ear is through its unexpected and often jarring, unexpected turns. What could one think of the novel that contains no plot, no plot, but also the kind of power of Tragedy is revealed. What was the case with which this work is concerned.

After all, Tragedy is not a genre, but a process of drama. This drama is primarily modeled in the theater as the medium for expressing Tragedy. The novel as a potential tragic action can be seen to begin with Manzoni's I Promessi Sposi (1827-29) followed by the nineteenth century by such novels as Stendhal's La Chartreuse de Parme, Stendhal's Fernande, Flaubert's Emma, and many others. The nineteenth century, with its complex emotional power, is one that the other-experience, we may see as the one in which it is possible more than ever before to understand.

Chapter One of this book is titled A Study of Tragedy and its gradual evolution from the ancient to the modern. Raymond Williams, in a survey of what constitutes a novel, and as an important contribution for my part, has written, "...pues que la desamortización..." Must one regard novels as a single, continuous genre? Am. the focus on the modernist novel has generated the historical question, what is the significance of this change, and the assumption that the novel is a form of self-representation that no longer holds in the present.
INTRODUCTION

This work was written because of a need to explore certain questions. It began with an interest in why twentieth-century fiction, in contrast to novels of the previous one hundred and sixty years, increasingly asks us to look for meanings behind or beyond the literal plot. Why do many twentieth-century novelists withdraw from representing human beings in action? Why are modernist and post-modernist writers obsessed with the problematic relationship between art and life, and less interested, seemingly, in the questions of life that were most often asked by the great tragedians?

These questions led to an interest in the genre of Tragedy. The aim was to determine the nature of Tragedy, to focus on its uniqueness and to attempt to understand why writers throughout time have felt that a civilization without tragedy is dangerously lacking something. The questions: What is it about the tragic view of life that attracts us? And why, in this century, has there been an absence of Tragedy in literature, with which this work is concerned.

Although Tragedy, in its origins, was expressed in drama, this thesis is primarily interested in the novel as the medium for expressing Tragedy. The novel as a potential tragic art-form can be seen to begin with Richardson’s Clarissa (1747-48) followed in the nineteenth century by works such as Melville’s Moby Dick, Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina, Hardy’s Tess of the D’urbervilles and Conrad’s Lord Jim. The nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, however, for reasons that this thesis explores, are seen to be times in which this potential fails to be fully realized in literature.

Chapter One of this work attempts to define Tragedy and in the process identify those elements of tragedy that have been banished from the artistic arena. Raymond Williams's study on modern Tragedy1 is used as an important springboard for my argument, at this point in the work, simply because he is the only writer who deals comprehensively with how Tragedy throughout time has assimilated the historical content into its traditions. Williams shows how the Aristotelian definition of Tragedy has undergone many changes and/or been subject to diverse interpretation from the time of antiquity to the present.

Writers in the twentieth century have chosen "states of being", in preference to the tragedian's "representation of an action", for the content of their work. This fact, in this thesis, is understood in the light of Williams's study which establishes the necessity of seeing Tragedy within an historical context.

Chapter Two attempts to ascertain the extent to which the Aristotelian concept of tragedy can be applied to modern works that deal with tragic themes.

In this thesis there is a double perspective in relation to literature of this century. First, one must recognize the ways in which modern and post-modern fiction turned on its head the basic premise that art imitates life. The world of empirical, common sense becomes a false world and is replaced by the essentially chaotic and problematic nature of subjective experience. This work explores how this process began in the eighteenth century when the idea that art imitated life was challenged by Romantic theories of the imagination.

Secondly, there is recognition that alongside modernist works there is a kind of writing that continues the tradition modernism reacted against. Writers of this literature regard their art as the communication of a reality that exists prior to and independent of the act of communication.

Tragedy cannot emerge from within either of these frameworks, that is from the "Post-modernist" or the "Realist". Chapter Three deals with how modernist and post-modernist works exclude the tragic genre. In Chapter Four, Beckett's novel *The Unnamable* is examined. The only action Beckett describes in this novel is that of the disoriented mind of the nameless hero imprisoned in the cage of consciousness. The argument that this thesis presents is that the concerns of the modernist and post-modernist writers are far removed from the "real" world and, in being finally more abstract than literal, are inevitably removed from the perspective of the tragic artist.

The alternative literary approach that is generally known as "Realist" is found to be equally unable to accommodate Tragedy.

In the following two chapters I analyse Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* which I see as containing both the modernist strain and the realist strain. I argue, though, that there is something new stirring in these novels - something which I term "Actualism" which might be understood as a "New-Realism". I argue that these two novels are not Tragedies but

---

that they embody in embryonic form the Tragedy that is to emerge in this decade, the eighth decade of the twentieth century. I am not arguing that this is necessarily a conscious intention of Stead and Lowry but that it is an intention that is realized in the work.\textsuperscript{5}

In setting up a new paradigm for Tragedy based on a new concept of ‘realism’ I am aware of problems associated with such a concept. Damian Grant in his work on Realism prefaces his study by drawing attention to the chronic instability of the word.\textsuperscript{6} He does this by noting the need of critical literature to attach another qualifying word to the term “realism” in order to give it some kind of semantic support. Hence we are told of, for example, dynamic realism, fantastic realism, formal realism, ideal realism, naturalist realism, subjective realism and quotidian realism; these words are to be found scattered in critical works pertaining to the subject.

This thesis does not attempt to disentangle all the literary and philosophical speculations that determine such a variety of definitions. As this work, nevertheless, does attempt to argue that a "new-realism" has been in a state of quiet evolution in the novels of some writers in this century, and that in its final form, it will accommodate the birth of a new form of Tragedy, an attempt must be made to explain what is understood by the term.

"Reality" or "truth" may be defined according to the perspective of the person making the inquiry. The term correspondence theory is used to describe the notion that truth is arrived at by a process of knowing which is empirical and which may be verified epistemologically. The term coherence theory is employed when Reality is seen to be created by the perspective of the person making the inquiry which is arrived at or created by intuitive perception.\textsuperscript{7} It is a reality which is seen to be something that is "created by a process of making". Thus while writers throughout literary history, depending upon their perspective, have used "realism" (or cognate terms) to describe their works, these works can be seen to be very different from each other.\textsuperscript{8} The same can be said of writers grouped together as contributing to movements known as "Romanticism", "Existentialism", "Modernism", and "Post-modernism". Predictably,
writers who have been categorized as belonging to one or other of these "movements" would see their work as being "more real" than the tradition it challenged.

The Romantics claimed their work was "more real" than the classicists, the naturalists denied that the Romantics were seeing reality and the surrealists claimed that at last they had emerged to capture in art and literature the world as it really is. Realism in the nineteenth century novel, based its superiority on its capacity to look directly at life without filters of any kind. This realism was to be "objective", "detached" and akin to a scientific view of life. Scientific thought now shows how inaccurate this is. As Robert Scholes states: "It is like gazing right into the sun; we see so much we are blinded".9 But although the nineteenth-century artist may have believed that art is or must be an imitation of life, that it must have a verisimilitude that corresponds to the external world, twentieth-century physics has shown that the observer cannot be an objective witness to a world outside himself/herself at any point of his/her observation. If, as Robert Scholes writes, we are blinded by the sun, we have also come to understand through Quantum Mechanics that it is our very act of seeing that contributes to and determines that blinding.

The nineteenth-century realists, in reaction to Romanticism, wished to present the world as having an *eternal*, physical existence independent of the mind. This view was most popular during a time when Science had absolute faith in its positivist and empirical approaches. The nineteenth-century novel was fascinated with the sheer mechanics of contemporary life, in politics, commerce, class relations, crime, education and every other activity which would now be described as social. Writers characterized by such terms as the "Naturalists", the "Impressionists", the "Surrealists", the "Symbolists" and the "Existentialists" would follow the nineteenth century with their unique artistic rendering of reality. This reality will supposedly be objectively or subjectively rendered; or it will be conceived as that which is known when the external world and the imagination find a synthesis; or it will deliberately exclude nature and be inspired from the mind; or it will be one that is found to transcend the object that signifies its presence.

Art, Walter Kaufmann writes, is a "triumph of make believe"10 and novels "create and invent realities" argues Robbe-Grillet.11 These contemporary views can be contrasted with that of Plato who downgrade[d] art because it is the imitation of an art which affirms the absolute value of an art which is "the illusion of an

---

illusion". The questions that can be asked of reality by writers and philosophers in their attempt to reproduce it or to create it are endless. Is there a reality "out there" separate from consciousness? Is reality only that which we create? Does language itself realize reality within its own structure? This work argues that the twentieth century has created an abundance of literature and art which have sought to shake off the mantle of empirical reality, that in so doing it has often severed itself from any relationship with a world that is simply there.

In this thesis I argue that the "new Realism", or what I have elected to term Actualism, dramatizes the tension between two opposing starting points, that is, between the "Realist" view of the world and the Post-modernist view. Furthermore, I argue that "Actualism" accommodates the emergence of a new tragic form.

The realist perspective is based presumably on the belief that we can describe the world without reference to ourselves. Objectivity is the first criterion for the value of a scientific result. It would be foolish for us to deny for example that London exists. Contemporary physics tells us, however, that we cannot accurately describe the atomic world, that it is, in fact, our consciousness that determines, at this level, what we see. The kind of post-modernist literature that has withdrawn from "representing an action", from giving any credence to the existence of an empirical world that can be reliably seen, is a literature that does not take into account that the Indeterminacy principle, the principle that science is built on a paradox. Von Weizsaäcker points out that "Nature is earlier than man, but man is earlier than natural science". Sambursky explains how the first part of the sentence justifies classical physics, with its ideal of complete objectivity. The second part tells us why we cannot escape the paradox of quantum theory, namely, the necessity, while accepting the Indeterminacy principle, of using the classical concepts.

The effect of our not being able to see the electron (the situation that the Indeterminacy principle attempts to explain) became translated by analogy into our not being able to see the world. This assertion upon which a multitude of important books is founded entails a danger, as such a myth, uncritically accepted, tends, like prophecy to shape a future in the arts to confirm it.

In literature there is a corresponding expression of two views held in tension. In this thesis I argue that post-modernism did ascertain a new truth when it sought to give

12. Quoted in N. Joseph Calarco, Tragic Being: Apollo and Dionysus in Western Drama (Minneapolis: The Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1969), p.11.
14. Ibid.
expression to the problematic relationship between consciousness and reality but that, in becoming withdrawn from seeing an empirical reality, it gave itself up to an intellectualized fantasy.

The new tragic art captures the paradox of quantum theory in literary form. Quantum mechanics has given the world back its final inexplicability but it has not, for all writers, robbed it of its meaningful relationship with humankind. Tragedy of the present occurs within a recognizable social and historical setting. The characters are seen to affect the world around them, to choose their reality, as much as they are determined by it. The natural world is not to be used merely to symbolize abstract preoccupations of the author but instead to stand for what it is in itself.

Actualism will attempt to bridge the schism between abstract thought and the recognition that an external world exists, even if its nature is hinged on our perception of it. I argue in this thesis that Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair* is a contemporary tragedy that dramatizes the living and instantaneous revelation of the unfathomable. I attempt to explain how Tragedy acts out the belief that people's ontological being cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. My concluding remarks speculate as to why Tragedy is in the process of emerging in the eighth decade of this century.

CHAPTER 1
TRAGEDY AND THE PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

Tragedy: Its Absence from Post-Modernist and Romantic Literature

The Tragic mode of presenting human life has always had, and continues to have, great power. Generalizations about the nature of the form do not apply in detail to the tragedies of all times and places. It is not difficult, however, to identify the periods in history that preclude the writing of Tragedy. It is apparent that protagonists like Oedipus, Hamlet and Lear differ in kind from those of modern literature. Whereas Hamlet’s death ironically re-affirms the world and its values that have destroyed him, Willy Loman’s death in Miller’s The Death of a Salesman is an indictment of his society.

Hamlet is heralded at his death to be a person of heroic status:

Bear Hamlet, like a soldier to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov’d most royally: ...
(Hamlet, Act V, Sc. 11, Lines 409-412)

Hamlet, nevertheless, is also seen as being responsible for “accidental judgements, casual slaughter” (Line 398).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the novelists have attempted and achieved images of human life that are commensurate with those of earlier verse Tragedy. They did not, however, create Tragedy. Kafka’s Gregor Samsa and Camus’s Meursault recognize their place in the universe and their relationship with their character and fate in very different contexts from Sophocles’s Oedipus or Shakespeare’s King Lear. Meursault in The Outsider goes to his death proud of his moral indifference to a world which he sees as being indifferent to him. Hamlet’s last words express care for the people and the values of the world he is about to leave. His closest friend Horatio bids that “flights of angels sing” him to his rest. Meursault, on the other hand, makes his last wish that there “should be a crowd of spectators at my execution and that they should greet me with cries of hatred” (The Outsider, p.107). Camus, Kafka, Miller, Ibsen, Sartre, and Hardy, to mention but a few modern writers, have created works of art that have tragic themes, but which are not Tragedies.

Tragedy in its artistic form expresses a coherent attitude towards the universe.
This form evolves out of a content which may be defined by its tensions and paradoxes. The tragic protagonist, who acts out these tensions, seeks to understand and value human existence.

In this post-modernist literary age, seeking to understand and evaluate life in a quotidian reality is often considered an obsolete quest. The tragic heroine unlike, for example, Beckett's "heroes", attempts to discover and fight for a meaningful life. The art of tragedy is the dramatization of this discovery of what humanity is and what it hopes to become. Actuality is represented in relation to an idealism that sets the horizons of human perfectibility expressing its torments and aspirations.

The writer of tragedy confronts "reality" on many levels, transforming it as it is being represented. Literature of the present, however, is by many critics and theorists, seen to be in direct contrast to tragic art. Wallace Martin, for example, writes that it adds nothing to the world:

It simply cuts open the seam between the conventional and the real, creating an absence that can be perpetually re-interpreted through the presence of empty symbols, as successive generations fill them with whatever it is they find lacking.¹

Post-modernist critics point to a number of elements in present literature that are in opposition to the concerns of tragic form and tragic content: order is mocked and attempts are made to shatter even the memory of it,² values are rejected as nihilism and anarchism are promoted, and a new way of perceiving the world is seen to be created.³ This new way of seeing the world, and transforming it through art, is concerned with valorizing new kinds of aesthetic experience.⁴ In Tragedy, the transformation is connected to the intellectual and value-oriented worth of the tragedian's statement, which, to be tragedy, must not be an end in itself.

The message and/or meaning of Tragedy co-exist with the story and structure which, in their essence, will share the facts about the society/world of their time. Tragedy represents life in action. As Laurence Michel expresses it, Tragedy is more

---

¹ See Martin, ibid., p.145, who categorizes the following critics as being either concerned with or proponents of this position: Levin, Kermode and Hassan.
² This is not to be confused with Nietzsche's view expressed in The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals, trans. Francis Golffing (U.S.A.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), which argues that the aesthetic experience replaces the moral one in a world which has lost its metaphysical framework. He argues that art may be able to discover the transcendence in the world to replace the one conceived as beyond it. Nietzsche sees in art the possible tool to unify humankind with "the twin divine images" presented in Apollo and Dionysus.
likely to be written when the work of art is an imitation of that "tremendously fertile notion of an action".5

The post-modernist genre can find its seeds in modernism which, in turn, can be traced back to romanticism.6 During the romantic period a self-consciousness emerged which abandoned the notion that the essence of art lay in the representation of "men doing things".7 Instead, there arose a preference for a way of looking at reality from within and a new conception of the outer world came into being. This is not to discount the positive elements of what is now termed the romantic movement. Its response to an artistic deadening,8 seen to be at that time endemic to literature and thought of the Enlightenment period, was expressed in a period of re-construction. It gave birth to a greater freedom in experiment, in discovering new flexible forms in art and in experiencing an organic and imaginative vision of the universe. Romantic literature, nevertheless, did involve the eye of the artist turning in on himself and, therefore, further away from Aristotle's concept of action. This concept I shall argue is the soul of Tragedy.9

Tragedy was an elusive art form during the Romantic period. The writers whom we now call romantic were provoked by what they saw as the decline from imaginative vitality of classical rationalism. Keats, for example, in the poem "Sleep and Poetry", gives expression to this decline:

The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll’d
Its gathering waves - ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of, - were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule

---

6. These terms "Post-modernism", "Modernism" and "Romanticism" are defined in chapter three of this work.
8. The romantic poet felt deprived of ontological certitude or centrality in the wake of, for example, the cartesian experiment, which brought about two paradoxical developments in British philosophic empiricism - the rise of a radical subjectivism and the emergence of an uneasy phenomenalism or "naive realism". This idea is further explained in chapter three of this thesis.
9. I write "Further away" due to the fact that the period prior the Romantic age, the Enlightenment period, was also devoid of Tragedy in Literature. See Geoffrey Brereton, Principles of Tragedy: a Rational Examination of the Tragic Concept of Life and Literature (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p.130, who argues for example that Voltaire's Candide is anti-tragic not through lack of sensibility, not because of his rationalism but because an obsessive impatience with the advocates of the providential solution drives him into a nihilistic agnosticism.
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicrafts men wore the mask
Of poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it, - no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of one Boile (Lines 188-206)

As Steiner\textsuperscript{10} argues this reaction was coupled with one against the *ancien-regime*;
Romanticism in its political guise sought to liberate people from all kinds of oppression.
The misery and injustice of humankind's fate not seen to be *caused* by the consequence of some tragic, immutable flaw in human nature. The notion that a new
dawn had arisen and people could work towards perfectibility we see as essentially
romantic. Wordsworth writes:

\begin{quote}
Not of outward things
Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,
Symbols or actions, but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
O Heavens! How awful is
the night of souls,
And what they do within
themselves while yet
The yoke of earth is new to them, the world
Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
\end{quote}

*(The Prelude, Bk I, Lines 175-180)*

At least this was the case at the beginning when the romantics were trying to create a
new dramatic tradition. Post 18\textsuperscript{16} this optimism faded with a certain dejection,
melancholy and sadness taking its place. Certainly this occurred in the Symbolist and
Decadent movements of the later nineteenth-century.

**Tragedy, the Novel and Romanticism: Strained Relations**

It is generally believed that Tragedy is expressed in the dramatic form, rather than
in epic forms. Aristotle certainly maintained that Tragedy was to be performed in a
theatre. It is the case, nevertheless, that the eighteenth-century novel, *Clarissa*, in its
theme and structure, is comparable with those of tragic drama. In the nineteenth

\textsuperscript{10} George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), pp.124, 125.
century,\textsuperscript{11} such novels as Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851), Hawthorne’s *The Scarlett Letter* (1850) and Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* "dramatize" tragic themes in prose form. Steiner argues that the "death of tragedy" was connected to the fact that verse has been replaced by prose and "no longer stands at the centre of communicative discourse .... The natural language of statement, justification, and recorded experience is now prose". \textsuperscript{12} Verse, of course, was the language of Kings, prophets and heroes of ancient Greek and Elizabethan drama. Prose, it can be argued, is the language of the common people who cannot be seen as heroic from the Aristotelian viewpoint.

The heroes and heroines of eighteenth and nineteenth century novels and plays, and the anti-heroes or tragic-victims of literature, are not protagonists whose representative qualities are determined by rank. The common person is considered to be worthy of tragic stature. It was the prose of the novelists that responded more readily to changing class structure and yet still dealt with tragic themes.

Throughout the last three centuries, writers have attempted to write tragic drama and tragic novels. During the nineteenth century, novelists such as Hardy and Tolstoy, rather than the dramatists, can be seen to be partially successful. The writers of the twentieth century have found the task even more difficult. What is significant is that the tragic mode of presenting human life still has a special power for us. We no longer watch plays in a Greek theatre, the shifts in movement of ideas create new frameworks. We are, nevertheless, tied to some of the traditional tragic contexts. Popular culture creates films in which the Aristotelian concept of the hero is ritualized: The archetypal hero of American westerns comes readily to mind as such an example.

Despite the absence of Tragedy in twentieth-century drama and novels, there have been exceptions. Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* is such an exception. Life and death appear in this novel as experiences, rather than as philosophical or literary attitudes. That is to say that the internal conflict that goes on between the massive thrust of ideology and the counter-pressure of personal sensibility is lived through in represented form by the main character. The novel deals with tragic themes: the destiny of the individual, the ultimate meaning of life, the existence or non-existence of God and the enigma posed by both life and death. The drama of love is acted out against the background of nature, war, revolution, hunger and violence. Characteristic of modern

\textsuperscript{11} See for example Jeanette King, *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), where she demonstrates that these nineteenth century writers deal in tragedy. King distinguishes between Tragedy as defined by Aristotle and a re-defined variety seen to be more applicable to nineteenth century writers. King argues that the novel rather than being antipathetic to tragedy was essential to its continuing existence and development.

\textsuperscript{12} Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, p.309.
fiction the main character is, among other things, a writer. It is the content of the character’s thought, rather than its processes, that informs the theme of the novel. In writing he is attempting to know the truth of his experiences; Art he discovers is not to be confused with abstract concepts. He wishes "to grasp and experience and express everything in the world". Like modern writers, Pasternak shows his interest in the nature of consciousness. His character, Yuri, asks "And what was subject? What was object? How were their identities to be defined?" The novel, nevertheless, dramatizes in the plot, in the action, how and why Yuri comes to ask these questions. The character's experiences represented in the story demonstrate how he comes to be aware of the contradictory elements in human nature and the irrational urges in humankind. Pasternak carries on in the literary tradition of Dostoyevsky in his respect for the free personality, and in his rejection of rationalism and materialism as determinant forces in life or in Art.

Romanticism on the other hand sponsored, both intellectually and imaginatively, a withdrawal from the external world. Despite Steiner's assertion that romanticism fed a revolutionary, political line, romantic literature was more concerned with an inner, rather than an outer world. The universe was created anew by the romantic imagination; this "shaping spirit" portrayed not the objective reality, but the poet's own unique perception.

The command to heed only oneself was obeyed and, simultaneously, the outer hitherto accepted physical world lost much of its authority. The world existed not in itself but only as seen by the poet and artist. Modern fiction, in its dependence on

15. See R. Williams, Modern Tragedy, p.167, where he argues that Doctor Zhivago is a novel that presents "life as sacrifice, which in the end gives meaning to both the Individual and the Social histories".
16. George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, p.125
19. See Clifford Leech, Tragedy: The Critical Idiom, J.D. Jump, ed. (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1970), p.25, where he argues that despite the romantics' wish to write Tragedy they were unable to deal with present realities.
20. Modern fiction is understood in this context to be fiction of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which questioned all conventional nineteenth century notions of what literature should be. Modern fiction has some or all of the following characteristics: 1. Symbol, myth and image were to be used to present the unconscious depths of the characters; 2. The characters were no longer representative but, instead, symbolic constructions; 3. Novels no longer had beginnings, middles, and ends that worked within a known chronological order; 4. The relationships between art and life became the subject matter of the writer's inquiry; 5. The processes of writing were often the real story being told despite the use of conventional plot.
symbolism as one of its vehicles of expression, is undoubtedly an inheritor of Romanticism. In particular, in the modern novel, from as early as Melville’s *Moby Dick* to the present day, the writer has followed the romantic path in attempting to convey perceptions in symbols. Edith Wharton had something similar in mind when she claimed “Modern fiction really began when the “action” of the novel was transferred from the street to the soul”.\(^{21}\) The emphasis was on apprehending meaning indirectly, via the imagination.

There is very little difference in principle between Blake’s conception of the sun as “an innumerable company of the heavenly host ...”\(^{22}\) and those symbols found, for example, in such modern writers as Patrick White, Christina Stead, Malcolm Lowry and Samuel Beckett.\(^{23}\) When Romanticism is understood to be associated only with the cult of beauty and harmony, with idealization and escapism, it is not recognizable as having close ties with twentieth-century writers. When, however, it is seen as a period of discovering in art the nightmarish and creative potential of the unconscious and the capacity of the imagination to create new worlds, it can be seen to have given birth to “symbolism”,\(^{24}\) as it is known today.

Literature and Art during the nineteenth century underwent a drastic change both in their form and content. This content shows the process of attempting to express the complexities involved in searching for a unifying factor to replace the Christian God.\(^{25}\) Simultaneously, whilst on one level, accepting the fact of secularization, literature strove


\(^{23}\) I mention these writers, in particular, as they are the subject of this work. Examples of symbols found in these writers’ works that indicate a shared likeness with Blake are: Patrick White, The Chandelier in *The Vivisector*; Christina Stead, The Night-rider in *The Man who Loved Children*; Malcolm Lowry, The Abyss in *Under the Volcano*; and Samuel Beckett, the limbless form in the jar in *The Unnamable*.

\(^{24}\) I am using the term symbolism in the way it is understood by Aniela Jaffe “Symbolism in the Visual Arts”, in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. C.G. Jung (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), p.310, who wrote that a symbol is “an object of the known world, hinting at something unknown; it is the known, expressing the life and sense of the inexpressible, and by T.S. Eliot, quoted in Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism, The Critical Idiom*, no. 16, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1968), p.1, who referring to the symbol as an objective correlative defines it as “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formulae of that particular emotion”.

\(^{25}\) Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, p.219, points out that Tragedy speaks not of “secular dilemmas”; the artist now had drifted into an anti-tragic era. The gradual elimination of the sphere of the supernatural brought about a revolutionary shift in the literary sensibility of the age. “God” starts to become a figure of speech, a vain longing of the soul. Wallace Fowlie, *Rimbaud* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1956), p.34, writes of how Arthur Rimbaud came to realize that his quest for God was a quest for himself.
to undermine the positivism\textsuperscript{26} that brought it about. The romantic poets, especially, in seeking to see beyond surface reality to the immanent ideal, and in conceiving the universe as existing in and through themselves were, in effect, withdrawing from an artistic concern with representing an objectified, external world or the life of action. This withdrawal from the social world can be seen to be an attempt to retain some semblance of religion and spirituality. Their mystical belief in a transcendental realm beyond appearance was metaphysically conceived and, as such, in opposition to positivism. An example of this can be found in the anti-Newtonian mythology of Blake.

**Tragedy, the Novel and Existential Thought**

The universe which Newton perceived was a neat, compact, self-sufficient, three-dimensional, and impersonal machine. It was simple and, yet, accounted for everything. It was completely material. Despite Newton’s religious belief, his work was seen by some to sponsor an anti-religious intellectual environment.

According to Blake, the trouble with Newton’s universe was that it left out God, humankind, life and all the values which make life worth living

Am I not Bacon and Newton and Locke: who teach Humility to Man, who teach Doubt and Experiment? (Jerusalem, 54:17).

These three

Deny a conscience in Man and the Communion of Saints and Angels, Condemning the Divine Vision and Fruition, Worshipping the Deus of the Heathen, the God of this world, and the Goddess nature, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Druid Dragon and Hidden Harlot (Jerusalem, 93:22).

Existential thought, characterized in the modern Novel by Camus and Sartre,\textsuperscript{27} came in the wake of romanticism.\textsuperscript{28} The works of "realism" and "naturalism" of the nineteenth century interrupted the flow, but did not disconnect it entirely from its influence on twentieth-century writers.

---

\textsuperscript{26} See L. Kolakowski, *Positivist Philosophy: From Hume to the Vienna Circle* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), pp.10-11, where he defines Positivism as standing "for a certain philosophical attitude to human knowledge; ... it does not prejudge questions about how men arrive at knowledge .... it is a collection of rules and evaluative criteria referring to human knowledge .... positivism is a normative attitude, regulating how we are to use such terms as "knowledge", "science", "cognition", and "information". Positivism entitles us to record only that which is actually manifested in experience."

\textsuperscript{27} Although Camus and Sartre have both at various points in their lives denied that they were existentialists, it is clear that they shared certain precepts that can be termed existential. For both the philosophical starting point is that the world of reality is "absurd". See e.g., A. Camus, trans. Joseph Laredo, *The Outsider* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984), and Jean Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965) for the dramatization of the "absurd" in fictional form.

\textsuperscript{28} See, e.g., Wylie Sypher, *The Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p.85, where he explores the way in which Nietzsche could be termed a Romantic and thus makes significant connections between existential and romantic thought.
The context of the existential sensibility has in the main been secular.\textsuperscript{29} Certainly the preoccupation with failure, dread and death was largely determined by the loss of faith in an ordained metaphysical order.\textsuperscript{30} Sartre’s concept of "en-soi", that existence comes before essence, that humankind to begin with is nothing, is not, entirely, an alien concept to romantic thought: "Man is" Sartre writes "a project which possesses a subjective life, instead of being a kind of moss or fungus or a cauliflower. Before the projection of the self nothing exists, not even in the heaven of intelligence: man will only attain existence when he is what he purposes to be".\textsuperscript{31} Perhaps the Romantic would substitute "wishes" or "fears" for "purposes" but, otherwise, there is no difficulty in seeing a relationship between the two strands of thought.

The Romantic writers in the initial stages of what has been termed the Romantic movement were intent to escape the world as a machine; their withdrawal from the outside world, nevertheless, brought about a solipsistic view of the self. The realism that developed in the nineteenth century was necessarily a reaction to this in its designation of "the idea of an external, physical existence independent of the mind".\textsuperscript{32}

Existential thought picked up the frayed threads of nineteenth century romanticism. In sympathy with romantic thought it reaffirmed the incompetence of reason and logic to explain or even grasp our deeply-lived experiences. The existential novelists’ reaction to the realist novels, which presented views of life and human behaviour in terms of manners and mores, was to pick up again the romantic notion that humankind does not live authentically until it accepts the inexplicable. The existentialists’ interest in "being" and "nothingness" and the general ennui of modern

\textsuperscript{29} See W. Kaufmann (editor and translator), \textit{Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre} (New York: New American Library, 1956).
\textsuperscript{30} See Sypher, p.76, where he discusses the following writers’ relationship with "death": Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, Sartre, Heidegger and Thomas Mann.
\textsuperscript{31} Quoted in W. Kaufmann, \textit{Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre}, p.291.
\textsuperscript{32} Grant, \textit{Realism}, p.4.
existence required symbolism to express it. A rejection of normal language was brought about by writers, who were struggling with new and elusive states of mind. Unlike the Romantic poets, writers, writing in the existential and/or symbolist mould of the twentieth century, became increasingly intellectual in their use of the symbol.

Kaufmann points out that the existential writers, and he refers to Camus, Kafka, Sartre and Rilke, believed that their philosophical interest was based on a passionate concern with "questions that arise from life, the moral pathos, and the firm belief that to be serious a philosophy has to be lived". The reality is, though, that those writers, who write within an existential philosophical framework, express less the life of the human being and more the theories that arise from questions asked of that life.

The Romantic imagination transformed the world in two directions: the beautiful, or the horrific, into the wish or the fear image. The two strands were flights from the present of that time, whether into the past, the future, or another world of dreams. In each instance, it was a flight from the representation of people "doing things". Similarly, existential thought, in its preoccupation with facing "the void", helped sponsor in the arts the recording of man and woman in thought, rather than in action. Generally, the "existentialists" kept aloof from political activism, since they cherished the virtue of disinterested abstract speculation. It is the "abstract speculation" which characterizes their work. Sartre was, nevertheless, even before he turned to Marxism, interested philosophically in the notion of action.

33. See Albert Camus, The Outsider, p.28, where the protagonist says of his life: "I realized that I'd managed to get through another Sunday, that mother was now buried, that I was going to go back to work and that, after all, nothing had changed" and Jean Paul Sartre, Nausea, p.80: "They could feel the minutes flowing between their fingers; would they have time to stock up enough youth to start afresh on Monday morning? They filled their lungs because sea air is invigorating: only their breathing, as regular and deep as that of sleepers, still testified that they were alive. I walked along stealthily, I didn’t know what to do with my hard, fresh body, in the midst of this tragic crowd taking its rest."

34. See A. Camus, "An Absurd Reasoning", in The Myth of Sisyphus, trans. Justin O’Brien (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1955), p.21, where he points out that reason cannot be a guide in exploring a reality that is absurd: "From Jaspers to Heidegger, from Kierkegaard to Schestov, from the phenomenologists to Scheler, on the logical plane and on the moral plane, a whole family of minds related by their nostalgia but opposed by their methods or their aims, have persisted in blocking the royal road to reason and in recovering the direct path to truth." The literary symbol, which was thought to apprehend truth rather than define it in rational ways, was utilized by Sartre and Camus to "argue" their philosophical viewpoint in fiction.


36. Jean Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", in Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre, p.291, where Sartre writes:

For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be. To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen; for we are unable ever to choose the worst.
existentialism and Marxism. That he failed to do this is not relevant to this work; what is of interest, though, is that, despite his move from one of intellectual detachment to one that faced the implications of the historical situation in which he was thrust, his novels and plays remained more philosophical than representational.

The character Mathieu in Roads to Freedom is shown in a state of debate, reflecting Sartre's own preoccupations: "Why am I caught in this loathsome world of noises, surgical instruments, furtive taxi rides, in this world where Spain does not exist ... Why haven't I wanted to go and fight?" The Sartrean protagonist, with very few exceptions, manifests a non-self, a freedom without content. He suffers from an introspection that makes him distrust both his "beliefs" and "his doubts". The heroes often feel handicapped, because they are unable to commit themselves. Iris Murdoch entitles her work on Sartre Romantic Rationalist which, to me, expresses his complicated stand of involvement and separation. As Sartre's support of Marxism grew he came to accept Existentialism as "only an ideology", whereas Marxism was accepted as a philosophy. Ideology or philosophy, his literary works, despite his political convictions, reflect the theory of life and the theory of literature, rather than the representation of humankind in action. The emphasis in his work is on human subjectivity, on the denial of "essences", and on the human being's utter solitude. His literature is always philosophical and shows the author and his characters in a paradoxical quest against self-definition and universal determinism: "I can neither seek with myself the true condition which will impel me to act, nor apply to a system of ethics for concepts which will permit me to act."

Sartre's work, in its Marxist and pre-Marxist framework, can be understood to demonstrate existential attitudes as being inevitable within a capitalistic society. Nausea, for example, shows Roquentin recoiling from nature, reason, language and society. The world around him, that is the bourgeois world of habits and self-gain, is led by les salauds who are the complacent, hypocritical people who cheat reality, robbing themselves and others of life.

Ihab Hassan explains how *Nausea* refuses tragedy:

It is perhaps the first phenomenological fiction, exploring mental states that owe little to traditional modes of literature, gathering in its brilliant title metaphors of a new sensibility. For nausea is not merely a vague human malaise; it is a total response of the organism to the nature of existence. Consciousness contracts, curls in revulsion from its environment, seeking to empty itself out, to unmake words - hopeless task! - and to disgorge the limp, pasty, or viscous substance of things.42

Sartre's intellectual awareness may include a demand for engagement with life but his literature retreats from the world to the edge of solipsism. His distrust of words as being capable tools is a modern philosophical attitude that persists in his work and, therefore, despite his political thought and its interest in action, his literature cannot be tragedy.

In Camus's *The Outsider* Meursault symbolically acts out an existential argument. Meursault in the first part of the novel is seen to partake in an absurd existence; he is man, merely existing. He has no sense of essence and he does not think beyond his own subjectivity. Meursault does not take responsibility for his actions; indeed, it is the sun, rather than any decision on his part, that kills the Arab.

Meursault's life before he "commits murder" is seen as being merely reflexive. On a theoretical level he is the representative of twentieth century humankind: people without meaning, without God, alive only to desires and appetites and existing in an absurd, habitual pattern of repetition and monotony. His act of murder brings the wrath of society upon him and, in the second part of the novel, he becomes aware that most people agree on what constitutes correct moral and social behaviour. Nothing really changes for Meursault, except that he now has an awareness that other people have constructed for themselves a system of values which curls their behaviour.

Meursault, nevertheless, goes to his death with confidence in his choice of life-style. The fact that society's constructed value system is seen to be inauthentic is Camus's insight, rather than Meursault's. He becomes aware that he is different, an outsider, and not a dead-man like the chaplain, but he does not make any conscious judgement of the society that judges him; he merely shows a preference for the way he chose to live his life:

For the first time in a very long time I thought of mother I felt that I understood why at the end of her life she'd taken a "fiancé" and why she'd pretended to start again .... And I too felt ready to live my life again ... I looked up at the mass of signs and stars in the night sky and laid myself open for the first time to the benign indifference of the world. And finding it so much like myself, I realized I'd been happy, and that I was still happy.43

---

The Outsider is not simply about a man who murders an Arab and who is executed for the crime. Unless it is seen within a framework of debate about existential questions, it would be a meaningless and somewhat boring description of a strange man, an unloved mother, a blinding sun and an unfortunate Arab. How would Meursault, given his new social awareness, have conducted his life if he were freed? One is left with this theoretical question at the end of the novel, not only with the image of man thwarted by a conformist society. Instead, it is a symbolic work. The literal level of the work is subordinate to its theoretical meaning. It is in this guise that it may be appreciated as an artistic achievement. The poetry and literary style of the work, to be fully appreciated, must be responded to in the knowledge of its symbolic message.

Tragedy: Its Absence from Theoretical Literature

It is not being argued here that there is something inherently wrong with this kind of theoretical literature. Instead, what is being argued is that it refuses Tragedy. "Theoretical" literature is not unique to this century; indeed H.D.F. Kitto argues that Euripides created a different kind of tragedy, because he "analyses his tragedy, into the tragedy of society, instead of synthesizing it in the tragedy of a representative hero." Kitto, who accepts Euripides as "the most tragic of the poets", recognizes how different he is from the other Greek tragedians. Kitto argues that the Greek mind, during the last three decades of the fifth century, "began to shift its weight from one leg to the other: from intuitive intelligence, based on a generalized reflection about human experience, and expressing itself through art and the traditional imagery of mythology, to a conscious analysis of experience which made use of new intellectual techniques and was expressed, inevitably, in prose." Consequently, Euripides's dramas, although tragedies, were to some extent not complying with all of the Aristotelian standards. Yet they were Tragedies; the inclusion of a theoretical perspective on social issues and religious thoughts, did not mean that Euripides failed to represent people "doing things".

Theoretical literature in the twentieth century is of a very different kind from that known in Euripides's dramas. The elements in twentieth century fiction that contribute...
to its precluding tragedy can be seen in their embryonic stages in nineteenth century novels.

On the one hand, there was the "realism" of the nineteenth century, which is yet another way of interpreting the world by setting up hypothetical axioms on what constitutes reality. This often involved in George Eliot’s works a portrayal of rustic characters who spoke in "realistic" dialogue. Jeanette King\(^{47}\) points out that such elements were suspect in a tragic work which should concentrate on worthier protagonists. In the Victorian critic R.H. Hutton’s view, Hardy’s realism precluded tragedy because it is limited to gloom: "It gives us the measure of human miserableness, rather than of human grief - of the incapacity of man to be great in suffering, or anything else".\(^{48}\) Characters of the nineteenth century novel were difficult to create as tragic personas. The rarefied atmosphere of civilized society in Hardy’s, Eliot’s, and James’s works did not readily accommodate the language of tragedy. The "realists" attempted to deal with everyday experience. If they saw tragedy there, and they did, it was to be unlike the Aristotelian view of the hero in active conflict with the universe. C.H. Lewes warned that realism could become "detailism": "the upholstery must be subordinate, and velvet must not draw our eyes away from faces".\(^{49}\) Realism represented character in individuals and not as representatives of "all people" as in the classical world. Nor was it immune from the imposition of other theories. King argues, for example, that the realism of George Eliot’s novels "is disturbed by the melodramatic intrusion of the heredity principle".\(^{50}\) Hardy, on the other hand, construes a world in which the characters can only find freedom in knowledge; only by learning that we are less free than we thought, can we learn to become more free.\(^{51}\)

On the other hand, nineteenth century literature also had within it the seeds of surrealism.\(^{52}\) Melville’s Bartleby who simply states that he "prefers not to", that is, to work and finally to live, prefigures the creator that Camus refers to in The Myth of Sisyphus as the "absurd creator". Raymond Williams notes that Tolstoy’s straying into

---

autobiography and preaching forced him back into a primarily internal action\textsuperscript{53} which again prefigures the personalized introspection of twentieth-century writings.\textsuperscript{54}

There is, nevertheless, a difference between the theory that forms a minor part of the nineteenth-century novel (whether it be related to the realist school, symbolic characters that prefigure existential questions, or the inclusion of autobiographical material), and that which characterizes modern novelists such as William Faulkner, Patrick White and John Fowles. Faulkner's novels, for example, have been seen as a series of related myths built around the conflict between traditionalism and the anti-traditional world in which it is immersed.\textsuperscript{55} Some of Patrick White's novels can be seen as modern allegories of the artistic process itself whether related to the self-conscious writer, his or her literary tools \textsuperscript{56} the work of art itself, and John Fowles's novel \textit{The French Lieutenant's Woman} is not only given two alternative endings from which the reader may choose an authentic finale but, also, actively dramatizes the presence of Fowles discussing with his readers the problems and tricks of his craft.\textsuperscript{57}

In the eighteenth century, Sterne was, in \textit{Tristram Shandy}, exploring similar problems and tricks of his craft. From the beginning, the novel has been self-conscious about its problematic relationship to life, to history, to other works of art and to other literary genres. As Robert Gorham Davis writes, when stating that Sterne saw with great clarity what is ontologically and experientially implied by the form he was employing: "What requires historical explanation is the fact that his discoveries vanished from the consciousness of his successors in the British novel for the next hundred and fifty years".\textsuperscript{58} In the nineteenth-century novels, in so far as the characters of these novels are not made aware that they are living a story, with all the questions of identity that this raises, were more likely to approximate Tragedy. The twentieth-century novelists like Sartre, Robbe-Grillet and Fowles return to the questions

\textsuperscript{53} Raymond Williams, \textit{Modern Tragedy}, p.122.
\textsuperscript{54} See von Szeliski, \textit{Tragedy and Fear: Why Modern Tragic Drama Fails} (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp.57-69, who argues convincingly that the strong autobiographical tendency of modern dramatists precludes the creation of tragic drama.
\textsuperscript{56} See my work Ann McCulloch, \textit{A Tragic Vision: The Novels of Patrick White} (St Lucia: Univ. of Queensland Press, 1983), pp.27-109, where three of White's novels are analysed along these lines.
\textsuperscript{57} John Fowles, \textit{The French Lieutenant's Woman} (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969). See chapter three of this thesis for analysis relating to these points.
Sterne asks. This self-consciousness, however, in some twentieth-century novels, will rely heavily on Symbolism to do this.

Dorothea from Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, Jude from Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* and Levin from Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* are less burdened with a symbolic weight that goes beyond their role as a character in a recognizable plot than Patrick White’s Arthur in *The Solid Mandala* or Faulkner’s Joe Christmas in *Light in August*. Yet, even in these latter works, the literal level of the work bears some relationship with what is commonly accepted as the observable empirical world. Although symbolism has taken on the task of representing ideas that are able to be discussed rationally instead of its former role of apprehending an unknowable world, it is being done in these novels within a context in which the form of the novel has not been entirely undermined. Yet this too occurs in the works of James Joyce, Kafka, Nabokov and Borges and Saramraute and many others who, in their individual ways, undermined all previous concepts of time, space, order, chaos, dream, action, reflection and art. The elements of these works work together in abstract relations but, nevertheless, do so within a closed structure. Given their interest in questioning the very mode of being of art, they do so within definable, clearly-constructed frameworks. They become rationally translatable. Form is noted by its absence, words appear on pages in order to invalidate themselves, and life is absolved from having to be meaningful.

The anguish of modern people, characterized in existential fiction and more recent fiction, finds its ontological origins in the forces of secularization of the mid-nineteenth century. The symbol, whose origins can be found in Romanticism, has been the artistic means by which this anguish has been transformed. It is the fact that this anguish in modern fiction has been theoretically rendered within the symbol which makes it unique to this century. The symbol finds a new relation with modern

---


60. This is not to suggest that the process of secularization began in the nineteenth century. The period of enlightenment between 1650-1750, the age of Newton, Locke, Hume, Diderot and Voltaire, was a time when the idea of progress was scientifically born. Nevertheless, I am using the concept specifically in the form it took in the nineteenth century. That is that the relation between societies and religion changed: men and women did not only withdraw from religious belief and practice because of rational, scientific thinking. Society was a religious phenomenon that underwent drastic changes. *Society* in the nineteenth century no longer needed the idea of God. Without God, nevertheless, individuals were left with a void, as the new "Gods" whether one terms them "science" or "progress" did not spiritually fill the void left by "God’s death".

61. See Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Fontana, 1971), who argues that modern Anglo-American criticism is based on the romantic inheritance, particularly as it is manifested in the 1890s, in French symbolism and in its equivalent in the poetry of the image in England in the works of people like Lionel Johnson and Yeats. Kermode argues that this tradition can be traced back through Pater, Arnold, Hazlitt, Wordsworth, Keats, and Coleridge to Blake.
allegory. This relation is one that goes beyond the understanding that Allegory is conceived in the intellect and seeks emotional forms, and that Symbolism is a literary device in which psychological realities rise from the subconscious and take sensible form. In the past one could characterize Allegory as a riddle, which failed, unless it was solved and symbolism was construed as a dream, which failed if its entire meaning was obvious. Modern allegory entails a form of symbolism, which has become increasingly intellectualized. This modern allegory does not only concern itself with existential anguish; it is also concerned with a time which has concluded that "the thing being represented falls outside of the representation itself", and that we are unhappily trapped in a language game which we cannot understand; J. Hillis Miller speaks of literature as a sham, which "captures in its subtle pages not the reality of darkness, but its verbal image" and that words are lies, being as they are fabrications of the intellect.

Many strands of post-modernism dramatize this literary period as one that distrusts the subject of empirical observation and philosophical thought. Structuralists, like Roland Barthes, talk of literature as "a system of deceptive signification": it is "emphatically signifying, but never finally signified". Perhaps the poetic expressions of Barthes's interest in "the fabrication of meaning which is considered more important ... than the meanings themselves" are to be found in Saussure's "Tropisms". Modern allegory questions everything; a splintered world is seen in a state of chaos by a consciousness that paradoxically can no longer serve as a test of reality, or as a way of demonstrating the existence of the self. The writer cannot get outside himself or herself, but neither can he or she be ever quite shut up within the confines of subjectivity.

The Modern Age and the Loss of Tragedy

This tendency of modern fiction to be theoretically conceived and to be a modern allegory of philosophical and literary preoccupations of the age is a central concern of this thesis. This factor, more than any other, alienates most modern fiction (and

62. The way in which I am using and understanding the term allegory is discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis.
66. Roland Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity", in Gregory T. Polletta, ed., Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1972), p.124; Barthes points out that there is no technical difference between structuralism as an intellectual activity on the one hand and literature in particular ... both derive from a mimesis, based not on the analogy of substances, but on the analogy of functions.
drama) from possible tragic expression. As already mentioned, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, a century and a half earlier, demonstrated the basic ontology of the novel and can be seen as a predecessor of these twentieth-century novelists. It is, however, also clear that the times in which Sterne wrote are very different from those in which modern fiction emerged. This is an important point as the nature of the modern era forms a major element in the allegory of modern and post-modern fiction.

There is a great deal of agreement among theorists of tragedy on why tragedy has not been created in the modern age. The most famous essay by Joseph Wood Krutch entitled "The Tragic Fallacy", which points out that modern drama is too "mean and depressing" to be called Tragedy has been argued against by Mark Harris in his book, *The Case for Tragedy*. Generally, though, it is agreed, that drama and novels with tragic themes of the modern age contrast negatively with the great tragedies of the past. It is also interesting that the philosophers, who have been fascinated by the concept and attitude of Tragedy (e.g., Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and de Unamuno), have been so, during times when it was noticeably absent. The nineteenth century and the twentieth century were times of great change in relation to social, moral and religious mores. Art sought to find new forms to express this age and philosophers sought to understand why the tragic protagonist was an elusive figure.

At the beginning of this century, art and literature can be seen to express both a plunge into chaos and, simultaneously, yet in opposition, a search for new form and structure. In art, Expressionism finds its counterpart in Cubism. In literature, writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Franz Kafka renounced perspective, traditional causality and totality and, yet, intellectualized symbolism in their use of myths and parables. Art and literature struggled to come to terms with a world that was being seen differently by scientists. It was as if, with the change of a scientific paradigm, the

67. See following references (respectively) which also argue that Tragedy is impossible when eschatological abstractions, Socratic axioms and the dissatisfaction with language become the determinant meaning of a work of art: Calarco, *Tragic Being: Apollo and Dionysus in Western Drama*, p.165, Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, section 14, p.285; and see René Wellek, *The Attack on Literature and Other Essays* (Great Britain: The Harvester Press Limited, 1982), p.7, where he refers to the fact that the literature of silence is amounting to a great deal of literature about the end of art and poetry.


70. George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, makes some of the better points concerning this: he notes for example, p.180, the search for a modern tragic form involved the creation of characters over whose lives hung "too vivid a cast of thought (ii) that tragedy in its language required a tension between verse and prose in the way Shakespeare practised it (pp.257-261); such a tension is absent from the modern drama and novels; and (iii) that the decline of tragedy is inseparably related to the decline of the organic world view and of its attendant context of mythological, symbolic and ritual reference" (p.292).
world itself was changing. A generally-accepted model of reality was being usurped. One interpretation of the world was being challenged by another and artists and writers, along with scientists, were suffering from the shock that a hitherto accepted view of the universe was not a valid one. Max Planck's Quantum Theory (1900), Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (1905), and his General Theory of Relativity (1915), Heisenberg's Quantum Mechanics for Atoms (1925) and his Uncertainty Principle, and Schrödinger's equations in their multiple dimensions as physics all contributed to relegating Newton's view of the world to the past and as obsolete. Artists and writers responded to these changes in their awareness that the world could no longer be represented as a totality, receiving its order from a definite perspective, and in unison with causal relationships. Ernst Fischer in his essay "Chaos and Form: The Necessity of the New" warns of relating the changes in science and mathematics simplistically on a one to one basis to changes in artistic expressions.\(^71\)

A relation, nevertheless, between the discoveries in these two fields does exist, given that simultaneity in history is itself a relation. The culture that arises in each era inevitably carries within it parallel growths in disparate fields. The notion of strictly causal relations among various kinds of creative thought can be suspended when inquiring into the organic growth of different disciplines during the same historical period. It is clear that, from a scientific and mathematical perspective, a new reality had arisen, and that the artists endeavoured to penetrate this new reality in a new way. Perspective was to be abandoned in art, traditional causality in literature, as well as in art, and the former sense of the world forming a totality was rejected. A search for a new expression, a new language, which the destruction of an old order would surely bring forth, became relentless in the twentieth century.

Despite the arts' response to a changing reality, there is an evident reticence by the academy to accept that life is composed of many endings.\(^72\) The natural sciences have as subject the fixing of laws within, paradoxically, a decomposing universe in motion, the humanities revere human person's present search for security within what history tells us is an environment beset with conflict. This fear of change, this inability to reject old formulations and axioms, no longer applicable to present reality, becomes

---


72. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, writes, p.52, that a new form is often not recognized as anything, but the absence of form as the standards of the past are used to measure it. The writer himself has become part of a mental civilization and a literature which can only be those of the past. I am not implying here that the form Robbe-Grillet creates has anything to do with tragedy. In fact, he strives in his work for the opposite effect. He argues (*ibid.*, pp.82-83) that man, having escaped from the metaphysical pact that other men made for him in days gone by, has rejected tragedy.
an enemy to an understanding of life and its relationship to Art. The form of art changes, indeed, to be self-renewing, form must be unstable. It changes because of the very actions and decisions made by men and women in each era which, in turn, determine the kind of actions taken. Present phenomena, whether in the arts, sciences, or life itself, cannot be explained purely by causal relationships, by simply using the past to serve the present.

Williams argues that the concept of Tragedy, although Aristotelian in its origins, changes according to how it is interpreted by writers and theorists of each age, and how it is assimilated by them into the prevailing culture. He therefore questions whether what is called the tradition in relation to Tragedy carries a clear and single meaning. Leech also questions whether there is general theory of Tragedy that can be applied throughout time to a great variety of works that differ so much from each other. In attempting to define what Tragedy is, in modern literature, one must be aware of the dangers of applying Aristotelian definitions to modern art uncritically and illogically. On the other hand, it would be equally foolish to ignore them completely.

The Concept of Tragedy: Continuity and Change

The weight of the past bears heavily upon us. The voice in Beckett's *Unnamable* expresses the surprising quality of the past. "And out it all pours unchanged, I have only to belch to be sure of hearing them, the same old sour teachings I can't change the title of. A parrot, that's what they're up against, a parrot." Raymond Williams is aware of these difficulties, when attempting to make modern sense out of the concept of Tragedy. Williams's study is an important one, because it explains how history has affected the ideational elements of tragedy. He sees Tragedy as having a tradition. At the same time he is critical of a simplistic approach of many modern writers who assume without question that they are contributing to a common idea or form.

Williams in his study shows how many of the elements that make a Tragedy, rather than being permanent facts, are determined and changed by the passing of time. In the light of and in comparison with Aristotle's definition of tragedy, he illustrates

---

73. Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, p.14, where he makes this question the premise of his inquiry.
74. Clifford Leech, *Tragedy: The Critical Idiom*, p.24, where he sheds doubt on such a possibility: He notes that the concept of tragedy has been applied to works that differ perhaps in all ways except in embodying this arbitrary concept of tragedy.
how differently aspects of Tragedy are interpreted in each age. In doing so, he is arguing that applying an Aristotelian definition rigidly on modern literature in order to ascertain it as Tragedy is illogical. Williams gives examples from Greek, Mediaeval, Renaissance, Elizabethan, Jacobean and, what he calls, secular tragedy, which illustrate how central concepts in tragedy change intrinsically from one age to another.

It is not within the scope of this work to test his assertions systematically against literature and aesthetics throughout history. What is significant about his coverage is that it illustrates how the concept of tragedy is a series of assimilations and, yet despite these, these assimilations are generally not regarded as changing the traditional concept at all. Despite the common theme, in Tragedy, of courage and inevitable defeat, the form in which it is dramatized, both in the novel and the play, has undergone many changes throughout time. Williams shows how a modern notion of individualism is quite different from that understood by Aristotle. The first historical meaning of 'individual' was understood as "a member of a group or kind rather than a separable and unique being". A romantic, existential or post-modernist understanding of "individual" is diametrically opposed to the Greek concept. Yet, haphazardly, modern critics apply Aristotle's concept seemingly without awareness. Similarly, the Greek understanding of "action" varies significantly from how people have conceived of it during the centuries. For the Greeks, "action" was at once public and metaphysical; it embodied a whole view of life.

The Aristotelian notion of Tragedy involving the fall of the hero "from prosperity to misery ..." took on a different conceptual meaning during mediaeval times. The worldly condition of the heroes was beginning to be severed from the metaphysical one. Williams illustrates how "fortune" increasingly referred to world success. He argues that "... in the separation of worldly from unw worldly, the mediaeval idea of tragedy became,

77. General reading, nevertheless, indicates support for many of his assertions; see for example: Leech, Tragedy: The Critical Idiom, p.25, who notes that people who wrote in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attempted to write Tragedy with the ancient or Renaissance examples still dominant on their thought; Murray Krieger, The Tragic Vision: Variations on a Theme in Literary Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), argues that applying Aristotle's poetics into modern literature is illogical, as it cannot do justice to the profound complex of metaphysical and psychological forces, which the modern tragic vision unleashes; Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, p.20, notes that the Elizabethans violated every precept of neo-classicism, and from pp.37-136 he discusses the relationships between the history of ideas, history and the presence or absence of some tragic form.

78. Williams, p.20.

79. The post-modernist has gone so far as dispensing with the individual altogether. See Peter Fuller, Beyond Crisis in Art (Great Britain: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society Ltd., 1980), p.31, quoting Mame Yates: "there is no practice except by and in ideology", and see M. Krieger, The Tragic Vision; Variations on a Theme in Literary Interpretation, p.21, where "individual" is defined as standing outside the universal.

paradoxically, more worldly than any before it." Williams argues convincingly that in the light of metaphysical and social categories becoming sharply opposed, and in the heroes possessing less an exemplary quality and more a mere title of rank, Mediaeval aesthetics changed the application and meaning of the Aristotelian concept of Tragedy.

With great precision, Williams goes through the ages pointing out the discrepancies between Aristotle's definition and the actual practice of it. In neo-classical times he uncovers: 1. a new significance of rank; that the dignity of tragedy took precedence over its general and representative quality; 2. that style, instead of content, was emphasized; 3. that, whereas in Aristotle's terms, error was rooted in the action and reflective of a metaphysical fault, the increasing emphasis on a rational morality affected the tragic action in one important way: It insisted on relating suffering to moral error, and so required the tragic action to demonstrate a moral scheme. It was a belief in redemption, rather than in dignified endurance; it was based on a moral emphasis, which occurred with the concept of decorum. 4. That the suffering and action of the hero were no longer metaphysical or religious in the way in which they were for the hero of ancient Greek drama; 5. and, finally, that Catharsis replaced action as the centre of the Tragedy.

Although Shakespearean Tragedy had a Christian consciousness in that the tragic action tended to demonstrate a moral scheme, it cannot be seen to be religious in the same sense as Greek Tragedy. During the eighteenth century the moral emphasis became so dogmatic as to form an ideology in itself. The recognition of unnatural suffering brought an end to such moral emphasis. Hegel's interest in the causes of suffering, in "ethical substance", his distinction between classical and modern action in tragedy, further contributed to what was distinct about a certain period in literary

---

81. Williams, p.22. Also see Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, p.120, where he notes that the Romantic writers argued it was the age that made tragedy impossible: "If we are to recreate a living theatre, we must reform the 'soul of social life'".
82. Aristotle, *The Art of Poetry*, p.41, where it is written "First and foremost, the characters should be good".
83. Ibid., p.23.
84. Ibid., pp.25-27.
85. See Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy*, p.245, where he quotes Hegel on this point:

The heroic self-consciousness (as in the tragedies of the ancients, of Oedipus, etc.) has not yet proceeded from its solidarity to the reflection of the difference between deed and action, between the external event and premeditation and knowledge of the circumstances; or to the fragmentation of the consequences; it accepts its guilt for the whole range of the deed.
86. Ibid., p.34. Aristotle's concept of action is very different from concepts of action as seen since by philosophers and writers.
history. Similarly, Bradley's psychological, rather than ethical theory of tragedy, and Marxist views that described a socio-economic process, rather than a spiritual one, took their toll on the Aristotelian definition. The nineteenth century brought Schopenhauer to the fore. His belief that the crime lay not in an individual, or in a society, but in existence itself, brought Tragic thought into the arena of despair. The significance of the tragic hero was, within his view, in his resignation; his surrender, not merely to life, but of the will to live. In the work of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche decreed a tragic delight in man's inevitable suffering. His heroes of Tragedy are destroyed but, simultaneously, this brings about an aesthetic expression of the primal unity of the Joy of life. The Nietzschean philosophy, which is seen to flourish in late romantic literature, and later in Existential artistic expression, existed alongside, though in separate development, to the growth of "Realism" in literature. In the latter, the "Aristotelian" hero was being replaced first, by middle class men and women and, finally, by all people. It was not, however, a matter of one person representing a class of people. In twentieth century literature the tragic hero or victim is an individual alienated from society.

Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions examines how, within the discipline of science, new discoveries transform scientific research by substituting one paradigm for another. The awareness of anomaly and the gradual and simultaneous emergence of both observational and conceptual recognition, pertaining to a new discovery, does eventuate in a consequent change of paradigm. There is, nevertheless, a great deal of resistance from adherents of the paradigm under siege. Kuhn's description of this resistance, and the nature of the changeover, serves as a parallel metaphor for the

87. See A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.7. The "story" or action of a Shakespearean tragedy does not consist, of course, solely of human actions and deeds; but the deeds are the predominant factor. And these deeds are, for the most part, actions in the full sense of the word; not things done "'tween asleep and wake", but acts or omissions thoroughly expressive of the doer - characteristic deeds".

88. See, for example, Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977).

89. See A. Schopenhauer, "The true sense of Tragedy is the deeper insight that it is not his own individual sins that the hero atones for, but original sin, i.e., the crime of existence itself", quoted in Williams, Modern Tragedy, p.37.

90. F. Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy.

struggle within literary theory to recognize and accept formal changes in Tragedy. Lessing is an example of a writer who, wishing to see what was new in Tragedy was unable, nevertheless, to recognize Jacobean and Elizabethan Tragedy as a new kind of Tragedy. His insistence that Shakespeare was the true inheritor of the Greeks is illustrated in his placing both the Greek and the Elizabethan tragedy into a traditional form. With the vantage of hindsight one can understand how historically this occurred. In the twentieth century, in the absence of an acceptable paradigm, theoreticians became involved in semantics and they have produced terms such as "the tragic vision", in the face of the lack of a suitable paradigm, which would replace the one and be able to re-examine the concept of tragedy in the light of the contemporary world. An attempt to establish a new model of tragedy would enable one to discern the reasons for the absence of tragedy for most of this century. Instead, writers note the ways in which modern drama and fiction are not tragic with constant reference back to the nature of effective tragedy - always the tragedy of long ago and, necessarily, pre-determined by unqualified Aristotelian definitions.

In science, transition from a paradigm in crisis, to a new one from which a new tradition of normal science can emerge, is far from a cumulative process. Instead, Kuhn points out, it is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary theoretical generalizations, as well as

92. I use the term "metaphor" quite deliberately at this point in this thesis. John Neubauer, "Models for the History of Science and Literature" in Harry R. Garvin, ed., Bucknell Review: Science and Literature (London: Associated Univ. Presses, 1983), pp.21 and 22, points out the problems of applying a Kuhnian structure to literature carelessly: "... Kuhn is a metacritic who studies the ways in which scientists study nature and interact with each other. What should be the subject matter of ... metacritics of literature? ... for art is man-made while nature is not. Unlike the metacritic of science the metacritic of literature has to study the function and behaviour of two very different groups, the artists and the literary scholar-critic".

93. See Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, p.188, where he writes that Lessing saw the Aristotelian ideal of Tragedy realized in the dramas of Shakespeare.

94. See Williams, Modern Tragedy, p.30:

For the truth seems to be that the character of Elizabethan tragedy is determined by a very complicated relationship between elements of an inherited order and elements of a new humanism ... we can see the historical basis for the very different assimilations that have emerged.


95. See, e.g., Sewall, The Tragic Vision and Murray Krieger, The Tragic Vision: Variations on a Theme in Literary Interpretation. In the latter case Krieger makes a final step towards attempting to outline a new model of Tragedy arguing for a "formless" tragedy which he sees as appropriate to the contemporary situation.
many of its paradigm methods and applications. A paradigm change is seen as necessary, when anomalies occur whose characteristic feature is their stubborn refusal to be assimilated by the existing paradigm. It becomes no longer possible to evade anomalies that subvert the existing transition of scientific practice. Since Romanticism, it has been evident that nineteenth and twentieth-century drama and fiction have not been assimilated comfortably into the tradition, as had their predecessors. A new paradigm for tragedy has not evolved. Instead, most theoreticians, either codify the formal inheritance and thus deny change in tragic kind, and/or they postulate that Tragedy, as an art form, is dead. The reasons usually given for the latter due to the work’s not fulfilling the qualities of Aristotle’s concept of tragedy. There are, of course, exceptions like Murray Krieger, Raymond Williams and Calarco who seek, albeit in different ways, to explain the kinds of relevance tragedy has for modern times. On the other hand, there are many examples of writers who wish to create tragedy in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries looking towards the past in order to find a "form" or 'container' for their tragic sensibilities and tragic philosophy. In the twentieth century the urge to draw on the past in order to write tragedy is also apparent: There has been Jean Anouilh’s Medea and Antigone, Sartre’s Les Mouches and T.S. Eliot’s The Family Reunion, just to mention a few.

The twentieth century, it is generally agreed, has not produced tragedy; the time, nevertheless, has come for the emergence of a new paradigm, which will rescue what is applicable from Aristotelian theory (that is that which describes what is constant in human nature), and accommodate a new form of tragedy that is evolving alongside "a new realism". In science, the single most prevalent claim advanced by the proponents of a new paradigm is that this paradigm can solve the problems that led the old one to crisis. A new model of Tragedy is now possible, I believe, because the cause of its "death" in this century can be identified. What died in the Tragic arts was the wish or the ability of the artist, whether for philosophical, historical or technical reasons, to represent man and woman in action. States of being, whether those of created characters or those relating to the literary and philosophical preoccupations of the author, replaced the representation of an action.

96. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p.84.
97. See Leech, Tragedy, p.25:

Many people wrote what they called tragedies in the years following the 17th century, with the ancient or Renaissance examples still dominant on their thought ... All the major Romantic and Victorian poets made an attempt at rivalling Shakespeare.
98. Anouilh’s Medea explores Medea’s psychological state, his Antigone recreates the Crean-Antigone opposition to represent France under the German Occupation, and Elliot’s play is loosely based on Oresteia, despite the Christian viewpoint.
99. This "new realism" and the problems of defining it is discussed in the introduction; it is also referred to at relevant points throughout this thesis.
In this stage of this work, it is necessary to draw attention to two central questions: First, what must be added and subtracted from the Aristotelian understanding of tragedy when developing a theory that can be applied to twentieth century fiction? In saying this, there is an essential recognition that in defining Tragedy, or in setting up a new model of Tragedy, one cannot ignore its long and rich tradition; nor is one interested in re-establishing an anachronism by superimposing uncritically Aristotle’s poetics onto modern art. Secondly, why is Tragedy generally considered the highest form of fiction, so much so that an age that fails to create it sees itself as sadly lacking? What is its unique value? These questions can be looked at by recognizing that Tragedy is an artistic expression of a lived Humanism; it is an art form that, in the midst of suffering, takes on the challenge of expressing life and the vastness of existence with awe, respect and love.
CHAPTER 2
THE CONTINUOUS ELEMENTS IN TRAGEDY

Enigmatic Evil and the Incomprehensible Nature of the Universe

Despite the evident differences in the form and content of tragedy from one era to the next, there are, nevertheless, elements that do not change. First there is the presence of an enigmatic evil. Steiner says of this force: "Call it what you will: a hidden or malevolent God, blind fate, the solicitations of hell, or the brute fury of our animal blood ...": Whatever its nature, it leads the human person to incomprehensible destruction. It makes one consider the enigmatic quality of life and the place that evil has in it. Sewall notes that what distinguishes tragedy is its peculiar and intense preoccupation with the evil in the universe: "Whatever it is in the stars that compels, harasses, and bears man down, Tragedy wrestles with the evil of the mystery - and the mystery of evil. And the contest never ends." This is magnified in human relevance, when the evil descends upon one, due to a good action, as A.C. Bradley says of Shakespeare: "He was writing tragedy, and tragedy would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery." The presence of this evil and its mystery has not been dispelled by the scientific age. It can, however, be argued that from the mid-nineteenth century, there was a temporary adherence to the notion that science could master the world and give it an order, unrelated to a metaphysical one. Darwin in his Origin of Species gave added weight to the intellectual distrust of the Bible. The optimism in scientific inquiry at this time led to a belief that perhaps in time the universe could be comprehended in its entirety. It is not surprising that novels of the nineteenth century emphasize the

1. See, for example Calarco, Tragic Being, p.178, where he distinguishes between tragedians, who differ due to historical situations. Yet, Calarco also shows the point where tragedians converge with "the common tragic perception outside history". Also Krieger, The Tragic Vision, in which he argues that Tragedy cannot remain defined literary form in which the tragic vision is surrendered to form. His belief is that twentieth century Tragedy cannot be expressed by the form set out in Aristotle's poetics; and see, Sewall, A Tragic Vision, where he argues that artistic works are the effects of a certain form in evolution.

2. Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, p.8. See also Sewall, "The Tragic Form" in Michel and Sewall (eds.), Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism, p.122, where he writes: "Thus Tragedy contemplates a universe in which man is not the measure of all things. It confronts a mystery".


4. Note, for example, the moral principles that determine the tragic fall of Hamlet, Oedipus and Antigone.

extent to which people are the results of their environment and heredity, and that in the light of them, behaviour, morality, and the general complexity of human life could be understood. Such a literary atmosphere does not sponsor the tragic perceptions.

In Tragedy, the human being will always seek to unravel the mystery of fate, or of evil that exists in life. Despite an acceptance of the ultimate mystery of the universe, tragic heroes and heroines take responsibility for the decisions they make. They are accountable for their actions. Wylie Sypher concurs that: "The inevitability of the nineteenth century scientific universe excluded any sense of guilt, any sense of responsibility, and malaise of conscience."\(^6\) What has been called Modern Tragedy in the twentieth century has excused the protagonist of the responsibility of his or her action and this has, therefore, robbed it of a tragic essence. John von Szeliski argues convincingly that modern drama fails to equal tragedy, because of its tendency to emerge from pessimism, instead of optimism from which he believes great tragedy must emerge.\(^7\)

This pessimism entails the refusal by the writer to make a conscious value judgement; it, instead, maintains that all conduct is the result of accident rather than error. Such an attitude is expressed poignantly in Tennessee Williams's comment: "I don't believe in "original sin". I don't believe in "guilt". I don't believe in villains or heroes - only in right and wrong ways that individuals have taken, not by choice but by necessity, circumstances and their antecedents."\(^8\)

Suffering and Enlightenment

Connected to the prevailing mystery of cosmic powers, that exists within the human situation, is the fact of human suffering. Tragedy is about suffering. Modern drama and modern fiction have portrayed human beings as functionaries, and as not accountable for suffering caused. The kind of suffering that Tragedy entails must in its nature lead to enlightenment, which is an unlikely state to achieve without taking responsibility for one's actions. Tragedy dramatizes a terrible stark insight into human life. This insight is accompanied by suffering which often serves to draw attention to the dignity of the protagonist. Whether it be seen in Euripides's Bacchae, when Cadmus, powerless, blind and broken, is hounded out of the city; in Sophocles's Oedipus

---

7. John von Szeliski, *Tragedy and Fear: Why Modern Tragic Drama Fails*. von Szeliski's understanding of optimism in tragedy forms a marked contrast with that of Henry A. Myers, "The Tragic Attitude Toward Value" in Michel and Sewall (eds.), *Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*, p.45, where he writes "The tragic attitude is not optimism, for it does not represent the little that is evil in the world as rapidly diminishing ...."
Rex, when Oedipus having brutally inflicted blindness on himself, enters into an exile from his home; in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as Hamlet, in a tormented state, dies as he attempts to avenge his father's death, or in White's *The Twyborn Affair* as Eddie walks into a war-blown street in a final lunge towards self-acceptance, there is an assumption of a new grandeur.

The suffering endemic to tragedy is that which comes from the acts of people who, in their actions, express their authenticity. On one interpretive level, Robert Musil's novel *The Man Without Qualities* demonstrates that humankind's scientific conquest of physical reality was one that turned sour. Man's temporary triumph over the universe has also entailed his becoming a slave to the machine. Science, and its harnessing of energy, its temporary claims to have created "progress", finally has been unable to answer to the spiritual needs of people of this century. As modern writers become more obsessively preoccupied with the dimensions of self, it is also clear that western society has robbed the individual of "the self". The French critic, Paul Ginestier, expresses this well when he writes: "The precision of our mechanical civilization has imprisoned man so narrowly that he has lost his spiritual independence."9

Wylie Sypher in *The Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art* demonstrates that the dominant themes of modern literature, especially the tendency toward non-identity, reflect the major intellectual developments of our times. His examination of Robert Musil's novel illuminates this. The main character in this novel, Ulrich, comes to an understanding that his life does not really depend on himself. He recognizes that his, and other people's, experiences are now detachable from people. He feels like "a human something floating about in a universal culture medium". Ulrich feels "manipulated",10 just one of a produced type. He doubts that his most private acts are his own: "they belong in a great complex of events robbing them of any essence by which they might be called his".11 The diffusion of responsibility that eventuates from such a sense of living a surrogate existence in a system, where "the seemingly solid became a porous pretext for many other meanings",12 leaves each person feeling without individual responsibility. It is difficult to find meaning for action, thus action is removed from its source of accountability. Consequent suffering, either experienced by the actor, or caused by the action, cannot lead to enlightenment; it has no personal moral birth. In tragedy there must be this relationship between suffering and enlightenment.

11. Ibid., p.11.
12. Ibid., p.11.
Myer points out that the tragic spirit lifts us above self-pity and reconciles us to suffering by showing that evil is a necessary part of the intelligible and just order of our experience. Suffering, in tragedy, however, is not just something to which one becomes reconciled. The tragic character is responsible for the suffering he incurs and necessarily enlightened by it. Tragedy deals with what Cox terms "necessary injustice". He believes correctly, I think, that when human suffering is seen in a literary work to be a product of absolute necessity, it affords some insight and some liberation - if not to the hero, at least to the audience. As Leech describes it: "Aristotle’s Anagnorisis implies suffering: it is the agency through which suffering, in the ultimate, mental sense, is brought into full being". Northrop Frye and Walter Kaufmann identify this suffering in Tragedy to be expressed finally in the self-sacrifice made by the protagonist in the interests of "truth". This sacrifice will inevitably depict the paradox of two conflicting elements, that of a fearful sense of rightness (the hero must fall), and a pitying sense of wrongness (it is too bad that he falls). Tragedies engender sacrifice and suffering, but they also show a kind of progress towards self-knowledge. This belief that suffering is ultimately creative, despite the pain incurred, is a retreating theme in modern literature. As early as Ibsen’s Brand (1866), one sees that this yearning for sacrifice, the uncompromising pursuit of an ideal, was suspect, perhaps even, an indulgence in the joy of pain. It is interesting that Ibsen’s later plays, for example, Pillars of Society (1875), move away from a quest for heroic self-realization, and concentrates instead on the struggle that takes place between individual and society. Suffering does not bring enlightenment; it is the result of injustice that could be cured - such is the view of this time. Tragedy must entail the gaining of wisdom through suffering; it must be opposite in kind to that experienced by Beckett’s heroes.

Williams recognizes this from a slightly different perspective. He notes how diminished individual responsibility for the ethical content in our daily action leads to a strangely detached understanding of social and political life. Consequently events, which are deep in the pattern of our culture, for example, war, famine, work, traffic accidents and politics, are not seen as tragic.

15. Leech, Tragedy, p.67.
18. Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy, pp.48-49.
This split between the human person's capacity for suffering and his/her ability to discover meanings and/or be enlightened by it, has removed, albeit temporarily, modern people from the human experience from which Tragedy is wrought. Aristotle was clear on this point. Suffering, he wrote, was an important element of tragedy that accompanied reversals and recognition, which he believed were the two most important means by which Tragedy plays on our feelings. These elements are necessary constituents of plot, which includes discoveries that lead the human being to action, or are made as the result of action. The best kind of discovery, Aristotle maintained, was that which unfolded naturally by the plot. Aristotle's view of discovery (Anagnorisis), which often came as the result of a "reversal" (peripeteia), was one that enabled human beings to see the bare truth of a human situation; Anagnorisis implies suffering, and the tragic heroes who experience it reach a state of enlightenment. Although it is a state that includes a recognition of the horror of the human condition, it is also a state of dignity and usually entails a redemption of a kind for the person involved. Oedipus is redeemed in his horrifying act of recognition; Willy Loman is not. *Oedipus Rex* is a Tragedy, *Death of a Salesman* is not. Oedipus acts, suffers, and is enlightened. Willy Loman is acted upon by the system, suffers, and does not learn anything other than that he is a loser. Oedipus is a hero, Willy is a victim.

**Tragedy: A Serious Theme**

Tragedy should deal with important questions of existence. It will show man and woman in search for truth; they will exercise their will and they will discover that there will always be a gulf between aspiration and fulfilment. It is the paradox embodied in tragic action which gives one a vision of the human situation. The tragic hero is ensnared in a universe that denies him ultimate results, despite his will and his determination to act and to know. His fight against a power he can not resist ends in defeat, but the fight itself demonstrates the essential dignity of the human person. The tragic hero is not going merely to adjust, accept or surrender to forces greater than himself. He or she is driven by a central condition of being human, and that is the will to power. The need to act, and the belief in the freedom to act, are what characterize Tragedy as optimistic.

---

20. Ibid., p.40.
21. Ibid., p.53.
22. See D.D. Raphael, *The Paradox of Tragedy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp.61-68, where he argues this and demonstrates the idea by reference to Racine’s capacity to see man in a tragic situation.
Tragedy - A Living Humanism: The Highest Form of Fiction

Great Art takes on the challenge of life. The question "Does life make sense?" is the central focal point in Tragedy. Tragedy exposes evil and demonstrates the human person in search of hope and values.

Although J.C. Maxwell disagrees that Tragedy should be on a "separate footing from the other main literary forms", novelists and playwrights throughout time have sought to write it, as if it possessed a certain quality that was essential for human survival. Shelley’s warning about the equation between an absence of tragedy and a third-rate culture seems to have been anticipated or heeded, given the attempts by the major Romantic and Victorian poets to rival Shakespeare. Leech argues that Wordsworth, Coleridge, Beddoes, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne all cultivated a Shakespearean idiom. Their bondage to the blank-verse line and the Elizabethan atmosphere was not merely a preference of form, but more the recognition that Tragedy dramatized that there is value inherent in actuality itself. To struggle not only for the fact of one’s own meaningful existence in time, but for the essence of all men and women in all time, is to decree that life is worth living. The dramatized struggle for authenticity against evil is the content of Tragedy. Tragedy is at the opposite end to despair. As tragic heroes go to their death, their mortality connects us to a larger concept of immortality - i.e., the continuum of ethical values in human societies. The near disappearance of tragedy in the modern age is related to a withdrawal from an interest and/or the belief in the human being’s search for value.

The so-called modern themes of modern literature, whether they hinge on concepts of alienation, lack of communication between people, loss of identity, despair and the loss of humankind as the point of absolute perspective, must be understood to emerge from within a society that has corresponding value "systems". That is as the human person experiences a disruption in relation to his/her place in the world, the former value-oriented framework that once held it up also undergoes fragmentation. As everything is questioned, including the phenomenon of consciousness, "truth" is as much under attack as the presence of a "real" world. This, however, does not mean that humankind stops having values. Instead, these values are questioned and more various. Yet modern fiction throws off a mirror version of the former, as it homes in on dramatizing the fact of relativity.

23. J.C. Maxwell, "The Presuppositions of Tragedy", in Michel and Sewall, Tragedy, pp.175 and 178.
24. See Leech, Tragedy, p.25, where he outlines the extent to which writers in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have attempted to write tragedy.
25. Quoted in von Szeliski, Tragedy and Fear, p.31.
There has been an abundant interest in the intellectual problems of ethics. This theorizing has replaced the art of representing man and woman actively seeking or working within a society that has, however fragmented, a value-oriented core. Fischer asks a most pertinent question, when he writes:

"Humanism - has it not reached its end? Man, a verbal spectre, a prejudice - has he not been done away with? And what will arise and has already begun to make its appearance, has it not to do with the dictatorship of things, the absolutism of material and factual relationships, of systems and orders which rid themselves of man as a disturbing element?"  

The scientific, rationalistic human being has created a technology that dropped atomic bombs in 1945; since then it has further improved on and constructed more deadly weapons capable of bringing the world to an end. Fischer rightly comments: "A science which has stripped itself of values makes each event an equation; and when this equation is correct the world may come to ruins." The brand of rationalism that took over most of the sciences has also brought a disturbing world view to the social sciences, to the visual arts and to literature. It is not my task here to engage in a dialogue with structuralists and the de-constructionists, but it should be acknowledged that these evolved with a belief in "the death of humanism".

Barthes points out that the object of structuralism is not man [woman] endowed with meanings, but man [woman] fabricating meanings, as if it could not be the content of meanings, which exhausted the semantic goals of humanity, but only the act by which these meanings, historical and contingent variables, are produced. The structuralist, in being interested in the processes that lead to created meaning, in being more interested in the fabrication of meaning than the meanings themselves, removes from centre stage the relationship between man and woman acting and existing in relation to apparent meaning.

The structuralist activity, of course, is very different from that of a tragedian. I do not wish to undermine its value or to refuse to see the ways in which one can usefully

26. See ibid., p.159, where von Szeliski shows that, although moral values vary from one era to the next, there is always some thing constant that suggests that values of some kind, despite relativity, persist.  
27. Ernst Fischer, "Chaos and Form: The Necessity of the New", in Chaos and Form, p.184. Also see Robbe-Grillet, Snapshots and Towards a New Novel, p.54, who is critical of the kind of "humanism" that permeates literature. He writes: "And so we should try to construct a solider, more immediate world to take the place of this universe of 'meanings' (psychological, social, functional meanings). So that the first impact of objects and gestures should be that of their presence, and that this presence should then continue to dominate, taking precedence over any explanatory theory which would attempt to imprison them in some system of reference, whether it be sentimental, sociological, Freudian, metaphysical, or any other.  
28. Ibid.  
work alongside it without being dominated by it. Nevertheless, the obsession with what Barthes calls "forms" or what might be called the locus of meaning, rather than with a "content" which has a named meaning, can be seen to be at odds with experiencing literature as Tragedy. Whether one refers to classical structuralism, concerned with the analysis of culture as a system or systems (Jakobson, Levi-Strauss and Todorov), or to post-structuralism, the analysis of literature, for example, as mediations of Ideologies (see Foucault, Lacan, Derrida), it is clear that it is an activity that is theoretical. Priority is given to the act by which meanings, whether historical, social or metaphysical are produced. It is backward-looking. It analyses how certain structures come into being. The tragic representation of humankind searching for a named meaning in a present reality is completely at odds with structuralist inquiry.

The reason for this is self-evident. The structuralists attack the notion that the study of literature should be a non-theoretical contemplation of "great" works of literary art, undertaken in the belief that this will make readers better human beings. Those influenced by the Marxist schools of thought work in a framework that sees literary texts as operating within modes of ideological production. More recently the deconstructionists concentrated on removing the author of the work as having any relevant part to play for a reader when coming to terms with the text. Instead the writing or text was to be seen as far removed from reality; it does not record and/or represent but rather refers by means of codes to other writings. These texts are ahistorical and are not to be understood by simply seeing the way they reflect the times in which the writer lived. Their origins though not their meaning are seen to be discovered in the codes they embody which connect them to other texts. Tragedians and theorists of Tragedy are interested in seeing man and woman represented in action, in representing a community at a certain time in history, in asking questions essentially about humanism. One hesitates to argue that literature should be read to make us better human beings, nor does it make much sense to understand a literary work solely in terms of the writer's life or personality. It is also interesting to look at the way literature can be a parody, comment or appendage to other writing, but to negate completely its capacity to reflect its historical, social, economic or philosophical setting is nonsensical. Indeed, the emphasis of theoretical concerns in literature (in symbolic form) and aesthetics throughout this century in itself says something quite specific about the modern western world.

The forms of the cosmos have receded from any authority of humanistic judgement as long ago as in the writings of Milton. He was the last major poet to assume the total relevance of Classic and Christian mythology. It is during times of great social and political crisis that humankind is most aware of the enigma of its presence in the world.
In the past, this awareness has tended to find its expression in Tragedy. In this century it originally showed itself in Existentialism. Existentialism, I have argued earlier, became a highly theoretically-rendered symbol in modern fiction. In this sense its counterpart in literary aesthetics and philosophy can be found in post-structuralism and/or deconstruction.

If there can be said to be any common perspective amongst the gamut of structuralists from Lacan to Levi-Strauss, from Foucault to Althusser, it lies in their resistance to the placing of "man" as the origin of social practice, their onslaught against any idea of man. Tragedy cannot emerge within a cultural milieu, where the very idea of the species 'man' is an abstract, or an ideological construction. Tragedy must show man and woman playing their part, i.e., participating in a process, that dramatizes human beings seeking, however unsuccessfull, human perfectibility. What is being sought is meaning, not its hidden forms, but that which provides a stage for action.

The tragic protagonists of the past, for example, Antigone, Orestes, Hamlet, Ahab, and Faust seek to know their strengths and weaknesses and to affirm their moral freedom. The conception of these heroes relates to the needs and noblest potentialities of the human spirit. Tragedy is defined in terms of values. For the tragic to occur some value must be destroyed, whether it be a life, a plan, a desire, power or faith. Yet this destruction, as Myers argues, must be followed by a triumph, which involves "good" winning over "evil" in the action itself. This triumph of good is not to be confused with justice. After all, Desdemona and Ophelia cannot be thought to deserve their fate. The "justice" that is recognized is one that accepts that every act must have its consequence, and that the consequence will be determined by the act and its context. In contrast, the modern nihilistic hero cannot act, because he knows no truth and sees no purpose worth striving for. He cannot believe in mankind or God and, in consequence, he is seen to exist only within this fragmented vision. He cannot act because he cannot still exist, as does the world in which actions are taken, but the potential protagonist is seen in a state of withdrawal, of indecision, of inaction, of being unable to be tragic. The modern protagonist, and one thinks of the creations of Ibsen, Kafka, Ionesco, Beckett, Céline and Gide, in being without any kind of moral certitude can find, if indeed he or she looked, no concordance between a moral character and a destiny. The tragic man, as Jaspers argues, has an "unconditional will to truth", but he must wish

30. Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, p.246.
32. Myers, "The Tragic Attitude Toward Value", in Michel and Sewall, *Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*, p.46.
to act, and have some sense of what determines and motivates that action. Shakespearean Tragedy, in particular, dramatizes the corruptibility "of the apparent good self." The modern character is not shown to know what is good. If Shakespeare and the Greek dramatists can be seen to share something in their tragic vision, it is a valorization of existence.

Lucien Goldmann, in referring to Sartre's works, notes that the idea of ambiguity of the world, its "sense and nonsense" has, like that of man's inability to find a clear and unequivocal line of conduct, become again one of the principal themes of philosophical thought. It has also become a principal theme in modern fiction and drama, and it has brought about the sacrifice of seeing what part "value" plays in human activity. We live in a modern world where men and women can define what constitutes murder. Despite philosophical speculation concerning nihilism, there is a basic drive to live meaningful and creative lives and there is an awareness of the need of moral values in society.

Morality, of course, may be relative and all questions of value, whether determining the quality of a work of art, or determining the ethical substance of its content, may have fallen in recent times into the category of mere subjectivism. All that falls outside the parameters of scientific criticism is to be suppressed.

One cannot expect of modern drama and fiction the moral fibre of the traditionalists. Nor is it helpful to point to other times and customs as repositories of moral values and attempt to imitate them in order to reclaim a set of absolute truths. Nevertheless, to disconnect humankind from a system of thought, to seek to discount the fact of conscience, of value-seeking, whatever the relativity of its search, is to continue to deny the possibility of tragedy.

The audience of Tragedy is aware at its conclusion that a summit has been reached; an end of a kind is experienced. Tragedy stops history in an instance of enlightenment, which is inevitably concerned with the problems of value. Human life is seen in its ultimate perspective.

Taking into consideration that the form tragedy takes throughout times changes, it is possible to set up a paradigm in tragedy, which is defined by a minimum agreement among thinkers (such as Aristotle, Hegel, A.C. Bradley and Muller): Tragedy occurs against a background of incomprehension. The world is not to be understood; Enigma

and "evil" stalk it. The tragic protagonist, through suffering, becomes enlightened about human value; the story that tells the tale is on a serious issue; it is representational, entailing an action and it might also entail a fictionalized or poetic element to take it beyond unembellished documentation of actual misfortune in real life. The fate of the protagonist is seen to be representative of the fate of humankind, and the Tragedy will always express the gulf between aspiration and fulfilment.

Raymond Williams\(^{36}\) demonstrates how human love, the beauty and frailty of human existence, the contrast between human beings' capacity for smallness and the infinity of the cosmos are portrayed in literary works in different ways in various historically determined societies.

If Tragedy is to be reborn it must take account not of obsolete forms but of what is constant in human experience and what forms, if any, are available to express Tragedy, as it is experienced currently. Furthermore, these permanent facts about Tragedy must be acted out in a recognizable way that is understood on its own terms and not as a symbol of intellectual notions.

**Tragedy in Action**

Tragedy, Aristotle writes, is a representation of serious actions.\(^{37}\) "In Tragedy it is action that is imitated, and this action is brought about by agents who necessarily display certain distinctive qualities both of character and of thought, according to which we also define the nature of the actions".\(^{38}\) This statement is not so dissimilar to Sartre's who in his essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" points out "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is".\(^{39}\) Both are humanistic. What separates the two is the completely different view of what constitutes the "actor", the "agent", the "hero", or the individual that does the action. Aristotle was more concerned with the generic action, rather than with the action of the isolated hero. Sartre will argue that his view that man is responsible for himself does not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality. Sartre writes that he is responsible for all men. The choice, nevertheless, existential man makes, even if he philosophically believes he is choosing for all men, is one made as an alienated being. It is a choice and action made from one's immediate sense of self. It is one made in a world without an

---

36. Williams, *Modern Tragedy*,
38. Ibid., p.39.
identified order. Artists lost faith in representing an action in a world that no longer had an order. As Williams points out, in *Ancient Tragedy*, the ends which individuals consciously seek have a "universal and essential content. Our sympathy is evoked and claimed for the simple conflict and issue of the essential powers of life, and for the godlike manifestations of the human heart, or distinctive representatives of which the heroes of tragedy set before us". This is lacking in modern literature which attempts to embody tragic insight. What little action that does exist in modern drama and fiction is estranged from a full context. Meursault's shooting of the Arab in *The Outsider*, Gregor's transformation in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Beckett's unnamable character attempting to move in his jar, demonstrate the extent to which art has been torn from its moorings and moved towards anarchy. The impassioned, private and self-conscious imagination of the writers, superimposes onto these disconnected actions other levels of meaning.

The actions occur in a world of unreality. They become meaningless and inexplicable. This happens to such an extent that the pattern of unreality, alienation and ennui becomes a literary convention. Whether modern writers become concerned with the absurdity of life, with nihilism, or with psychology, they are concerned, not with actions but, instead, with things of the mind. Oedipus, Antigone, Hamlet and Othello, despite their forebodings, are tragic heroes because they retain enough strength to *act* their way to an uncertain consequence. They recognize human truths out of action, not merely through inner psychological searching nor through predestined revelation. The hero or heroine must *do* and not merely exist. Tragic heroes, despite their sufferings, are sustained by hope which, in turn, makes it possible for them to act and, therefore, to have meaning in themselves. The meaning comes not from the abstraction "life", but from their actions in life. As Mandel argues, all tragedy concerns ambition, more fundamentally, all tragedy concerns the will. The will of the Tragic hero is inevitably directed at an idea of what the self can achieve. Modern drama and fiction do not exhibit this will towards anything other than avoiding emptiness or embracing it.

The ambitions and aspirations of modern protagonists are personalized and do not relate to universal questions about the fate of humankind. The characters of Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* act merely in order to protect themselves from emptiness; Edmond Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey* simply wants to dissolve into a bank of fog. The struggle over larger issues is absent as characters, like Willy Loman and Jay Gatsby, aspire for personal, selfish and in-grown goals.

Von Szeliski characterizes current protagonists as having goals that are very often connected with "personal medication, or soothing distraction from a harsh life rather than large and active issues affecting life, or affecting living conceived in motion".\textsuperscript{42}

The modern hero and heroine are not decision makers, or proclaimers or prime-movers. They exist in an environment that is by necessity one of a priori confusion. Theirs is a Godless fate in a world of dissonance and disorientation. A tragic hero must act; he or she must be an event-making person; and must break through "the confining web of contingent history to destroy old relativities and define the new limits of the possible".\textsuperscript{43} The kind of action necessary to represent this kind of heroic struggle is almost non-existent in the plot of modern writing. As Leech points out, when looking at the plays of Pinter, Stoppard and McGrath there is a deliberate withholding from the decisive action "... The characters hesitate and debate, they do not do much".\textsuperscript{44}

Aristotle is very clear on the significance action has for Tragedy. The representation of the action, he writes, is the plot of Tragedy. The plot he believed to be a most important element. This ordering of the incidents for Tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life, of happiness and unhappiness which in turn are bound up with action.\textsuperscript{45} He emphasizes that the action is a demonstration of a character (\textit{AP}, p.40) and that the action is caused by agents who necessarily display certain qualities both of character and thought (p.39). Aristotle emphasizes that, even if the action is complex, it must develop logically out of the structure of plot (p.45). The action he insists must not be inexplicable. Perhaps one could also add to these prescriptives his view on Epic poetry, which included his belief that the poet should be absent, for it is not in that way that he represents actions (p.68).

It is clear that the representation of an action which Aristotle describes is not to be found in modern fiction and modern drama. The writer is not only present as either an autobiographer and/or a symbolist, or allegorist, the characters do not act and the plots, if they exist at all, are rarely representational. The concept of plot as understood by Aristotle has been undermined in modernism in two major ways. In the late nineteenth and much of this century, the quality of the art-piece (and this applies to the visual arts, as much as to literature), was seen as existing in the thinking of the artist. Yet in opposition to this view, structuralists insist that the way we think, structure our feelings, and relate to one another is in many respects historically specific or

\textsuperscript{42} John von Szeliski, \textit{Tragedy and Fear}, p.121.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Leech, \textit{Tragedy}, p.80.
\textsuperscript{45} Aristotle, \textit{Classical Literary Criticism} (Ringwood: Penguin Books Australia, 1965), p.39; all further references to this text to be cited as \textit{AP}.
"ideological". The extreme adherents to this thought claim that ideology is everything, that it constitutes our "lived relation" to the world; we do not so much think as "are thought"; we do not act, but "are acted" upon by a structure outside ourselves whose effects we become.\(^{46}\)

The plot, i.e., the Aristotelian concept of plot, must re-surface if Tragedy is to be reborn. Despite what E.M. Forster says about character being more important than plot, Elizabeth Dipple\(^{47}\) is correct in pinpointing the plot's crucial dependence on action and life. Forster's characters are, she argues, being watched in action. In agreement with the historicists, characters will reflect the culture of their time, and art cannot be reduced to being only ideologically specific phenomena.

Tragedy of the past is not alien and opaque to us; it reveals relatively constant elements in human experience. If Tragedy is a "permanent fact", its eternal meaning rests in its power to show how human beings act, and why they choose to act. Aristotle's insistence that "action should evolve out of structure of the plot" (p.45) seen along with his statement that "Tragedy must have a beginning, a middle and an end" is at loggerheads with the tendency of twentieth century literature to mean something other than its literal representation and its tendency to represent human beings' behaviour rather than their actions.\(^{48}\)

**Action and Order**

Earlier in this thesis it was asserted that form in art must be open to change in order to be self-renewing; that in history there are endings and that art/literature, either predicts or, finally, embodies the consequent new world in a new form. Consequently, some of the qualities that Aristotle believed essential to a Tragedy have become obsolete. The need, however, to write Tragedy persists and Tragedy does, at certain times in history, resurface. Raymond Williams argues that the experience of tragedy is obviously present in the contemporary world. He points out, however, that literary critics fail to recognize it as they tend to define the essence of Tragedy as pertaining to a particular order. This concept of order is understood to be the consequence of pre-existing beliefs. Williams correctly maintains that it is these elements that are most narrowly limited culturally.\(^{49}\)

\(^{46}\) Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, p.247.

\(^{47}\) Elizabeth Dipple, *Plot*, p.4; also see R. Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, pp.26 and 27, where he argues that Tragedy in neo-classical times disappeared when error was no longer seen to be rooted in the action but in the moral fibre of character.


\(^{49}\) Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, p.52.
To connect a definition of Tragedy with an obsolete notion of order is to put blinkers on to the ever-changing form of literature, as it reflects endings and new beginnings. Williams seems to be arguing that, if writers and literary critics would remove the blinkers and see that men and women do act, do feel, and do believe, they should see that this human activity does not have to be connected to antiquated metaphysical concepts of order, and this should result in their being able to create Tragedy. Williams is arguing specifically for a recognition that human beings are in pursuit of a new order. With the optimism of a Marxist, Williams points out that order may not be the necessary backdrop to Tragedy and action, but may in fact result from it. What is difficult to come to terms with in Williams's work is, on one hand, his recognition that there is such a thing as modern Tragedy and yet, on the other, his detailed analysis of its absence in modern literature. Must one then assume that all modern writers suffer from false consciousness? In his analysis of modern drama, in particular, he pinpoints how twentieth century literature fails to see social and personal life as one. He shows how the isolated individual’s inward agony replaces the action of the tragic hero or heroine who represented all men and women. He correctly outlines how society becomes environment and how our own ideas of order are oriented to a pervasive individualism.

Williams is now concerned with arguing that Tragedy does occur in a struggle towards revolution and, therefore, should be written by potential modern tragedians. The fact remains that, although "Tragedy", as Raymond Williams defines it has occurred, writers who have the artistic capacity to write Tragedy have chosen not to. Instead, as Williams himself notes, the inner conflicts of the individual have been the main subject of interest. Williams argues that *Anna Karenina* is a Tragedy, because it deals with a whole action. It shows what is going on in a world determined by economic and political forces. *Anna Karenina* dramatizes the tragedy of the breakdown and schism between personal action and social action.

**Humankind at Odds with Self and Society**

When writers of this century have attempted to write about the tragedies of the times, they have worked within a naturalistic framework. Direct application to actuality, and a need to communicate what it was like to be alive at a time of crisis and struggle, determine the "poetry" of the works. The First World War, the Russian

---

50. Ibid., p.131.
51. Ibid., p.140.
52. Ibid., p.53.
53. Ibid., p.131.
Revolution, Stalinism, the decadence of the twenties followed by the Depression, the Second World War, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the Cold War, Vietnam and Kampuchea all have found literary expression, yet few of these works have approached "tragedy".

The Russian Revolution and Stalinism produced the context for Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. Although a subtle work of art it is created from the rawest materials of public life, representing in poetic form the harshness of the original. Solzhenitsyn in the *First Circle* deals with conscience faced by Communists who succumbed in the show trials. The twenties and thirties produced *The Great Gatsby*, a novel where moral carelessness is shown to be the pervading malaise, rather than any kind of heroism. D.H. Lawrence delivers up an effete and nerve-worn people with nothing much to do, who turn for a surrogate to the wilderness and the splendour of hot-blooded animal life that belongs there. Generally, the characters, who exist in a representative twentieth century fiction, are presented as disoriented, without values and experiencing disintegration of some kind. This disorientation is often dramatized in a particular scene or event in a novel. For example, Mrs Moore in Forster's *A Passage to India* personally experiences this disorientation when jostled by the Indians in the caves. Similarly Découd, in Conrad's *Nostromo*, at the end of the novel, when adrift in a boat in the midst of an immense sea, loses his grip on his own sense of self and on life.

The depression in America brought about Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, which concentrates on what is happening to people's lives in the world. This novel gives a complete picture of a society living through the gamut of experiences possible in their time and space. As Orwell presents Lancashire in a monstrous scenery of slag heaps, so Steinbeck focusses on the external squalor of a desperate people, attempting to survive an economic depression. The naturalistic rendering of these environments, where hope is directed towards the knowable forces in the world, is not akin to the making of tragic art. As Jaspers points out, where there is no sense of the infinite vastness of what is beyond our grasp, all we finally succeed in conveying is misery, not tragedy. This is the peculiar predicament of modern "tragedy".

Potential writers of tragedy of these times, writers who seek to express a vision of life through their protagonists (Gide, Céline, Sartre, Faulkner, Malraux, Camus, Beckett, Joyce, White, Lowry) are pre-determined by a belief that humankind is essentially isolated and at odds with itself and society. They are not interested in representing an action. If there has been an action moving through a state of disorder in twentieth century fiction and drama, it has not been about the external world. Instead,

it has been posited in the "action" of an individual, who usually is more concerned with psychological and philosophical problems that have no resolution other than in discovering a new order out of disorder. I am not in argument with Williams that Tragedy was occurring somewhere "out there" and that it, or at least its definition, required new relations and new points of negotiation. The point is these generally were not found, because artists lost faith in representing an action in a world that no longer had an agreed order. It was not that our writers failed to find significance, but that the significance was seen to be occurring within the human person. Modern artists withdrew from the external world. The inner questions surfaced as the dominant themes, and these were inevitably symbolized or allegorized.

Williams, as a Marxist thinker, implies in his work on Tragedy, that modern western writers suffer from false consciousness in the subject matter they choose to explore. Georg Lukács takes a similar position and writes of these writers (necessarily modern bourgeois writers) as only able to conceive of "man" as solitary, asocial, and unable to enter into relationships with other human beings. If it is true that the modern protagonist embodies the notion of man that negates the vital, all-important principle of social existence, it is also true that the presentation of the human being as locked within himself and aware of a disintegration of outer reality embodies a present historical reality.

Kafka’s well-known comment that "all those parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already" typifies a subjectivism inherent in twentieth century literature. What is interesting about this literature, which in its initial rebellion against crude reality and in its search for the authentic self, is that it has resulted in an intellectualized approach to art that in effect contradicts its original stance. The turning away from the tyranny of the rational and the embracing of the creative imagination, intuition and unconscious thoughts led artists into a new use of the symbol (and allegory). The symbolists, who came in the wake of

55. See Williams, p.53, where Williams maintains that the hero’s action in twentieth century fiction is not the whole of the action; it is but a part.
57. See Georg Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism" in Gregory T. Polletta (ed.), *Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism*, pp.721-2, where he writes about Musil:

the corrupt society of our time is inevitably the main source of energy, since the escape into psychopathology is a mere abstraction. The rejection of modern reality is purely subjective ... These writers are not wholly wrong in believing that psychopathology is their surest refuge; it is the ideological complement of their historical position.

the Romantics and pre-empted those writers who wrote within an existential framework, rejected life and, instead, explored art and dream. More than not the symbolist’s belief in the religion of art led them to the terrifying vision of the void.59

Chiari pinpoints the symbolist’s area of interest, finally, to be "non being". The symbolists had little interest in the individual as a social being. Mallarmé sought a "purity" of language that excluded the non-artistic values of morality. It was "centred on a concept of beauty that was by definition detached from life or dependent on a specifically artistic way of envisaging it".60 That "artistic way" of envisaging it becomes as much the subject of the symbolists as does their commitment to the religion of art. The symbolists were beset by their own theorizing which, ironically, made their work rationally translatable.

This kind of writing, which can be traced back to its seed in Romanticism and its fully grown state in post-modernist works, is far removed from the Aristotelian representation of an action. The traditional Aristotelian dictum is that man is a social animal. This dictum is applicable to all great "realistic" literature. In Antigone, Anna Karenina and Middle March the "ontological being", inherent in the protagonists, cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Modernist writers are predetermined by the exact opposite of this. They see humankind as composed of alienated individuals, solitary and unable to enter relationships with other human beings. The created characters are thus conceived as ahistorical. The post-modernist novelist owes more to psychology, to introspection, to the form of introspection which reasons, argues and analyses, than to representation of man and woman in an historical context.

Post-modernism involves a dispersal of the human - that is, of language - in the immanence of discourse and mind, as a philosophical and social phenomenon. Ihab Hassan characterizes post-modernism as open, playful, disjunctive, displaced, or indeterminate forms, a discourse of fragments, an ideology of fracture and a will to unmaking.61 It involves an intellectual discourse that must, in the final analysis, accept that the 'negation' that forms part of the theorizing is the result of a conscious act. It is a conscious act that excludes the poetry that traditional writers found in representing the world as it empirically seemed to exist. Philosophy and this kind of poetry has been split asunder. The theorizing that permeates post-modernist literature is of the kind

that E.M. Cioran sees as precipitating its ending: "Today Descartes would probably be a novelist; Pascal certainly ... But, ironically, it is just such minds that are sapping the novel from within; they introduce problems heterogeneous to its nature, diversify it, pervert and overburden it until they make its architecture crack ... Whenever philosophers insinuate themselves into Letters, it is to exploit their confusion or to precipitate their collapse".\(^\text{62}\)

It must be also pointed out that twentieth century literature that is seen to be concerned with the human being and his or her society is also presented in an allegorical form. Brecht’s plays were created, specifically, to cause a response of a certain kind in the audience. Brecht expected his audience to think above the flow of the play.

Williams argues that the most significant contribution Brecht made was to his "recovery of history as a dimension of Tragedy". It is important for Williams that, if action is represented in drama, that it is the kind that is both complex and dynamic, and which is one towards revolution. Brecht presents life as it is, but endemic to his plot and action is the suggestion that life could be otherwise. There is a theoretical level in Brecht’s plays that could be termed allegorical in that the story refers us to a realm of abstract ideas, which could be said to be not only unknown, but unknowable. Its "truth" is unverifiable as no revolution has been seen to give birth to the communist utopia as visualized by Marx. We can, though, on an epistemological level, recognize in the narrative the structure of an analogous system.

Brecht’s epic theatre, unlike Aristotelian drama, arouses a will to action in the spectator; it seeks to teach and it emerges creatively from the intellect. Whereas in Aristotelian theatre, humankind is given as a known quantity, in Brecht’s plays, it is a subject of investigation. When the plays go beyond representing a Marxist perspective, i.e., with characters representing only social forces, they succeed in being modern Tragedy.

The Tragedy that Williams recognizes as being successfully created in Brecht’s Mother Courage and her Children is to be found in this play because it shows life in process; it presents an action that is not single in space and time. All Tragedy, whether Greek, Elizabethan or Modern, must present the human being in the full context of living life. The fact, nevertheless, that Brecht did write Tragedy and that the Tragedy was one that dramatized a Marxist position does not lead one to conclude that the only possible modern Tragedy is one that is of this political persuasion. It does, however, suggest that modern Tragedy must rise above, or perhaps evolve logically away from a subjectivity that in its nature ignores people "doing things" in a social context.

Allegory and the "New Subjectivity"

Hannah Arendt, who is not a Marxist, has written about the "utter subjectivity" of modern people. She pinpoints the problems associated with our capacity for action and speech, which she believes have been banished into the sphere of the intimate and the private. Arendt explains how it is developed at the expense of the assurance of the reality of the world and men: "The presence of others assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves ... [Since] the intimacy of a fully developed private life, such as had never been known before the rise of the modern age and the concomitant decline of the public realm, will always greatly intensify and enrich the whole scale of subjective emotions and private feelings." This intensification will come to pass, while the outer world where action occurs will become removed.

Modern people's actions, when they do occur, are separated from their understanding of them. Arendt explains that this is the result of the "truths" of modern science. These scientific "truths", although demonstrated in mathematical formulas and proved technologically, will no longer lend themselves to normal expressions in speech and thought. The moment these "truths" are spoken of conceptually and coherently, the resulting statements will "not be perhaps as meaningless as a 'triangular circle', but much more so than a 'winged lion'" (Erwin Schrödinger).

Williams, in speaking of Brechtian Tragedy, focusses on the kind of suffering known: "We have to see not only that suffering is avoidable, but that it is not avoided. And not only that suffering breaks us, but that it need not break us". In Marxist language, when an acceptance of false consciousness leads to false action, one has Tragedy. The suffering of a tragic hero is connected to a particular choice and consequent action in all tragedy. Arendt argues that in the modern world, where "subjectivity" dominates an experience as basic as pain (suffering), that pain becomes incommunicable. Pain and suffering experienced in a public action do carry meaning. But the suffering of the isolated individual has no connection with the outer world of life. Arendt writes: "Pain, in other words, truly a borderline experience between life as "being among men" and death is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all." The closed system of this subjectivity has become a major subject matter of art.

64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., pp.1-3.
66. Williams, p.203.
and literature for over one hundred years. Modern literature has become intellectually obsessed with the "loss of self", or with the incapacity of the artist to refer to reality and to represent experience by words. This has led to a particular kind of allegory to appear in modern writing.

**Modern Allegory**

In defining what is meant by allegory in this context, it is necessary to distinguish it from other literary modes. All literature represents another meaning or truth beyond itself, that is, it is "other seeking". Sheila Delany argues that the crucial difference between allegory and other literary modes is to be found in the nature of the "other" it implies. Non-allegorical literature usually refers the reader back to the world he inhabits, so that the proportion it establishes is between two known systems. The world beyond the narrative can be verified. Most allegories, however, refer us to a realm of abstract, moral, or religious ideas which are not only unknown but unknowable. The Allegory that is unique to modern literature is one that refers not to moral or religious ideas, but to intellectual and psychological processes and ideas of the artist and his or her cultural milieu. As Robert Scholes points out "... For the depths of the psyche are an invisible world also, one which Modern men accept with the same unquestioning faith once reserved for the invisible world of Christianity."

Earlier I referred to "the new subjectivity" of modern writers as being a closed system. The reader, in order to translate this modern allegory, is required to bear in mind a structure and a set of ideas different from the narrative but proportional to it, and to interpret the narrative in terms of that "set of ideas" which, in themselves, do not constitute a system. Neither do they produce new knowledge. The allegory of abstraction produces a circular method. The world outside is seen to represent inner questioning which refers, abstractly, back and often in disbelief to the outer reality. In modern Literature the meanings that pass between the system of the inner mind and that of the external world do not constitute any kind of certainty. Allegories in the past were created within a framework of "known truths". If they were based on Christianity the reader was expected to believe in that doctrine to benefit from the poem. Plato's allegory of the cave is used only when the epistemological system it represents has been carefully laid out in discursive argument: "Every feature in this parable" says Socrates,

---

68. See chapter three of this thesis where this point is discussed in depth.
"is meant to fit an earlier analysis".  Epistemologically, meaning precedes narrative in allegory. A certain kind of meaning precedes modern-day narrative. The "system" to which modern allegorical narrative "corresponds" is a set of ideas. Scholes sums it up well when he writes: "For writers of today, nature has been both disenchanted and dehumanized. It is merely alien, other. Their choice is simply whether to try and capture this dehumanization". The contemporary allegorist is likely to be both arbitrary and tentative. The world may be idealized but unsystematic, full of meanings but devoid of meaning.

The correct interpretation of most contemporary literature is to be found in all possible questions that can be formulated about concepts of alienation, ennui or ones pertaining to the problematic relationship between art and life. It is necessary to use the term 'allegory', as it expresses what is happening in twentieth-century literature, better than other terms. The new subject is not merely about life or landscape seen through a temperament; it is not the expressive images of an inner world of imagination and sensuous life; it is not exploring the language of colour, form or light. It is not realism, surrealism or abstraction. Nonetheless it may invoke some of these. It, like allegory from the past, turns its back on surface realism in order to reveal something more universal and generic. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that one of its defining qualities is that it withdraws from the immediate rendering of surface reality by using metaphorically the experiences of such reality to represent inner intellectual and emotional preoccupations. These descriptions of life give a visual experience which work like metaphors, to feed the mind with intellectual and imaginative questions of "life".

Alec King, in an essay on Blake, argues that "True allegory you have to interpret and understand as imaginative vision, resisting any inclination to translate it into fixed generalizations, or intellectual concepts". The imaginative vision, however, of modern allegorists may have reached its final peak in Beckett.

No matter how amused or bemused we may be with Beckett's outer world of living creatures in our final impressions of his art, we are left with intellectual concepts. Modern literature is filled with myth that is consciously used. Scholes points out "all symbols become allegorical to the extent that we understand them". Camus's symbols of the "sea" and "sun" become allegorical when seen in terms of the meaning of "La

73. Scholes, The Fabulators, p.171; also see p.103, where Scholes explains how Jung's symbols became available for allegorical use.
Peste" or "L'Étranger". Modern allegories, unlike ones based on a closed system, such as Christianity,\textsuperscript{74} or Communism\textsuperscript{75} do not provide final answers. Leech points out, when discussing the Tragic content in the work of Ibsen and Steinberg, that they contribute most strongly to the tragic kind, when they are governed by an intuition of what living at its most crucial moments is, and are furthest from theorizing about it.\textsuperscript{76} A great work of art, for example, Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, removes itself from the arena of tragedy. Although current patterns of birth, death and rebirth are used to organize material drawn from throughout history and prehistory, the meaning of the work is more concerned with language games and with philosophical questions like - can language mirror the human mind?

Allegory does express a way of perceiving reality at certain times in history. The writing of traditional Allegory required that qualities be abstracted from the entities which displayed them in real life, and that these qualities be granted an independent literary existence. In modern allegory aspects of human behaviour and human perceptions are abstracted from life, in order to represent particular literary and philosophical preoccupations. In literature, there is a literary consciousness aware of itself and its problematic relationship with its own processes. For example, elements from a story in its literal form, are used to represent the nature of the problems associated with writing Modern tragedy.\textsuperscript{77} Alongside this overplayed imaginative centre of modern art, there is an actual world in varied kinds of economic, social and technological chaos. Modern writers, in reaction to the nineteenth century realists, dramatized that literature was no longer an imitation of reality but a component of reality itself. This led to some remarkable fiction of both psychological depth and universal scope. It required writers to plunge into apparent chaos and allowed us to discover if not order at least the meaning of that chaos. I believe that symbolism and allegory have served their purpose for this century. Modern people have learnt all there is to know by looking at the pieces. Ernst Cassirer writes:

> The Dividing lines which the symbolism of language and the abstract concept introduce into reality may seem necessary and inevitable: however they are necessary not from the standpoint of pure knowledge but from the standpoint of action. Man can act upon the world only by breaking it into pieces - by

\textsuperscript{74} See John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

\textsuperscript{75} See, e.g., G. Orwell, *Animal Farm*, which is an allegory of the Russian Revolution of 1917: the relation between the pigs Napoleon and Snowball resembles Stalin's persecution of Trotsky, and Napoleon's policies for managing the farm remind us of Stalin's increasingly revisionist rapprochement with the capitalist world.

\textsuperscript{76} Leech, *Tragedy*, p.22.

\textsuperscript{77} See Ann McCulloch, *A Tragic Vision*, pp.27-63, where I analyse Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala* and demonstrate how the relationship between Arthur and Waldo can be understood to represent the impossibility of creating tragedy in a secular and Socratic environment.
dissecting it into separate spheres of action and objects of action.  

Sheila Delany argues that there are times in history when the allegorical mode is an unsuitable vehicle for perceiving reality. Delany shows why for example, the fourteenth century was not a likely time for allegory to be written. She points out that "during the fourteenth century, scholars in fields as varied as physics and cosmology, political theory and logic, began to question received theories based on analogy. Such simultaneity, rooted in history and therefore far from coincidental, testifies to the emergence of new social needs which generated new ways of looking at man". Later in this thesis, I will argue that the complexity of the fourteenth century is not unlike that being experienced in this latter quarter of the twentieth century. Today is a time of unusual complexity: unusual in that so many institutions and assumptions are being challenged simultaneously.

Brereton argues that "Declining cultures are afraid of being hurt and are inclined to take refuge in petty repetitions and unadventurous didacticism". Perhaps the withdrawal of artists and writers from the representation of people "doing things" and toward an interest in the problematic relationship between art and life due in part to a latent fear that progress, as understood in the first half of this century, was not necessarily leading to a better world. If allegory has any value other than artistic it is that it helps us to communicate and in turn to act, it is as Delany points out "well suited ... to didactic purposes". The allegory of the modernists has presented its case. The reader and writer of the present is, perhaps, beginning to feel limited by the framework that modern allegory offers. The self-evident functions of its parts are beginning to lose their relevance in a world that is undergoing great changes. Perhaps now is a time for action. Contemporary artists are beginning to show an interest in representing what they see in the world with a social and artistic consciousness. In what he terms "an unprofessional note" to a most enlightening essay on post-modernism Ihab Hassan recognizes the distance between some post-modern concerns and the real world. He also recognizes the impossibility of post-modernist writers escape from certain realities:

We ask about post-modernism. But men die, women suffer, children starve in the dust, torturers heed no screams, technicians don their leaded aprons, octogenarians reach for an empty cup, and physicists discover traces of the original moment of the universe. I suspect that these, and countless other

---

79. Delany, p.41.
80. Geoffrey Brereton, *Principles of Tragedy*, p.73.
81. Delany, p.56.
events, are not entirely alien to the "question of post-modernism." We are, after all, engaged in a task of reflection that seeks to encompass the reality of our time. The pressure of the unspeakable, the unnamable, the raw necessities of the human condition, threatens always to disrupt our discourse even as we try to give it dignity and shape. Yet that pressure and that disruption also save us from our categorical selves. In some recoverable sense, no question we ask is innocent in pain and our mortality.\textsuperscript{82}

The questions that Beckett asks are no longer of immediate interest to a world in the process of great change. The questions that Tragedy explores are. The world has been broken into pieces. Symbolism and allegory have expressed its fragmentation and the inner fragmentation in the consciousness of artists and writers. Is there now a movement towards representing a new reality in which human beings are portrayed as acting with hope towards new meaning?

The drama of Ionesco, based largely on psychology, was surreal. His theatre of the absurd with its emphasis on the dichotomy between the world within and the world without (\textit{The Killer}) and the absurdity of the work of art that dramatizes the literary preoccupations of the artist (\textit{Improvisations}) begin to lose immediate relevance in a world that has examined the absurd condition too long. As Ionesco himself believed, only by coming to grips with the absurdity of the human condition can the possibility of non-absurdity be realized: "I feel that every message of despair is the statement of a situation from which everyone must freely try to find a way out". The personification of abstract ideas has run its course. Something new is in the process of being born.

\textbf{Modernism: The Split Between the Spiritual and the Material}

Marshall Berman in his book \textit{All That is Solid Melts into Air}\textsuperscript{83} argues persuasively that nineteenth century writers such as Goethe, Hegel and Marx, Stendhal and Baudelaire, Carlyle and Dickens, Herzen and Dostoevsky understood the modern spirit in a way twentieth century thinkers do not. He argues that our vision of modern life tends to be split into material and spiritual planes:

Some people devote themselves to "Modernism", which they see as a species of pure spirit, evolving in accord with its autonomous artistic and intellectual imperatives; other people work within the orbit of "modernization", a complex of material structures and processes - political, economic, social - which, supposedly, once it has got under way, runs on its own momentum with little or no input from human minds or souls.\textsuperscript{84}

Berman is correct in identifying this dualism that pervades our culture and alienates us

\textsuperscript{82} Ihab Hassan, "The Question of Post-modernism" in \textit{Bucknell Review: Romanticism, Modernism, Post-modernism}, p.122.

\textsuperscript{83} Marshall Berman, \textit{All That is Solid Melts Into Air} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}, p.132.
from a total experience of modern life. We need to live the interfusion of its material
and spiritual forces, the intimate unity of the modern self and the modern environment.
Berman shows that nineteenth century modernism was dynamic, alive - that it referred
to a total condition. It is true that art and literature over the last one hundred years
have been less concerned with protagonists and actors. He shows how Marcuse’s One
Dimensional Man became a dominant paradigm in critical thought and how, in the
process, it left its followers with futility and despair. Berman’s aim is to explain how
the modernist movements of this century, whether it be pop art, or anti-modernism in
the early 1960s, lacks the essential vitality and humanity of nineteenth century
modern thought. He argues that contemporary thinkers (for example, the
structuralists), either wipe the question of modernity - along with all other questions
about the self and history off the map, or embrace a mystique of post-modernism, which
strives to cultivate ignorance of modern history and culture. This post-modernism
speaks as if all human feeling, expressiveness, play, sexuality and community have just
been invented. Meanwhile in the social sciences, thinkers flee from building a model of
modern life. Instead, they split modernity into a series of separate components and
resist any attempt to integrate them into a whole. The modern world has been split into
an aggregation of private material and spiritual interest groups. Although from a
different perspective, Berman identifies similar problem areas which have been examined
by Hannah Arendt and Raymond Williams. The world is split asunder. Artists,
literary writers, philosophers, political scientists, poets, playwrights and novelists are
living in windowless monads, far more isolated than we need to be.

Berman’s answer to this fragmentation is to bring the dynamic and dialectical
modernism of the nineteenth century to life again. Raymond Williams would agree with
him that Marx, for example, understood better than most modernists that “the death of

85. Ibid., pp.23-24.
86. Ibid., pp.28-29.
87. Ibid., p.31.
88. Barthes, ”The Structuralist Activity”, in Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism,
p.128, argues against this accusation: ”Structuralism”, he writes, ”does not withdraw history
from the world: it seems to link to history, not only certain contents, but also certain forms, not
only the material but also the intelligible, not only the ideological, but also the aesthetic.” It
would, however, seem to be the case that the forms, the intelligible and the aesthetic, are drawn
from a context in a manner that excludes ”the material” world.
89. See Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, and Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy,
pp.50 and 62 respectively, ”... the rise of the modern age and the concomitant decline of the
public realm, will always greatly intensify and enrich the whole scale of subjective emotions and
private feelings, this intensification will always come to pass at the expense of the assurance of the
reality of the world and men” and ”Having separated earlier tragic systems from their actual
societies, we can achieve a similar separation in our own time, and can take it for granted that
modern tragedy can be discussed without reference to the deep social crisis, of war and revolution,
through which we have all been living”. 
God" should be confronted by action and not withdrawal. Perhaps there is something to be said for returning to the past in order to understand the present. The Mexican poet and critic, Octavio Paz, has lamented that modernity is "cut off from the past and continually hurrying forward at such a dizzy pace that it cannot take root, that it merely survives from one day to the next: it is unable to return to its beginnings and thus recover its powers of renewal." It also is true, nevertheless, that conditions of existence of the 1980s are substantially different from those of the nineteenth century. No doubt we can go back to these writers and rethink our response to our present reality yet we must also understand why writers of this century did become concerned with a splintered world, and why they chose (or were determined) to respond with a consciousness to the world in the way they have.

It is now a time of renewal. In many fields of the arts there is a move towards representing the world by some reference to its surface reality. This can be seen in the photo-realists as well as in post-modernist architecture. Berman believes that it is only now that modern men and women, as Marx and Nietzsche and Baudelaire and Dostoevsky saw them, are coming fully into their own. Then the world was only partially modern, now the processes of modernization have cast a net that no one can escape. For most of this century the negative elements of modernism, of the machine age, of industrialization, of alienation, ennui, and moral relativity have been inscribed upon our consciousness and become in literature a literary convention.

Is it possible that the dynamics of nineteenth century thought, that is, the positive elements of modernism, will be consciously injected into our present reality? If this is possible, it also seems, to me, that it can only be done against the background of the last century. The ways in which, for example, Freud, Jung, Marx and Nietzsche saw their world were not necessarily utilized by their disciples in the ways in which these thinkers may have hoped. For them, all was movement, flux, depths, and contradictions. For their "followers", theirs were concepts to be thought upon rather than acted upon. And there are modernists like Foucault who, although having something substantial to say about modernism, denies the possibility of any sort of freedom. He sees modern people as imprisoned in "total institutions", which tend to swallow up any facet of modern life. The conceptual ability of the mind to unmask oppression is also argued by Foucault to be a negative one in that the critic is "in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of

90. Berman, p.35.
power, which we bring to ourselves, since we are part of its mechanism. Freud’s and Jung’s interest in symbolism was due to it being the best possible expression for an unconscious content, whose nature can only be guessed at. Nevertheless, once they, in their individual ways, chartered the unconscious and named its symbols, those symbols became available for allegorical use. The writer of modern allegory paraphrases conscious content by making the plot of a work of art represent the questions that obsess him or her.

The present modern artist, nevertheless, is in the process of making a Faustian discovery. Like Goethe’s Faust, he or she has discovered that the powers of his or her mind, in turning inward, have turned against him or her and helped create a prison. Modern artists, like Faust, are straining to find a way for the abundance of their inner life to overflow, to express itself through action in the world outside. In Faust’s predicament it is his childhood that calls him back to life:

And yet, I know this sound so well from childhood,
That even now it calls me back to life (769-70).

Faust in his return to the outside world rewrites the beginning of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word" is changed finally to "In the beginning was the Deed". He is elated at the idea of a God, who defines Himself through action: "It’s the restless activity that proves a man" (1755-60). Yet Faust, like all potential tragic characters, is interested in the kind of person he will become; he is aware of the gulf between aspiration and fulfilment:

Alas, what am I, if I cannot
Reach mankind’s crown, which merely mocks
Our senses’ craving like a star? [(1802-05)]

Like Faust, the modern person is confronted by the coming of a new world. Allegory, given that meaning precedes its design, is unable to capture this new reality. If we, like Faust, seek for renewal by turning to the thinkers of the nineteenth century as Berman advocates, to the infancy of modernism, equally so, we can turn to the lessons of Antiquity. Somehow, the words of Aristotle can pervade and illuminate the contradictory forces and needs that inspire and torment us: We are caught between the need to hold on to the coherence and stability of the past, yet we struggle relentlessly, in the pursuit of knowledge, to grow beyond it.


Piercing the either, new born, I aspire
To rise to spheres of pure activity.

94. Ibid., p.71.
The Art form of Tragedy changes its guise in each era in which it appears. Yet there is a permanence in its major preoccupations. Tragedy always entails disorder and order but each will vary from one culture to another, from one era to another. We should see this variation, not as an obstacle to defining Tragedy or writing it, but as evidence for the cultural importance of Tragedy as a form of art.

We are on the brink of the emergence of a new order. It is one that can be understood by art focussing on men and women "doing things". It will evolve from a representation of action and not a dramatization of literary abstractions. The twentieth century has produced a literature that has scrutinized the anguish of the modern temper. Perhaps as von Szeliski believes it has led to a deeper understanding of our world.95 Perhaps we have reached a point where our knowledge makes it possible to respond to an environment in which Tragedy may re-emerge in Art. John von Szeliski argues that tragedy emerges from a society that preoccupies itself with a future as well as a present. The minimum requirements for Tragedy, he insists, is "a cultural environment reflecting basic love of ideas, of wisdom following upon knowledge, where free investigation of creeds and credos is possible - perhaps with a society that is attracted to humanistically uplifting sensations, a society which has experienced its world and come back to know itself".96

The depiction and analysis of fragmentation in the twentieth-century western world has been exhausted by artists and writers alike. Not only is there little left to be said but also something new is stirring in our midst. The Tragedies of the present will acknowledge this stirring; it will capture man and woman seeking an identity as much in thought as in action. It will not, however, be played against a known order. A new order will be sought; hypothetically it will exist in the face of all kinds of disorder. In the light of this absence of order there will not be an Aristotelian Catharsis. That is, if there is to be a Catharsis, it will not be wedded to a social or religious process which moves from disorder to order.

Catharsis and Tragedy

Aristotle used the term catharsis but did not define it; writers after him have failed to reach agreement as to its meaning. Catharsis is a kind of purgation; Aristotle believed that it occurred when the representation of an action roused pity and fear which in turn became purged.97 This means that in the end we are not oppressed but emotionally liberated by the spectacle of human suffering. Our liberation is due to our sense that the

---
96. Ibid.
moral order has been restored and re-affirmed by the capacity of humankind for expiatory suffering and redemptive knowledge. One must understand how the suffering is necessary in that it leads to a knowledge bound up with the acceptance of the supremacy of the universal moral order.

Aristotle emphasized that this fear and pity rose essentially "from the structure of the action" and must be "bound up with the events of the plot" (AP, p.49).

Although Aristotle considers the action of tragedy to be more significant than the character who acts, he is insistent that the character must be a kind of person who, in moving from prosperity to misery, is capable of awakening pity and fear in us (p.48). This person who falls into vice due to error will be someone who enjoys a high reputation (p.48). Aristotle relates "fear and pity" to the enlightenment of the protagonists and the form of discovery accompanying it "... the form of discovery most essentially related to the plot and action of the play involves a discovery in combination with a reversal which will carry with it either

To what extent does the catharsis of Aristotle's understanding relate to present art forms? Raymond Williams demonstrates how its formal expression changes throughout history. He points out that "fear and pity" in neo-classical times came to be understood as "admiration and commiseration". Williams believes that this comparatively limited and in effect technical concept of catharsis, to which this discussion of tragic effect was increasingly related, became eventually, a substitute for tragic action.98 The further the experience of catharsis moves away from its original connection with action the further it is removed from being understood as a significant part of Tragedy as defined by Aristotle.

Nietzsche believed that the oppositions between the truth of nature and the pretentious lie of civilization was expressed in Tragedy.99 Nietzsche has very different views on how the cathartic moment manifests itself. Art, he maintained, is not an imitation of nature "but its metaphysical supplement ..." (BT, p.142). Nietzsche argues that tragedy does provide a "delight" in suffering, but that it refers as much to an aesthetic as to a moral framework:

I am speaking of esthetic delight, being at the same time fully aware that many of these images yield a moral delight as well, in the form of compassion or ethical triumph. But whoever tries to trace the tragic effect solely to these moral sources, as has been the custom among estheticians for so long, need not think that he is doing art a service. Art must insist on interpretations that are germane to its essence. In examining the peculiar delight arising from tragedy, we must look for it in the aesthetic sphere, without trespassing on the areas of

Nietzsche believed that due to Socratic thought the Apollonian and Dionysian elements, existent in Greek Tragedy, could not find unity in the modern, scientifically oriented secular world. Consciousness robbed the world of myth and left it bereft of any universally accepted "moral/esthetic" order.

Williams argues against this classical order being a necessary element for Tragic form. He points to the absurdity of believing in a common sense of order being adhered to by the Greeks and the Mediaeval Christians. It seems, nevertheless, that the cathartic principle is essentially bound up with that calmness of mind that, Sypher argues, was brought to that final vision of the tragic protagonist at the close of tragedy: It was a tragic silence brought before a vision of man, and the highest plateau of his self-sufficiency, a silence before a "fate entirely moral in its meaning and therefore saturated by an awareness of self alien from the inhumanity of the universe."

Tragedy, because it deals with values, about human error in the face of perfectibility, has been inevitably understood philosophically within a schema that relates to an order. Given that Tragedy in the past has been dramatized within an order that had some kind of morality sustaining it, is it now possible, given the nature of the modern world, to create tragedy? And what role will Catharsis play? The term catharsis is understood to be connected with tragic effect through pity and fear which closely aligns it to moral and artistic effect. In that form, to some extent, as the "container" of content, it is inevitable that the subject matter of modern life is going to be contained differently to that of the past.

The concept of Catharsis has received varied interpretations. Catharsis occurs at the height of the tragic action when the enlightenment of the protagonist ensures two results. First, order of a kind would return to the community, and secondly the art form itself would enact an aesthetic resolution. The medical linguistic heritage of the term "catharsis" serves as an interesting metaphor for the order that returns to a disordered community. The writings of the Hippocratic school of medicine used the term to denote the discharge of whatever excess of bodily elements had produced a state of sickness, and the consequent return of the body to that state of right proportion.

The question persists: Is there a state of sickness in our society that could, through action, be brought back to a state of health? There is certainly no recognizable order comparable to that of past tragic eras. The cathartic principle has always been

100. Ibid., p.143.
101. Williams, Modern Tragedy, p.29.
understood either as related to either aesthetics and order, or morality and order. Lessing in his Laocoon\(^{103}\) emphasizes the applicability of Aristotle’s ethical standard of "due measure" to the principle of catharsis; Tragedy, if it is to transform our pity and fear into virtue, "must be capable of purifying us from both extremes" from "too little" by its emotional contagion and from "too much" by the restraint which its formal pattern imposes.

Schiller in his essay "On the Sublime" (1801)\(^{104}\) notes that the most perfect Tragedy is one that produces its cathartic effect not by its subject matter but by its tragic form. Schopenhauer has more interest in its relationship to morals than to the form of the tragedy: He (in 1819) equates the cathartic principle of tragedy with an idealized and universal experience of fellow suffering wholly disproportionate to moral deserts.\(^{105}\) I.A. Richards interprets the cathartic principle as a process of reconciliation and re-equilibration of pity and terror.\(^{106}\) The emphasis tends to be always on union of opposing forces (Nietzsche) or the aesthetic reconciliation of pity and terror which are considered irreconcilable in real life.\(^{107}\)

Modern Tragedy goes beyond catharsis - it may dramatize it - but unlike Aristotle’s catharsis the "purging" does not occur with the return of an order; nor will the Tragic characters be seen to be falling into a recognizable vice due to error. The new tragic protagonists must be able to endure what Nietzsche believed to be unendurable. They must be able to look into the abyss, confront their natures and in their enlightenment pursue life as a kind of activity.\(^{108}\) The resolution will not be expressed in the aesthetic form, in the way it was in ancient Greek and Elizabethan Tragedy. What may be noticeable in the form of modern Tragedy will be its return to the use of a story that tells of people actively in search of meaning.

The form of this story will reflect its modern status. It will contain a story which will deal with empirical reality; that is, human beings will be represented in activity. The view will be a humanistic one which sees people as willing to assume responsibility

---

108. See Aristotle, p.40, where he writes: "The purpose of living is an end which is a kind of activity not a quality".
for their choices, their blindness and their offences against nature. This new Tragedy will show that we are no longer "walking in a universe where there is no echo of I".109

Mandel points out that the tragic spirit is essentially humanistic and given this that "as long as we can mourn for others, whether they are free or not, we shall not find ourselves incapable of writing or understanding Tragedy".110

The twentieth-century preoccupation in the arts with human entropy, deadness and absurdity seen against a backdrop of scientific complexity and sophistication has resulted in an evasion of, or inability to achieve, simplicity. John Von Szeliski is correct in arguing that crucial to the return of Tragedy as an artform is the return of optimism. He believes that the language of tragedy must accommodate an imaginative escape; we must he argues discover a language that fights the pressures of reality. Tragedy must be about hope, about what we "might wish to become".111 The vital fictions of Tragedy, he believes, cannot be pessimistic, it cannot be anti-life and it cannot exist in a world where the prevailing philosophy is one of despair.112 Tragedy can't be based on nihilism or on the consciousness of nothingness.

Tragedy of the future must resurrect the story which is immediately the form, content and essence of Tragedy; its simple essence re-affirms the possibility of an innate, universal tragic pleasure motive separate from philosophical complexities. This is not an argument for an authority of common sense, positivist and righteous realism. Nor does it argue for a kind of naturalism which might only reflect a social existence. Instead modern Tragedy, in being based on hope, must give artistic expression to the spiritual energies always in a state of growth.

Faith in reason and confidence in progress contributed to an era that banished Tragedy. Artists of the modern age have concentrated on the absence of meaning and artistic form during a time of near-despair. The belief in science as replacing God as the measurer of all things is now undermined. We live in a time of fear and disbelief. Is it possible for any kind of hope and humanism to emerge in the artist's conception of a world that has been analysed so thoroughly? Perhaps the world can become known again and its people might move towards a new order. As Fischer writes "The prerequisite for a humanity still beyond reach is the recognition of its absence."113

110. Oscar Mandel, A Definition of Tragedy, p.121.
111. von Szeliski, Tragedy and Fear, pp.142, 144.
112. See Kaufmann, Tragedy and Philosophy, p.xviii: "we have been told that Tragedy is dead, that it died of optimism, faith in reason, confidence in progress, Tragedy is not dead, but what estranges us from it is just the opposite: despair."
Fischer suggests that artists have tired of "the process of dehumanization" and will seek to express the human person in his attempt to transform himself. This will occur because artists have exhausted an analysis of humankind in chaos. It has been a detached, intellectualized analysis of chaos which has been necessary before the new shape and face of humankind could emerge.
CHAPTER 3
ROMANTICISM, MODERNISM, POST-MODERNISM
AND CONTEMPORARY PHYSICS

Obsession with Self

Twentieth century novelists have been obsessed with "the self". "Identity", as
subject matter, whether belonging to the author or to the created character, has become
a literary preoccupation. This in itself is not new to literature. The Romantics were the
first to give a sense of having become aware of the problem of defining themselves as
individuals existing in a world that was different from that of preceding ages. It was
Romantic literature that first signalled the transition from a predominantly mimetic to
an expressive aesthetic. As the self or identity became more symbolized into an
aesthetic structure, the novelists and dramatists turned further away from the world of
personality, society and nature. The hitherto more humanizing drive to find in art the
means of realizing the integrity and primacy of the "self" had become superseded.

The Romantics in the face of Cartesian rationalism, Newtonian mechanism and
Lockean empiricism were determined to find the "self" some ontological certitude or
centrality. The external world, nevertheless, was never brought into question as having
an objective existence. Artists, in fact, were in search of a rapprochement between the
inner and the outer worlds: Science of that time was seen as a threat to the existence of
a self outside "rationality"; it did not follow, though, that the material world that the
scientific mind was bent on measuring and categorizing was thought to be nonexistent.
The Romantic poets saw a sustaining reciprocity between art and life made visible in
poetic language. The act of poetry, and the experience of creation, entailed the
challenge of individualism. As Byron announced in the third canto of *Childe Harold’s
Pilgrimage*,

'Tis to create, and in creating live

---

1. This point, expressed more philosophically by Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (U.S.A.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p.466, is worth noting "... romanticism can be thought of as the discovery, or one rediscovery, of the subjective; the subjective as the exception; or the discovery of freedom as a state in which each subject claims its right to recognition, or acknowledgement; the right to name and assess its own satisfaction".
The modern expression of self in literature, although originating in romanticism, developed its own unique nature. The human questions surrounding identity, order, meaning and value traditionally cushioned between the instruments of the mind and "reality" have lost a relevance.

Modern and post-modernist literature have sharpened the instruments of the mind and created worlds, where one may not dare breathe an empirical sigh or whisper a common sense word. As the writer is technically peeling the onion in search of its unknowable centre, whether that be her mind or the process of the mind itself, the physicist is artistically "discovering that it is impossible to know the world empirically". The fact that the artist and the scientist can be seen to have been interpreting a similar view of the world throughout this century is relevant to identifying reasons for the absence of modern Tragedy and to predicting its re-appearance. It is believed that science and Secularization in reaching their zenith in the mid-nineteenth century contributed to a death in tragic writing. The "myths" born with Descarte, Newton and Locke robbed the world of belief in mystery, evil and the unknowable cosmos. These beliefs brought about a cultural milieu in which tragic action must but could not be played out.

The physicist and the artist have formulated ideas about being both the observer and the participator in the act of creation. Just as the modern painter and poet do not create a visual model or a clear referrent that could mirror their thoughts, does the scientist, who accepts the existence of an electron, admit to seeing one. It is ironic that the writer should have become more intellectual, reflexive and technical, and the scientist more sceptical of intellectual tools and more responsive to the enigma of the universe.3

Recent theories of science, such as those postulated by Paul Feyerabend4 and Larry Laudan,5 have explored the possible structural, thematic and ideational connections between literature and science. But there have been no concrete examples, mainly because the language of literature is inevitably subsumed, and therefore lost, in the expository discourse of science. A common world view may be identified, but not a

---

3. See Paul Feyerabend, Against Method: Outline of an Anachronistic Theory of Knowledge (London: Verso, 1978), pp.21, 32 and 189, where he prefers to see science as a "Dadaist" enterprise.
4. Ibid.
relationship between the form and concept of each discipline. I believe, however, that such an example can be given. Both science and literature deal with concepts which are, in fact, interpretations of the world as far as we can perceive it. Late nineteenth and twentieth century literature in its stylistic changes and the consequent artistic forms or formlessness has artistically rendered what modern Physics has discovered. This deals with the role of the self as an entity and as an active perceiver who in the act of perception changes her/his world, and who wishes to understand her/his world and determine her/his relationship with it. This acknowledges a common acceptance by scientists and lay people alike that in one sense there is a world "out there". There is, nevertheless, a second way of perceiving reality that exists in one's mind. In this world, much happens that simply does not fit our common experiences of "out there". This inner reality, as literature tells us in many forms, consists of thoughts, dreams and pictures which resemble or symbolize the outer reality. Sometimes there is a corresponding relationship with the outer world and the inner world (i.e. as far as one can ascertain such things), yet at other times the relationship is more tenuous. Quantum mechanics has shown us that there is a third mode of apprehending reality which possesses attributes of the two other ways of perceiving reality already outlined. This mode of perception is that which connects the other two. As it has attributes of both of these, it is a paradoxical and a magical mode of apprehending reality. In, for example, Under the Volcano, Lowry attempts to give expression to this third way of seeing. It is one in which the "laws" of cause and effect are manifested. The response of the inner world to the outer world is in itself a determining, creative mechanism that brings about in life and which has a corresponding form in literature, a behaviour and/or meaning extraneous to the other two ways of perceiving yet determined by their inter-connection. I will attempt to explain how the physicists identified this "mechanism" and from that point show its corresponding form in literature. The discovery of its presence in both fields has led to a great deal of theoretical debate. It is my contention that when art seeks to represent the living of the reality of the interpretation it will create Tragedy.

Quantum Mechanics: Finding a New World

For the last three centuries philosophy, and therefore the writings of literary theorists and writers of fiction with philosophical interests, have derived from people's reactions to the laws of Newtonian physics. Leo Aylen exaggerates when he writes that, our way of thought is bound to derive from the indeterminacy principle. It is more

accurate to note that "the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory starts with a paradox. It starts from the fact that we describe our experiments in the terms of classical physics and at the same time from the knowledge that these concepts do not fit nature accurately." The tension between these two starting points is the root of the statistical character of quantum theory. The corresponding form in post-modernist literature, more than not, expresses not this tension but instead concurs with Aylen's assessment. It dramatizes what is known in physics as the "quantum leap". The leap from a Newtonian world to one that is being moulded by the Indeterminacy principle and affecting disciplines other than physics, is known as the Quantum Leap:

The "quantum leap" ... is to be taken both literally and figuratively. In its literal sense, the quantum leap is the tiny explosive jump that a particle of matter undergoes in moving from one place to another. The "new physics" - quantum physics - indicates that all particles composing the physical universe must move in this fashion or cease to exist. Since you and I are composed of atomic and subatomic matter, we too must "take the quantum leap".

The new physics uncovered a bizarre and magical underworld. A new "order" evolved predicated on a belief that this "order" was not to be found in the particles of matter but in the minds of the physicists. Quantum physicists discovered that every act of observation made of an electron by a physicist disturbed the electron. As the late romantics and early modernists had expressed in symbolism the capacity and processes of the creative imagination, the physicists discovered that "what one observes appears to depend upon what one chooses to observe", and that describing the true order of the universe is difficult because it involves something more than the physical world. The scientist's view of science as a reasonable, orderly process of observing nature and describing the observed objectively was being questioned by a view that entertained the notion that "our minds may enter into nature in a way we had not imagined possible". Just as writers such as Beckett explored the problematic relationship between the external world and art so some scientists were beginning to wonder if the order of the universe might be the order of our own minds. The new insight concerning the universe was simply that the observer affects the observed. It became apparent that the process of observation affects what has been observed. As Werner Heisenberg discovered in 1926, that observation, as we actually experience it, does not allow us to analyse motion on to infinity. Sooner or later we see that our activity introduces discontinuities in

9. Ibid., p.3.
10. Ibid., p.6.
whatever we are observing. These discontinuities are fundamental to the new physics of the twentieth century.

Although Quantum Mechanics grew out of the mechanical age that responded to the human desire to know how things worked, it would become the means of undermining that world view. Newton's laws of motion that construed the world as a machine had hidden within it the assumption that the observer does not disturb it. The observer merely observes what is there. Newton's view saw a predictable universe; by the nineteenth century, the mechanical age of reason had become the age of certainty.

The Newtonian view of the universe postulated that it followed well-defined laws according to the same guiding principles. Everything was, and is, predictable. One only need find the force, know the masses, positions and velocities of the objects under study at one single time, and all is predictable. Cause and effect rule and nothing is by chance. The belief was that when the ultimate hidden cause was detected "there would be no room for free will, salvation, and damnation, or for love and hate. Even the most trifling thought had been determined in a far-gone age".11 This is not the kind of world view that could ever accommodate a tragic sensibility. By the nineteenth century, the only stage that was set was one that saw the human being as a machine. Classical physics had become not only the model for the physical universe, but the model for human behaviour as well. "The wave of mechanical materialism, which began as a small ripple in the stream of seventeenth century thought, had grown to tidal wave proportions, sweeping all Greek thinking aside".12 The assumptions of the mechanical age were disrupted when scientists were unable to find a mechanical explanation for the invisible parts that made up the material universe. These parts were heat and light. The mystery of the movement of light and its unexplained behaviour in relation to heated and glowing objects started a revolution in the scientific world. The active observer would be replaced by the disturbing observer. The new physicists, Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr, were led back to that earlier Greek picture of wholeness. To observe is to disturb, for observation breaks the wholeness of nature.

Max Planck isolated what was called the 'h' factor. This was a unity of energy-time, something physicists call action. The physicist Bohr noticed that 'h' could be viewed as a unit of angular momentum and that observation had a direct bearing on his atomic model. Bohr discovered that although the world appeared to be continuous it was fundamentally a quantum jumping world. The classical physicists did battle with this interpretation. De Broglie's waves suggested that Newtonian mechanics was not

11. Ibid., p.44.
12. Ibid., p.46.
dead; it had only been modified to accommodate a new form of matter - the matter wave. De Broglie's waves offered a picture of what was going on inside an atom. But mystery persisted - How could one visualize the shifting pattern of the wave when it changed its energy and produced light? It was Erwin Schroedinger who found a mathematical equation that explained the changing wave patterns inside an atom. De Broglie's and Schroedinger's wave interpretation calmed the classical physicists. Bohr's quantum jumping electron inside the atom was accommodated within the established scientific paradigm. As Wolf writes:

Schroedinger's picture of the atom, although complicated and dependent upon a nearly unimaginable wave function, was nevertheless quite reasonable. The atom's electron was a wave. The atom radiated, not because its electrons jumped from orbit to orbit, but because of a continuous process of harmonic beats.

Schroedinger's view of this would eventually become unacceptable. The problem of identifying the particle within the wave persisted until Max Born came on the scene. He discovered that the wave was not the electron; it was a wave of probability. Born identified the wave as "a probability function." Born interpreted Schroedinger's wave by applying his theory of probability. He "observed" that whenever there was a greater concentration of electrons in the beam, the Schroedinger wave had a greater intensity. By calculating that intensity, Born found he could predict the probability of a collision between an electron and an atom. This led to the question: was nature essentially a probability game?

Heisenberg and Bohr are the two physicists who in a kind of partnership finally rid physics of its mechanical models, at least from their perspective. Heisenberg is reminded by Bohr that "atoms were not things". Classical ideas about the world of motion only made sense when one could see the object in motion. They did not make sense when applied to ideas about what we think is happening but cannot actually see. Heisenberg, in recognizing one could not measure the position and momentum of an unobservable electron within an unseen atom, decided to develop means of measuring the light that came from them. He discovered that the observed frequencies and intensities of the light from the atoms obeyed a strange law of multiplication. The only way of observing an electron was to bombard it with a photon (a small wave-length light) which, in turn, changes its course. We cannot predict where the electron will be next. Our process of

---

observing it disrupts its motion. The more one knew about the position of the electron, the less one knew of its path to the future, and its momentum.

This "magical-power" of the "third reality" that has the power to render a continuous world into a discontinuous one, that disrupts and disturbs a harmonious world was in science called the Heisenberg principle of indeterminism or the Principle of Uncertainty. The question for science was how can there be a mechanical universe out there, if the universe changed every time we observed it. The nineteenth century age of certainty had come to a close. Not only can we not be sure that what we see is really what is, we also recognize the existence of a kind of seeing that has indefinable and seemingly magical qualities. There is an unbroken wholeness that becomes paradoxical as soon as we attempt to analyse it.

Nietzsche's words in the light of this knowledge take on a prophetic element: speaking of the scientific inquirer he writes:

When the inquirer, having pushed to the circumference, realizes how logic in that place curls about itself and bites its own tail, he is struck with a new kind of perception: the tragic perception, which requires to make it tolerable, the remedy of art.\(^{17}\)

Similarly, Nietzsche writes of the world "out there" that quantum mechanics has shown to be what we choose it to be or one that we can not measure or be sure of its predictability or how it comes to be seen:

Men of philosophical disposition are known for their constant premonition that our everyday reality, too, is an illusion, hiding another, totally different kind of reality. It was Schopenhauer who considered the ability to view at certain times all men and things as phantom or dream images to be the true mark of philosophic talent.\(^ {18}\)

When one identifies the quantum wholeness of the world the observer "becomes" the observed. "He or she is what he or she sees".\(^ {19}\) Nietzsche writes:

... Schopenhauer has described for us the tremendous awe which seizes man when he suddenly begins to doubt the cognitive modes of experience ... when in a given instance the law of causation seems to suspend itself. If we add to this awe the glorious transport which arises in man, even from the very depths of Nature, at the shattering of the principium individuationis, then we are in a position to apprehend the essence of Dionysiac rapture, whose closest analogy is furnished by physical intoxication.\(^ {20}\)

Tragedy can, according to Nietzsche, only occur when there is a unification of the Apollonian world view and the Dionysian one. Apollonian culture is characterized by

---

18. Ibid., p.20.
Nietzsche in its perfected form when there is "that complete identification with the beauty of appearance". Nietzsche believes that "the original oneness, the ground of being, ever suffering and contradictory, time and again has need of rapt vision and delightful illusion to redeem itself. Since we ourselves are the very stuff of such illusions, we must view ourselves as the truly non-existent, that is to say, as a perpetual unfolding in time, space, and causality - what we label "empiric reality".

Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle tells us that we cannot know total order from our observations. On the other hand, we are free to choose. As Wolf points out: "Our very helplessness to create a perfect order allows us to create". The uncertainty principle frees us from the past because it shows what is erroneous about laws of science that suggest that predictions about how the world works can be made. Although we can choose how we go about in the universe, we cannot predict the results of our choices. As Nietzsche argues we are in a state of continual "becoming".

Nietzsche identifies the enemy of tragedy to be Socrates: "Thenceforward the real antagonism was to be between the Dionysiac spirit and the Socratic, and tragedy was to perish in the conflict". Socrates is cast by Nietzsche as theoretical man. Whereas the artist

having unveiled the truth garment by garment, remains with his gaze fixed on what is still hidden, theoretical man takes delight in the cast garments and finds his highest satisfaction in the unveiling process itself, which proves to him his own power ... we find a type of deep-seated illusion, first manifest in Socrates: the illusion that thought, guided by the thread of causation, might plumb the farthest abysses of being and even correct it. This grand metaphysical illusion has become integral to the scientific endeavour and again and again leads science to those far limits of its inquiry where it becomes art.

Nietzsche argues that the age of certainty which reached its climax during the nineteenth century reached a point of doubt. Science has pushed to its limits and "faced with those limits, [had] been forced to renounce its claim to universal validity". Nietzsche had hoped that this would bring about a rebirth of Tragedy.

Given the findings of quantum mechanics, for which in some ways Nietzsche provided prophetic images with his philosophical probings, it is at first glance surprising that Tragedy did not come about in artistic form in the late nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century. An enigmatic universe was seen to appear once more. It however, was a world that had lost its myths; it was a secularized world which had broken with "the unconscious metaphysics of its earlier mode of existence, with all the

22. Nietzsche, p.77.
23. Ibid., pp.92 and 93.
24. Ibid., p.23.
accompanying dismal moral consequences”. It was, perhaps even more significantly, a world in which thinkers and writers wished to theorize, deliberate and dramatize their discoveries rather than seek to see whether they might affect the ”moral” world, that is, one in which social action was occurring.

The extent to which the arts sought to allegorize the problematic relationship between the self, the world and art will be discussed in this chapter. It does I think emphasize the strange reality of modern art-forms that preferred to concentrate on one area of thought at the expense of the reality that was, however intangible, still ”out there”. Although quantum mechanics demonstrates that all physical processes are not exactly compatible with the properties of mechanical models it does not follow that all machines are useless. Our mechanical models work for large objects. Much of what we observe is not at all disturbed or affected by observation. Observation of most objects in the universe is quite reliable when seen in ordinary light. Classical mechanical thinking is perfectly adequate in describing the notion of most objects. Yet when we choose to regard everything we see and do within the framework of the new physics, then we can say that, to some extent, reality construction is what we do every instant of our conscious lives.

A tension between the two views exists and it is undeniable that we see things from within both frameworks. ”The instantaneous experience of the reality of Now will not appear paradoxical at all. It is only when we observers attempt to construct a history of our perceptions that reality seems paradoxical.” Robbe-Grillet’s work on the theory of the novel is interesting to look at in relation to those two points. Robbe-Grillet is intolerant of any meaning, whether metaphysical, psychological or social, superimposed onto a world that is simply there. He has a distrust of adjectives which falsely presume to measure, to situate, to limit and to define. Robbe-Grillet’s preference is for a literature that takes note of the actual presence of objects; he argues strongly against one that imprisons the empirical world in some system of reference. One can understand Robbe-Grillet’s views. It is a reaction to sixty years of the artistic withdrawal from seeing the world that is there. Becoming imprisoned in ”some system of reference” has led to a situation in art where the ”thing being represented falls outside of the representation itself”. Reality has somehow become lost in debates about how there is no relation between language and reality. It is not difficult to understand the

25. Ibid., p.139.
28. Ibid., p.54.
origins of this splintering between self/language/mind and body/world/society. Expressionistic fiction was needed in the face of Naturalism with its narrow conception of the human personality as being conditioned by heredity and environment. This anti-Newtonian world-view from writers like Kafka can be seen as necessary and inevitable. Literature came to terms with what quantum mechanics brought to science long before the scientific community accepted the new paradigm. The new conception of the universe that contradicts the former conception that the human being is a machine in a mechanical world has been played out in the cry for subjective and spiritual values for the past one hundred years. It has however, gone too far.

This is part of Robbe-Grillet’s argument. He pleads for consciousness to see the empirical world. I wonder though if in his prescription for jettisoning all "systems of reference" he is refusing to take note of the relevance of what quantum mechanics brings to our understanding of the world. Quantum mechanics tells us that we can see objects most of the time and that the uncertainty principle denies their reality. Both these views are, however paradoxically, correct. We live both of the realities from which these views emerge. Both the scientific community as well as the literary one is bent on wanting to accept that only one is true. Instead, literature (and science), must express the tension, and the paradox of the fact that the two co-exist.

Robbe-Grillet fails to acknowledge that the observer does become what is observed and that he or she can and does choose the reality she or he sees. I do not believe that it is humanly or scientifically possible, for the human perspective written into the novel form not to point towards some meaning (whether metaphysical, social or psychological) if that novel is attempting to represent the actions of men and women. Of course the latter is the opposite to what Robbe-Grillet intends creating. Perhaps Robbe-Grillet, contrary to his aims, is simply working within an obsolete framework. He writes that:

Science is the only honest means at man’s disposal whereby he can make use of the world around him - but only material .... Only science, though, can claim to know the inside of things. The information about the inside of the pebble, the tree or the snail that Francis Ponge gives us, cares nothing for science, of course (and even less than Sartre seems to think). It in no way describes what really is inside these things, but merely that part of man’s mind that he projects into them.”

What Robbe-Grillet criticizes the literary person for doing is what quantum mechanics now presents the contemporary physicist as experiencing. I emphasize that Robbe-Grillet has a point in drawing our sights back to the world we see. He does, nevertheless, deny that the spectator disturbs the world he sees and this is in opposition to a scientific view.

30. Robbe-Grillet, p.91.
Quantum mechanics shows the way towards accepting the enigma of the universe; it shows that there is room for the human will to choose without being able to predict the result of those choices. We are equally led back to the acceptance of a sensible world that we can see.

Leo Aylen argues that the twentieth century will be a time when tragedy emerges. I also believe that the present world has become concerned with the reasons for actions rather than the causes; that, like the fifth century Athens, we might be in an age where writers wish to write about "fact" not "fiction". If writers begin like the Greeks to believe in the world views they present, to be concerned with making this society a better place and wish to enlarge a value-oriented outlook of an audience, we may discover in art-form a new tragic form.

Tragedy requires an interest in presenting a seen world, in which people make choices, but which is understood as being ultimately unknowable. This will and has begun to appear at the end of a unique artistic age in which literature has dramatized its "Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle". This dramatization brought about a particular kind of allegorical writing.

Theorists of Quantum Mechanics are quick to point out that classical objects are seen, can be measured and do form, as far as we can know, a real part of our practical lives. The 'h' factor is usually minute and becomes active only when we attempt to see such things as electrons. Most modern and/or post-modernist novelists, dramatists, and artists, however, give very little artistic space to the reflection of a "seen" external world. Consciousness is the protagonist, and that 'world' out there, if present at all, is used more as a sign or symbol of the "real" inner reality, than as existing in its own right. My task is to identify the many forms that consciousness, as a protagonist, takes in contemporary literature.

A certain strand of twentieth century reflexive writing, like Dubuffet's paintings, has become fascinated with "the object, the pigment, the operation, the process" to such an extent that a disturbing geography has been created from which the figure of humankind has disappeared. And it is in this sense that literature of the self-conscious genre of this century differs from reflexive literature of the past. Georg Lukács argues a similar position; his term for this genre is "psychopathology" which, he writes, is obsessional in modernist literature and expresses a desire to escape from the reality of

---

33. See W. Sypher, *The Loss of Self in Modern Literature and Art*, p.110, who analyses Dubuffet's painting. Drawing on the analogy between literature and art, he discusses the loss of human presence in both fields.
capitalism. The dramatized self-consciousness of the author, and interest in the composition of the work, go back as far as Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. Similarly, as we read Fielding’s *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* we are taken on an excursion by the narrator, who delights in telling us the rules and games of story-telling. In the more modern works there are many examples of the interest in the act of creation by the author becoming an important element in the novel. Emily Brontë uses it in *Wuthering Heights*. This technique allows the writer to “be” in the story in the role of heroine, that is experiencing the joy and suffering of that fictive world and, as the observer, who not only watches these experiences, but also considers the nature of the telling of them. Fitzgerald’s Nick Carraway and Conrad’s Marlowe play at a similar game. Modernist works, nevertheless, have taken the divided self-motif much further. The observer, no longer watches the hero/heroine experiencing her/his fictive life, instead, the observer becomes fascinated with the processes within his/her act of observation.

When examining what is negative about a literature based on self-consciousness, some distinction should be made between subjectivity and subjectivism. Von Szeliski believes that a certain autobiographical subjectivity has been the cause of twentieth century drama failing to equal tragedy. He refers to that loss of aesthetic distance in tragedy, where the playwright was not psychoanalysing himself, rationalizing his own history, or cursing the audience for some evil it had condoned; Von Szeliski here is speaking of “subjectivity”.

---

"Subjectivism" concerns more, the turning the self and, in particular, the perceptions of the self, into the object of inquiry. Experience is reduced to ideas. Both states, when expressed in artistic form, are at odds with the experience and expression of Tragedy. Yet, although it is generally accepted that "subjectivity or self-consciousness is the salient problem of Romanticism", it is not the case that in romantic poetry both are unresolvable faults typical of this literature as a whole. The romantic poets expressed more importantly a shared interest, not so much in subjectivism per se but, instead in an intense excitement for the phenomenon of the creating self. Working within the framework of Kantian philosophy, the Romantics were giving artistic expression to a new relation between "self" and "world". No longer were these entities seen as static and juxtaposed, but were shown to be dynamic, variables whose interaction made possible the fullness and universality of experience.

The modernist and post-modernist interest in the creating-self has evolved into quite a different condition. Nathalie Sauvraute, for example, in her novels, becomes engaged in a personal pursuit, a quest for identity which revolves entirely around the subject’s psyche. Sauvraute is determined to intercept inner reality. Madeleine Wright considers Sauvraute’s writings to be so subjective that only Sauvraute can understand them. Sauvraute’s subject matter is the borders of consciousness; it seeks little relationship with the world outside.

Reflexive literature, both in its modernist and post-modernist phase, has not included the writing of tragedy. In particular, one can note the non-tragic post-humanist character of post-modernist works, whose source can be traced back to modernism. Most writers who have written extensively on post-modernism, point more to the difficulty of distinguishing between the two, than elucidating on its unique characteristics. Post-modernism must be seen as part of a "continuity" - as born out of

38. See, e.g., Blake, All Religions are One, where he characterized the bard as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness", and Wordsworth in the preface to the lyrical ballads: "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"; and Shelley’s remarks in A Defense of Poetry "a poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds".
modernism and, like all literary periods, is connected to its predecessors in some way. It, nevertheless, is a "discontinuity", in that it severs particular human elements from literary expression.

Ihab Hassan attempts to identify differences, dialogics and dichotomies between modernism and post-modernism. His resultant table suggested, for example, the following differences: Whereas Modernism contained more Romanticism and Symbolism, Post-modernism worked more in the areas as Pataphysics and Dadaism. And so the parallel goes on form/anti-form, purpose/play, design/chance, hierarchy/anarchy, mastery/exhaustion, creation/decreation, presence/absence, interpretation/against interpretation. The post-modernist tendency seems to move towards "indeterminance", towards fracture, towards the "dispersal of the human". The answer (whatever that might mean) might be found in "the immanence or discourse of the mind". Post-modernists may argue that the aim is not nihilistic, that they seek the source of language, a new agnosticism, or some order or other; nevertheless, their seeking takes the form of reflection, of mental things, of modern allegory. As they destroy, decreate, de-construct, the entailed negation is done consciously and this consciousness is informed by some constructed and created theory.

Types of Post-modernism

Novels of this century (which may or may not fall into the modernist or post-modernist category) tend to call attention to their creation. This obsession with the nature of the literature itself has meant that the creation of artifice has all but replaced any interest in "imitating" reality. Three recognizable strands have emerged. Barthe refers to one of these as "the Literature of Exhaustion". This entails writers using as their premise the tantalizing thought that literature is finished. Writers such as Barthe, Borges and Nabokov are seen to fit this category, partially because of their attack on traditional concepts of time. Their aim is to remove the oppression of the past. Consequently, all that is known by memory, or recognizable as past reality become taboo sources for creativity. The writers working within this framework pursue the notions of Infinity, rather than ones of space or symmetry, which are seen as themes

43. It seems to me that writers like Kafka, Joyce, Céline and Beckett could be accommodated in both strands.
44. See J. Barthe, "The Literature of Exhaustion", Atlantic Monthly, 2 (August 1967), pp.29-34, where he applies this term to Borges and Nabokov.
of limitation. Literature of exhaustion argues that the self, like the external world, is not truly real. Art according to its proponents is antiquated, nothing more than "a dumping ground of fine feelings, a museum of belles-lettres".

The second strand of post-modernist literature is known as the "Literature of Silence". René Wellek discusses how a distrust of language is central to recent fiction. Quoting from Shakespeare, Goethe, Berkeley and many others, he demonstrates how the failure of language to express the enigma of life has long been the artist’s preoccupation. The step from an awareness that language has its inadequacy to the preoccupation of this time which, in some quarters, has concluded that "the thing being represented falls outside of the representation itself" is a huge one. The relationship between literature and reality breaks down completely.

Susan Sontag argues that the myth about art is to be found in the idea of the "absoluteness of the artist’s activity". This realized, art inevitably turns into anti-art or silence. Sontag’s solution is that in "discovering one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say that". The form this takes involves self-consciousness, a disinterest in creating or communicating meaning and a dream of an ahistorical literature. George Steiner also argues for silence in literature, believing that the pressures of history have "tarnished words". Ihab Hassan understands the silence as a disruption between language and reality, and advocates a literature that finds its activity in games. The exponents of the Literature of Silence believe the self cannot be known. This is "dramatized" in works by writers like Serraute and Robbe-Grillet who write without recourse to traditional elements of fiction such as plot, meaning and character.

The third stand of post-modernism is that relating to the processes of literature. This is a forerunner to the literature of exhaustion and it can be traced back to the so-called romantic mode, but it does not disappear with the advent of the Literature of Exhaustion. In fact, it is the dominant one of post-modernist literature, particularly as symbolic process was, for the romantics, the consummate mode for realizing the

50. Ibid., p.12.
52. See Ihab Hassan, *The Literature of Silence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), and *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*. 
integrity and primacy of "self". Language was the organ of inner existence. It was the tool that prevented the people from being utterly adrift in the indifferent world of Newtonian mechanism, Lockean empiricism and Cartesian rationalism. This was the point where language was beginning to be seen as an activity. It was, nevertheless, a means of affirming life, of having a heightened awareness of the intentional, related character of man's being. Language was understood to be a creative activity that led closer to the truth of the world's presence. Authenticity of self within a world was the objective, to know via language something of that mystery of their being-in-the-world. It cannot be stressed enough that Literature as process in the Romantic era was humanist. Literature as process in this century is not. Writers, who adhere to either the Literature of Silence, or the Literature of Exhaustion, write within a framework concerned with theoretical questions which relate to the self. In exploring the "self's" unknowable qualities or its non-existence, these modern writers are writing with a disengaged imagination, not one disengaged from ideas, but from a reality.

The reality that has been abolished is one in which human beings were seen to be in pursuit of meaning and values. As consciousness watches itself and the very language employed in the watching, "life" becomes a reflection of literature and divorced from actuality. The novel of processes owes too much to psychology, to introspection, to the form of introspection, which reasons, argues and discusses. It is all the work of the writers' intellect. The reader of these novels in attempting to understand them must break through codes. The only avenue of investigation seems to be the linguistic, semantic and formal analysis of the work. It can be said of Sartre's work in her novels is that of a character looking for an author. How far indeed we are from Aristotle's belief in the plot that must come from character and should not involve the biassed and meddling attitudes of the writer.

The tragic cause, which Aristotle saw in the action, becomes throughout time, progressively internalized. Tragedy in the world, out there, was and is continually experienced. Literature, as it became more and more aware of its inability to know the dividing line between perception and representation or to distinguish between reality and illusion, dehumanized itself with intellectual preoccupations that alienate the expression of Tragedy. If Tragedy is dramatized in modern literature, it takes the form of intellectual awareness of its absence which, it can be argued, is a tragedy of another kind. The tragic, though Hebbel tells us, must appear from the start as something

53. See Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy, p.94, when he says of Romantic drama, "The Individual rebellion is humanist, at a conscious level".
54. See, for example, the novels Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les entendez.
Consciousness as protagonist in modern drama, fiction and art can be recognized in one of the following formats: The autobiographical art that relies heavily on the private agonies of the writer, Literature as process, under which heading I include Literature of Silence and Literature of Exhaustion, and Literature of a theoretical nature which is controlled by a desire to present an intellectual thought/system more than a representation of life. A consciousness is now imposed into the art, which is no longer free to represent life in its wholeness. Williams gives an example of this in relation to D.H. Lawrence. He shows how, within Lawrence's novels, life becomes separated from that which is desired: Its forms of creation are in buds, not children. All that is human, beyond the singleness of pure being is an old shadow world. The only relationship, finally, is between the single being and the non-human mystery. This is the kind of tragedy that cannot be represented; it can only be the object of theory. Tragedy is about relationships that create consciousness and action, which cannot exist in a fiction in which consciousness creates relationships.

Theoretical Literature: The French Lieutenant's Woman

The French Lieutenant's Woman written by John Fowles is an example of such theoretical literature. Although John Fowles ends his novel by arguing that his characters act out independently, "as Marx defined it - the actions of men (and of women) in pursuit of their ends", the book is consciously exploring, and at most times satirizing, the plight of the modernist writer, who has become too obsessed with his/her role as a creator. Understanding this book entails recognizing Fowles as writing the novel from a particular historical perspective. We see at work his knowledge of how twentieth century philosophy of ideas evolved out of a Victorian world. His characters dramatize both the positive and negative elements of the onslaught of the modern on nineteenth century values and life style.

This theoretical novel finds its nexus in the relationship between Sarah and Charles. Their coming together is an enactment of two worlds in conflict, yet inevitably

56. See Williams, Modern Tragedy, pp.112, 116, 122, where he argues that the conflict for human beings became internalized and thus Steinberg's technical creativity became directed towards finding form for assumed psychological processes; Williams points out that both Lawrence and Tolstoy stray into autobiography and preaching, which make the "action" internal; and O'Neill's patterns within his plays Williams writes are so conscious that life for O'Neill has no meaning outside himself.
57. Williams, p.136.
58. John Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman. All future references to this text will be cited as FL.
intertwined. Fowles's concern is with the birth of the existential being, who is to be torn by intolerable contradictions, in a condition of essential absurdity. On the positive side, in the form of Sarah, he writes of the new "authenticity" that can be sought outside Victorian strictures.

Sarah, when we first meet her, is likened to a "myth": "a living memorial to the drowned". She is also called "Poor Tragedy". Sarah is being placed by Fowles outside her age; this is not the age of Tragedy but, instead, the age of reason that renounces any truths embodied in mythology. Her facial appearance is described as "unlike the pretensions of the Age". It is the face of tragedy, of potentially purifying depths. It is in this context that she is understood symbolically in terms of the Sea. The opening poem sets her up as a riddle; she is an empty sea but, like it, it is implied, she has depth (FL, p.13). The three most crucial scenes between Charles and Sarah invoke the sea to give depth of idea to their relationship: Sarah's authenticity, as understood by twentieth century existential thought, will reach out to its opposite number as seen in Charles who, although imprisoned in the Victorian age, will through Sarah be given a sense of how to acquire it. Charles, on first sighting Sarah, "did not know it, but in those brief poised seconds above the waiting sea, in that luminous evening silence broken only by the waves quiet wash, the whole Victorian age was lost" (p.66). When Sarah explains her life to Charles "she stared out to sea, as if that was the listener" (p.147). Charles, later in the story, whilst alienated from both country and Sarah seeks in Matthew Arnold's poem the mirror of his condition:

A God, a God their severance ruled;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd salt, estranging sea (FL, p.366).

The last line of the poem expresses the closing thoughts of the novel (p.399).

Sarah refuses to submit to the demands of her age. She seeks an authenticity that conflicts with the goals of Victorian woman. Sarah sees no sense in dogmas, rules, duties, or in offering special respect towards people of particular class distinction. Fowles creates a character who exhibits all the characteristics of an existential "heroine". Sarah's impassioned speech about her predicament conveys this, her hatred of a hypocritical society, her suffering, her questioning of the norm, and her disbelief in the reality of sin. Potentially, she is like Camus's rebel. Conscious like Sisyphus of the absurdity of her prison she identifies strongly with "the unionists' wild acts of revenge against poverty and exploitation".

Sarah knows a deep loneliness. Charles recognizes her as an "outcast" (p.65), a view confirmed by Sarah who accepts "what I must be, an outcast" (p.157). Charles acknowledges her despair, a condition that preconditions Camus's understanding of
revolt: "He could not imagine what, besides despair, could drive her, in an age where women were semi-static, timid, incapable of sustained physical effort, to this wild place" (p.104). Sarah herself speaks of her despair to Charles when explaining her marriage to the French officer: "I married shame ... an act of despair ... my shame keeps me alive". Dr Grogan who sees all that Sarah is, without being able to understand her, or give meaning to her behaviour, other than madness, is able to see that her strange behaviour emanates from despair, rather than evil (p.197).

Sarah does make a conscious decision to revolt against this despair and against her society. This revolt, which leads to her only sense of freedom, begins with the lie she tells concerning her relationship with Vargueness: "So I am a doubly dishonoured woman. By circumstances. And by choice ..." (p.152). Sarah is aware that she is unlike other women, but knows that her scorn of society frees her in a way other women can never be: "Sometimes I almost pity them. I think I have a freedom they cannot understand. No insult, no blame, can touch me. Because I have set myself beyond the pale ..." (p.153). Sarah is not afraid to be an outcast, nor to express her sensuality (p.105). Although Charles is a little shocked at her lack of restraint, he rationalizes his own acceptance of it by remembering how enlightened he is by Darwinism. Charles is attracted by what Sarah symbolizes (p.114). Her openness, her honesty, incites Charles to catch a glimpse of an ideal world "a mythical world where naked beauty mattered far more than naked truth". Sarah makes Charles aware that he is deprived in the fixity of his world. He is driven by her to question his life and see, like an impossible dream, another world beyond the rationalistic nature of his own - "a sinless land".

Charles sees within Sarah a knowledge that he can barely apprehend. It is a knowledge "of nobler things that are compatible with either evil or madness" (p.197). When she raises her face to his, he knows there is something he must see "a truth beyond his truths, an emotion beyond his emotions, a history beyond all his conceptions of history". And, yet, he argues with Sarah and her need to offend society, an offence which he sees as being fruitless. Sarah answers that there are fruits though they are bitter. Charles accepts her sincerity, her questioning of life, even her revolt as being marks of her own authenticity (pp.158-59). Later, at another meeting, Charles likens Sarah to the wren both wild and free with the wildness of innocence. At this point Fowles draws attention to the contrast between Sarah, a twentieth century existential type, and the Victorians, who would not be able to respond in such a way to beauty and nature. Indeed, they would be "troubled rather than pleased by them. They were not the people for existential moments" (p.215). Charles is, in this scene, to be engaged with an experience he cannot understand: "So Charles was inexplicable to himself".

Charles is moulded and imprisoned by the Victorian age, but, endowed with his
sense of estrangement from it, a distrust of it and a fear of rejecting it. He is, on one hand, the perfect Victorian product with a slightly paradoxical perspective on the changing world, unable to see that his devotion to science was one directed at a process in history that would whittle away the class system of which he approves and benefits. He wants a world where man could be responsible for himself and not tied to the sanctions and duties of a repressed society. Yet, he savours the privileges and snobbery that go with his aristocratic class. This is displayed by his feelings that Ernestina behaves like a draper’s daughter (p.175), when hearing of his loss of Winsyatt and by his feelings of debasement, when Mr Freeman invites him to join the business world (p.251). His intellectual and scientific self embraces a post-Victorian world, but the aristocratic man is subdued by the thought that scientific progress is inviting ostentation and vulgarity (p.253). He may have within him the stirring of existential man, but he has none of the stirrings of an early socialist: "He did not feel the moral enormity of his privileged economic position" and his treatment of his servant Sam is superior and condescending.

Charles’s attitude towards women is Victorian; he is insulted when Sarah assumes some sort of equality of intellect with him (p.124). He maintains that there are things that a woman could not understand: "the richness of male life, the enormous difficulty of being one to whom there was rather more than dress and home and children" (p.114).

Charles, nevertheless, is torn between two world views - that embodied in Sarah and that which goes along with marrying Ernestina. This decision to marry Ernestina is at odds with any preference for a life of passion and imagination. It also reflects the extent to which he is unable to take responsibility for himself: "... he was not quite sure which planet he had just landed on, but sincerely hoped the natives were friendly" (p.75). Yet Charles experiences, however reluctantly, the stages of growth of the hero of the absurd. He recognizes the absurdity of life, he feels existential ennui, isolation and boredom. His revolt against despair comes, like that of Sisyphus,59 as the result of his consciousness of the meaninglessness of his life (p.254).

Fowles does not let his readers forget that this novel is to be seen from the perspective of the twentieth century, and that Charles is unable, being a prisoner of his time, to find the authenticity that Sarah leads him to:

After all, he was a Victorian. We could not expect him to see what we are just beginning - and with so much more knowledge and the lessons of existentialist philosophy at our disposal - to realize ourselves: that the desire to hold and the desire to enjoy are mutually destructive. His statement to himself should have been "I possess this now, therefore I am happy", instead of what it so

Victorianly was, "I cannot possess this forever, and therefore am sad" (*FL*, p.63).60

And, yet, Fowles constantly imposes modernist preoccupations onto Charles, who is seen to think "that time was the great fallacy; existence was without history, was always now, was always this being caught in the same fiendish machine. All those painted screens erected by man to shut out reality - history, religion, duty, social position, all were illusions, were opium fantasies" (p.179). When Charles experiences the defiant song of the wren, this moment of intensity of "engagement", he is intellectually rendered by Fowles as representing "the appalling ennui of human reality" lying cleft to the core in contrast to the real life which "pulsed there in the wren's triumphant throat" (p.208). Fowles's readers are further told, and perhaps unnecessarily, that this experience makes Charles feel excommunicated "by historical time", by the impossibility of being authentic in his time, that life is perhaps nothing more original than "priority of existence over death".

Charles or Sarah could well be tragic heroes. Their predicament of being in conflict, yet tied to their realities, is the kind of circumstance common in all great tragedies. It is, however, not their lives represented in this story but, instead, Fowles's theoretical world-view. Throughout the story Charles is given by the author: (1) the sense of being a prisoner of his time, and (2) actual experiences of the hero of the Absurd, who experiences moments of existential authenticity.

These are sprinkled consistently throughout the text but become concentrated towards the end of it. In relation to Charles's being ensnared by the Victorian times we learn:

(a) His kiss with Sarah was a moment that "overcame the age" (p.217) and that he felt like a man "beneath a breaking dam" (p.217).

(b) Fowles tells us that Charles is "a man struggling to overcome history ..." (p.257).

(c) The Victorians are presented as giving more reality to the soul than to the body (p.319).

(d) Dr Grogan, in true Victorian style, tells Charles that this new morality that he is tempted to take up may just be an excuse for a wild life style (p.342).

60. See *ibid.*, p.50, where Camus says the absurd is "that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, my nostalgia for unity, this fragmented universe and the contradictions that bind them together".
The extent to which Charles embraces an existential predicament is emphasized in the second half of the novel.

(a) The freedom he takes for himself by his decision to seek a life with Sarah is understood to be one accompanied by anxiety (p.296). He feels that his relationship with Sarah became “the pure essence of cruel and necessary freedom” (p.317). It is a freedom that offers another kind of prison compensated only by his awareness that becoming an outcast was the result of a decision he made (p.366). His move to America is made, in his faith in a kind of freedom in which he preferred anarchy to the rigid social rules of his homeland.

(b) The newly-found consciousness that comes with this decision also brings an awareness of life’s meaninglessness. He sees the “thin walls that stood between him and nothingness, an ultimate vacuity, a total purposelessness” (p.364).

(c) His new awareness also brings with it the consciousness of his alienated state: “I am infinitely strange to myself” (pp.306 and 321).

(d) Like Camus’s hero of the absurd he experiences boredom (p.367).

(e) The traditional concepts of morality allied to the church undergo a dramatic revision to the extent that Charles weeps at his inability to speak to God, and Christ remained a terrible anomaly in reason (p.312). He accepts that Sarah’s deceit was necessary in order to “unblind him” (p.318) and that the life was temporal and did not move beyond death to any metaphysical judgement (p.315).

(d) Charles, despite this consciousness which causes him suffering, is nevertheless awed by the pleasure he receives in his courage to be himself (p.321). Although he recognizes the dangers in seeking ultimate meaning, he is prepared to seek it if it allows him some of those intense, authentic meanings (p.278).

Fowles’s modernism is evident in his ironic play with the role of the writer in his novel. On one hand, he plays at attempting to look at this role objectively, with a detachment, as if to allow his judgements to hold value. He places his characters within a known historical reality and, yet, argues that he does now know what his characters will do, that they will have their own organic growth within the act of his creativity.

61. Camus outlines the aspects of the absurd as being (a) the lack of spontaneity to life in the modern world of mechanical tasks, and of deadening and repetitive routine; (b) boredom; (c) a sense of alienation of self; (d) an intellectual inability of the mind to give a satisfactory account of experience.

62. See Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, p.21, where the Absurd is located in the confrontation of the irrational with the wild longing for clarity.

63. See ibid., p.60, where Camus states that Death and the absurd are “the principles of the only reasonable freedom”, that which the human heart can experience and live.
The reader is aware that the writer begins with conclusions; the characters are forced by historical forces to reach certain predicaments. The book is the dramatization of Fowles's views on how the twentieth century with its existential sensibility evolved out of the nineteenth-century Victorian world. When Fowles argues that his first principle as a writer is freedom, we are as aware of his game-playing as we are of his seriousness. In ironic contrast Beckett's Unnamable, the main 'character' of the novel, wants to be cut off from the author, his creator, in order to no longer exist. The flaw in the Unnamable's plan is that he, a fictitious character, also creates his character such as Mahood and Worm on whom he depends upon to keep existing.

Fowles argues the writers must remain and inevitably are gods that create characters. But, he insists, his characters are free from his absolute control (p.86) and, in fact, have ideas without his intervention. Fowles apologizes for his own intrusion into the story but points out that his presence is no more fictitious than that of his characters, no more real for that matter. He ends this rendering of modernist themes in novels with a characteristic amused air that leaves the questions eternally poised or suspended, where they inevitably remain in modernist literature:

So if you think all this unlikely (but it is Chapter Thirteen) digression has nothing to do with your Time, Progress, Society, Evolution and all those other capitalized ghosts in the Night that are rattling their chains behind the schemes of this book ... I will not argue. But I shall suspect you (FL, p.87).

Later in the novel he plays at ending it, poking fun as he does so, at the conventional endings of Victorian novels cast in the mental image of people like Dr Grogan. Having rationally diagnosed Sarah as insane, despairing rather than evil, and Charles as a generous spirited yet a naive victim, Sarah is sent on his advice to a comfortable asylum and Charles is enabled to live out a comfortable though boring life (pp.192, 292-94). Fowles follows up this invention by telling us that the "ending" was not his but, instead, one that Charles has imagined. The writer intrudes in order to remind us that he is not there, that the characters are freely, organically coming into their own fortunes (p.295). Fowles tells us at this point that, rather than this being a literary trick, it is in fact what "real" people do at various points in their life. They imagine a future in order to examine its potential or its pitfalls. He further suggests that such hypotheses "often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow" (p.295).

What does one make of Fowles's intrusion? In one sense, one is aware of Fowles's humour. His insistence that he is not the prime mover in the creation of his characters, yet this same intellectual perspective demonstrates how absurd this position is. Similarly, he writes enthusiastically about the spontaneity and organic growth of his characters yet, continually, reminds us that we, as well as he, know not only their
probable actions, but the names of their ideas, being as we are in an advantageous position as twentieth century observers of nineteenth century behaviour. Fowles writes: "I have pretended to slip back into 1867; but of course, that year is in reality past. It is futile to show optimism or pessimism, or anything else about it, because we know what has happened since" (p.348).

Yet, finally, the Janus-faced objectivity is irritating. The work is perhaps too contrived despite Fowles' intention to overdo it. The book can only, in the end, be read as a story told in order to present Fowles's ideas. We read the story to know the mind.

Fowles plays with the idea of character and shows the dubious relationship between author and creation. A writer such as Saurraute abandons character altogether, not even using it as an idea in the way Fowles does. Saurraute argues that the character, as known in traditional literature, has lost his past, his manners and his name. Consequently, the novel comes to deal with the figures of the author and the reader: "For not only are they both wary of the character, but through him, they are wary of each other". Fowles may not have worked this out to this degree in this work, but it forms part of his approach to the ending of his novel.

The first ending suggested by the writer is presented as a Victorian one. We are told that "the convention of Victorian fiction, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ending" (p.348). This ending sees the estranged lovers overcome all barriers and they live "happily ever after". The second ending is a modern one. It is inconclusive, it portrays both characters making a decision towards their own authenticity.

Sarah offers a relationship without marriage, one in which she can continue to be herself. Charles refuses, in accordance with his nature, but goes about his life as if re-born. Each act according to Matthew Arnold's line: "True piety [or authenticity] is acting what one knows". The final statement of the book is an existentialist one: that life is to be endured despite its meaninglessness. The positive note is that, despite his suffering, Charles will seek a future with a renewed faith in himself.

Sarah and Charles on yet another level embody modern art and the Victorian novel respectively. Sarah is modernism when it is torn loose from the moorings of myth and moving towards anarchy. Sarah carries a lot of meaning and one wonders if Fowles has over endowed his symbol. Although he has alerted us to his knowledge of Alain Robbe-Grillet's withdrawal from language carrying too much meaning (whether metaphysical, social, psychological etc.) this has not curtailed his "use" of Sarah. Her

three versions of her predicament concerning her relationship with the French Lieutenant reflect not only the uncertainty of modern art in its state of evolution, but the uncertain feature for modern woman seeking an identity outside that determined by a patriarchal world-order. Similarly Charles, as he tentatively embraces a relationship with a woman based on equality and outside a known framework that previously set out guidelines for correct role-playing, is conceived as early modern art in tension. Implied is the conflict between the attempt to express and know new ideas of both a sensual and a scientific ilk but the reluctance to give up old forms. Charles, in this, represents not only the content of late Victorian literature but also the early modernist artist. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a novel in which the writer consciously, and not without satirical intent, uses a story to discuss theoretically, modernist trends and philosophies in literary creation. The characters' actions and procrastinations are made in this novel to represent or allegorize Fowles's intellectual preoccupations.

It could be argued that *Faust* might not be conceived as a Tragedy, because Faust is the protagonist of a drama of pure knowledge. With the ideal of knowledge undermined within the plot of the play, Faust's tragic knowledge of the external, material world could result in a purely intellectual tragedy. Cavell, however, makes a very important distinction which separates *Faust* from other kinds of theoretical literature which in the latter case do preclude the possibility of Tragedy "If," Cavell writes, "there is a purely intellectual tragedy, its *protagonist* will still have to be characterized as *living his or her skepticism*, living some inability to acknowledge, I mean accept, the human conditions of knowing" (my italics).

Theoretical literature sacrifices the expression of the *Living Out* of the human thought for a representation of the thought alone. One cannot discount the value of interpretation but, as Jaspers correctly points out, a dramatization of an interpretation blurs the original vision. Tragedy does not come from such dramatization; thinkers with a tragic sense of life are burdened with wisdom rather than knowledge.

Theoretical literature can be seen to find its origin in symbolism. It was the poets, like Mallarmé, who, struggling to express elusive inner states of mind, rejected ordinary language and sought "words" that could apprehend reality, if not define it. But symbols in the end are made of words and words we have come to understand "are a fabrication of humankind's intellect". Whereas symbolism reacted against definitive meaning, some post-modernist writing is openly interested in communicating meaning at all. Symbolism has been replaced by a modern allegorizing at that point where the

Literature "of Silence" and "of Exhaustion", "of process" and "of theory" take root. This is the stage where the symbol is transformed into modern allegory.
CHAPTER 4
BECKETT: THE UNNAMABLE

A Modern Allegory

Beckett is a modern allegorizer, who explores intellectually "the tragedy" of the absence of tragedy.

The Unnamable is a literary expression of the post-modernist preoccupations. It is also an expression of an awareness of the absence of Tragedy. In an ironic manner elements of Tragedy are shown to be reduced to theoretical questions bearing little, if any, relationship to each other. Whether relating to Tragedy proper and touching on matters of form, such as, Catharsis or Aristotle’s unities, or on qualities that the tragic hero is understood to possess, The Unnamable presents their "absence" by parody. If they exist in the novel, they do so either as lurking shadows in the unnamable’s psyche, or as the object of fun and satire.

Beckett brings into poetic form the place modern man and woman have been brought to by two hundred years of philosophical and literary debate. In becoming modern, we accept in Beckett’s work the disconnection with the sacramental, the personal and the natural forces that were once the ritual of living and endemic to worlds that created tragedy. Cartesian rationalism has been held responsible for turning the "self" into a kind of grammatical subject. ¹ In becoming such, the "self", so creatively and imaginatively treated by the symbolists, is seen to become the object of the modern allegorists.

The war that the romantics waged against British Empiricism, against the philosophies of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, was primarily in the name of being able to discover in their creative act their sense of self. Beckett's work shows us to what extent Modernism and Post-modernism have grown out of this debate. For Descartes, the world outside could be known only by a cautious intellectual judgement of sensory qualities. The "self", in being seen as a "thinking" thing was robbed of an ontological nature. Locke’s mechanistic model of the mind as tabula rasa denied any

creative autonomy to the mind, and made knowledge contingent solely on the breadth of one's experience. There were, Locke believed, no \textit{a priori} universals and all ideas came from sensory experience. Existence it seemed could be conceived only as an accident of consciousness. Hume went so far as to postulate that identity is merely an idea we have about ourselves.\(^2\) The contact between the "world" and the "self" in these philosophical debates was becoming increasingly severed. This dualism, as Ihab Hassan points out, "admitted solipsism" by the back door.\(^3\) How could mind and matter ever touch in this dualism? Kenner discusses Beckett's use of his characters riding bicycles as "Cartesian Centaurs",\(^4\) symbolic parodies of Descartes's dualism. These cyclists are seemingly disconnected from any controlling intelligence or sensibility and appear to be more machines than bodies. Yet Beckett is serious in his pursuit of an identity, and attempts to discover it as more than an idea even though the task is rendered as an impossible one. The trilogy is about the unidentifiable seeking identity.\(^5\) Ruby Cohn also characterizes the "quest" in the trilogy as an individual finding a "distinctive identity" though she also argues that the quest has a parallel, one of a writer finding his fiction.\(^6\) Vivian Mercier characterizes Beckett's interest in identity as including the finding, the denying and the annihilation of his self: "From the seedy solipsist Murphy, who constantly struggles to enjoy his self, to Watt, who is altogether without personality, to Molloy-Moran in an id-ego conflict, to Malone, who dislikes his self and tries to invent a new one on the eve of his ceasing to be to the Unnamable, whose self is unwilling even to be born, and who may represent life at the centre of the closed world of the schizophrenic".\(^7\) Although Kenner\(^8\) argues that Beckett's fiction in its pursuit of identity asks the question: "Have we made this queer culture ... or has it made us?" it is clear that the empirical, social world has little bearing on "the identity" that Beckett dramatizes and/or questions. The extent to which Beckett's \textit{The Unnamable} dramatizes the search for self, or dramatizes theoretical questions connected with philosophical and literary concepts of self, is a concern of this thesis.

---

2. See Hume, \textit{A Treatise of Human Nature}, where he writes "Self was nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (1.4.6).

3. Ihab Hassan, \textit{The Dismemberment of Orpheus}, p.46.


Intellectual Literature

Despite Beckett's denial, the content of his work is made up of affiliations with philosophical systems. Ruby Cohn\(^9\) notes his allusion to and parody of Descartes, Géulinez, Malebranche, and the Occasionalist doctrine, Wittgenstein and Heidegger. Certainly this intellectual play with such thinkers does not form the central focus of his work. They are engendered simply because they are thinkers whose ideas reflect the way in which the modern world has evolved since the Enlightenment. John Fletcher\(^10\) adds to this list of thinkers; he believes that to understand Beckett's writings, one should trace developments back as far as the pre-Socratics (Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Democritus, and Empedocles) through the mediaeval Christian philosophers (St Augustine, Guillaume, de Champeaux, and Bruno) to Descartes. He also believes Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, and Leibniz play their part in his artistic rendering of modern existence. Nathan Scott\(^11\) concentrates on the way in which Beckett is fascinated with "empirical surfaces", in the sense of their existence or non-existence. Scott focusses on the way Beckett relates to the French literary tradition from Baudelaire to Robbe-Grillet. Coe,\(^12\) like most critics of Beckett, points to the intellectual traditions of Cartesianism and positivism, as being crucial to understanding Beckett's meaning. He also looks at the way in which Buddhism and Existentialism form part of Beckett's inquiry.

The list of influences goes on and on.\(^13\) It is not my intention to explore these avenues of thought and explain their role in Beckett's art. They are mentioned only in order to emphasize the varied and complex filters of thought a reader of Beckett must become aware of before the meaning of his work is in any way apprehended. In many instances, Beckett's use of such philosophical systems is a means of undermining their value.\(^14\) Like Sterne before him, Beckett seems to be saying that systems are useless, when attempting to understand our nature. The nucleus of meaning eludes rational analysis. Beckett, of course, is not unaware of the paradox of his use of rational analysis to comprehend that which is beyond human comprehension.

Beckett is interested in metaphysical questions, which Hassan calls "man's sordid

---

13. See P.N. Furbank, "Beckett's Purgatory", *Encounter*, XXII (June 1964), pp.69-72, where further influences are noted: Dante, Joyce, Valery, Urquhart, and Maeterlinck.
14. See Jacqueline Hefner, "Watt", *Perspective*, XI (Autumn 1959), pp.166-182, where she shows how Wittgenstein's logical positivism forms a possible parallel to Watt's philosophical satire and the dramatized realization of the uselessness of systems.
awareness, alienation, in the universe”.15 When he seeks metaphors for his inquiry into the human condition, he flings a wide net over poets and philosophers of the past. The gathering up of these metaphors in imaginative patterns is made more complex by Beckett’s rendering them either ironically or in parody. Beckett’s work forces the reader to regard as natural and predictable an absurd, irrational and grotesque universe. Nihilistic in theme, Beckett’s work embraces the writings of philosophers such as Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Ortega Gasset, Sartre and Camus, whose philosophies share the concept of man’s existence being solitary, suffering and anxious.16 The abstract expressionism of Beckett’s art assumes that the human person is engaged in an extra-intellectual, concrete quest for identity. In enacting an existential theoretical argument, Beckett is not always accepting its axioms of deliberated freedom and engagement. Geraldine Cmarada argues persuasively that Malone Dies, for example, is a philosophical satire in which the perverted sense of freedom existentialism gives is mocked.17

There seems to be no limit to the systems of thought that can be found in Beckett’s writings. While not denying that Beckett’s work is an imaginative and impassioned artform, it is clear that it is informed by theoretical questions. These questions are not only concerned with the irrationality and meaninglessness of the human condition; they are also directed at, and this is especially so of The Unnamable, the “rights” and “wrongs” of writing at all.

Literature of Exhaustion

In The Unnamable the main “character” agonizes over whether memories are stories. The consequence of such thinking leads the unnamable to experiment with story-telling which ends in a tangled mess. The writer, nevertheless, still remains certain, that “words” are real, given their refusal to stop forming. This is slightly qualified by the fact that the hero in The Unnamable argues that he is the victim of a plot in which others are trying to make him believe that he is talking. There is a conclusion reached by the hero that nothing should be expressed even though a mental activity persists. He sees this activity as a sterile reasoning force that works only for its own sake in a vacuum. The mind is then set meaningless mental exercises that reinforce this notion. The premise that a reader is left with is that this kind of literature, which becomes obsessed with the quest for identity, and a language to accommodate this quest,

16. See Milton Rickels, ”Existential Themes in Beckett’s Unnamable”, Criticism, IV (Spring 1962), pp.134-147, for further discussion on the existential thought that informs The Unnamable.
is one that can end only with its own exhaustion. Vivian Mercier sums up Beckett's relationship to this particular form of modernism: Beckett "seems to be trying to define the limit of the novel and ... of existence itself". Martin Gerard is less inclined to see the task of questioning the ability of an artist to "speak directly to the truth" as proof of its exhaustibility. Instead, he characterizes Beckett's trilogy as an act of faith in literary creation, which must continue to strive for truth, despite its seeming absence in a world of "fiction" and "lies".

That literature of exhaustion continues to be written cannot be argued with, but the fact that it exists like an interesting syllogism in a vacuum, makes one aware of its separation from life. Beckett himself has spoken about the absence of "system" from his work because he asks "What to do when you find nothing to say." What Beckett does do, whether motivated by despair or hope, is to present a world in which there is a disintegration of meaning. Beckett tries, simultaneously, to come to an end, and determines not to give up. This is the paradox for the modern person and, to this extent, it mirrors an important point of reckoning in history. The questions asked, nevertheless, become, as Beckett consciously dramatizes, more and more intellectualized and more removed from the representation of living. Whereas other writers may criticize stereotyped reality and mass culture, Beckett ignores the possibility of a reality around him and explores, instead, the possibility of man's own existence. The passion for art continues, the need to express ideas persists. Hassan writes of the mind in Beckett's work that has "nothing to contemplate, but its own symmetry"; the narrators in Beckett's work "tabulate" a language, caught in the paradox of its own self-denial. Their stories tend towards silent infinity. Art and the artist long to be free of one another: "Yet it is only in their mutual bondage that both exist to will their reciprocal destruction."

23. Ibid., p.232.
The Literature of Silence

Critics have noted that Beckett's writings proclaim the value of silence. He reaches, Hassan writes, beyond Existentialism, beyond Aliterature, into a silence that sings. Beckett's characters seek peace in entropy, in silence. Beckett writes: "To restore silence is the role of objects," whereas Susan Sontag writes that one "in discovering one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say that." Beckett's aim has about it more of the spirit of remembered life, of remembered possible engagement: "There are many ways in which the thing I am trying in vain to say may be tried in vain to be said."  

To make sense of Beckett's comment, it is necessary to explore his metaphor of silence as it exists in The Unnamable. This novel is the third in the trilogy, which also includes Molloy and Malone Dies. The connection between the three works should be established as the heroes of the three novels are virtually the same hero. They do not exist within a recognizable quotidian existence; time, space, matter, and self-definition are dissolved, as speeches emanate from indistinguishable speakers. They (he) speak of a decay that cannot be named, let alone understood, that eats away at all closed systems.

Molloy is the first "novel" in the trilogy. It is broken into two sections; one dealing with Molloy and the other with Moran. Both characters enact an absurd journey, which is rendered in the first person. The two journeys culminate nowhere in particular and are testimony to human impotence. The consciousness of the human person in pursuit of identity is seen to be reduced to meaningless sounds in a vacuum.

Molloy's journey is one that is directed towards a master, who like Molloy, is ageless, sexless, and seemingly devoid of a logical thought, or a normal identifiable sensibility. Molloy, on crutches, riding a bicycle, without a chain, is eventually captured by a woman called Lousse. This section is an attack on love or a lament at its absence. Lousse makes propositions to him, which remind him of some sexual experience he may have had with someone called either Edith or Ruth, which he recalls with indifference, vulgarity and mild curiosity: "Perhaps after all she put me in her rectum ... A matter of complete indifference to me ... But is it true love" (Mol., p.75). Molloy indulges in meaningless rituals, like the sucking of pebbles, and fiddling with his clothes and crutches. These serve to parody the concept of order and the notion that an organic life...
is possible. Love is abandoned as a knowable human experience by Molloy’s constant confusion of erotic and excremental functions. Finally, he finds himself in his mother’s room.

The second part concentrates on Moran, who is characterized as a cold, cruel bully who believes himself to be kind and generous. He seems to know something about Molloy, but what he knows is never clarified. Moran is cruel to his thirteen-year-old son, Jacques, who accompanies his father on the journey. This son is lost on the journey and Moran indulges in violence (he beats one man to near death with a stick), and the pain that afflicts him. He struggles home hobbling on diseased legs, finding at every turn the obstacles of physical matter. He renounces his existence: “I have been a man long enough” but, nevertheless, is persuaded on reaching his darkened house to write a report.

Hassan writes “that Molloy embodies the parodic impulses of Beckett in a complete form, a form that still scoffs at all possibilities of human order.” Hassan explains how Molloy brings together the two journeys of Molloy and Moran as a mirror image of each other. Moran in following Molloy is in search of what he becomes as he, finally, writes about his search in his report. The novel tells of the disease of solipsism, of the futility of endless reflection, and of the further dilemma of the writer who, diseased himself, attempts to tell stories about people. The sacramental life of the past is unknowable, birth is anal, and love has fecal associations.

The second novel in the trilogy continues with similar messages. Malone Dies. concentrates more on the absurdity of being a creator, that is, a writer. Malone exists only as long as he creates characters who, in turn, he depends on for his continued life. We read what Malone writes. Malone is obsessed with taking inventories of his goods. He condemns the absurdity of his writing task, which is the only reality he has. Malone dies when he ceases to write and, so Beckett implies this is the reason why modernist literature with its anti-form and its anti-life, continues to prevail.

The Unnamable evolves out of these two novels. In this “story”, the hero is the ultimate modern writer of silence who, nevertheless, continues to comment on thoughts that require no utterance as he makes them.

---

29. See Molloy, p.229, for Moran’s parody of the Lord’s Prayer.
The Unnamable and the Literature of Silence:
Search for Form and Anti-Form

One of the essential elements of "Tragedy" is that out of the inherent tensions and paradoxes of its content evolves a form that, finally, expresses a coherent attitude towards the universe and humankind. The Unnamable in contrast, is an anti-novel in one of its most random and submerged forms. The plea to go silent in Beckett's The Unnamable is a plea to forego all possibility of form. The dramatization of silence, of negation is a kind of literary suicide in that it kills off the literary expression of a search for values. This fascination with a new form that concentrates on its own limitations can be compared with a modern artist's concentration in the object, the pigment, the germination and the process of the work.

The plea for silence in The Unnamable calls into question the possibility of form in art. In choosing it, nevertheless, in attempting to bring it about Beckett considers the "form" it must take:

Would it not be better if I were simply to keep on saying babababa, for example, while wanting to ascertain the true function of this venerable organ? Enough questions, enough reasoning, I resume, years later, meaning I suppose that I went silent, that I can go silent. And now this noise again. That is all rather obscure. I say years, though here there are no years. What matter how long? Years is one of Basil's ideas. A short time, a long time, it's all the same. I kept silence that's all that counts, if that counts, I have forgotten if that is supposed to count. And now it is taken from me again. Silence, yes, but what silence! For it is all very fine to keep silence, but one has also to consider the kind of silence one keeps. I listened. One might as well speak and be done with it.31

In considering the kind of silence he should keep, Beckett explores the possibility of its form. Such consideration creates a tantalizing dialogue between the forces that lead to the need for silence and those that prolong both the need and the wish for continued existence. The voice in The Unnamable knows that his only chance to enter, finally, into silence is to say everything that ought to be said (Unn, p.295). Paradoxically this presence, that continually seeks meaning without expectation or belief, knows that the situation asks him to find a courage that will stop his going silent and also a courage to go silent (p.363). Both opposing thoughts are experienced within the process of one sentence; they are experienced emotionally and intellectually.

That silence that is craved is conceived by Beckett as a birth within an end (p.307), which is associated with darkness and night: "There is no night so deep ... that it may not be pierced in the end, with the help of no other light than that of the

31. Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable in The Beckett Trilogy, p.283. All further references to this text will be cited as Unn.
blackened sky, or of the earth itself" (p.275). The narrator speaks of a place that is silent at night but, immediately, strains his eyes to hear the stable’s muffled sounds. When the horse does neigh the "hero" knows "that nothing has changed" (p.317). Counterbalanced against this desire for some eternal silence that will not be granted there is always the constant wish for his voice to stop "... for a second, it would seem long to me, a second of silence" (pp.334-335). Silence will never occur, we are told by a compulsive voice, which cannot stop philosophizing about what prevents it (p.339). The hero is in a continued state of contradiction in which he knows with equal conviction that "... this will never end ..." and "... they’ll come around to it, after me it will be the end ..." (p.345). "I’ll go silent", the narrator insists but then the voice will come back and "I’ll begin again. My voice. The voice, ... always a resurrection" (pp.362-363).

The Impossibility of Not Speaking

The need to speak is constant throughout The Unnamable. One feels that, despite all evidence to the contrary, the narrator believes that there might be still something left to say. Consequently, this point is the subject of speculation, which is not so much directed towards finding what is worth talking about, as speculating towards a "happy speculation" (p.340). Silence will come not when all meaning is banished, but when all speculation about the absence of meaning and its possible rebirth has been spent. The ultimate silence is one that comes after the lesson the narrator believes he must say (p.285); that is the promise on which the novel is based. The Unnamable’s wish to say what can be said is curtailed by his feeling that he is controlled by creators. He requests his freedom from them in order "to set about saying what I was, and where, during all this long lost time" (p.304). Within moments of this expressed wish, the Unnamable asks "And into whose hands I play when I ask myself such questions" (p.304).

It is from within this state of consciousness that Worm is born. The narrator becomes more intensely aware that no one is to be spared from this "mad need to speak ... to know where one is, where one was ..." (p.318). Even in a situation when that blackness is arrived at, when the lamps are taken away "... the black proves nothing either, as to the nature of the silence which it inspissates (as it were). For they will come back, long after the lights are spent, having pleaded for years in vain before the Master and failed to convince him there is nothing to be done, with Worm, for Worm. Then all will start over again, obviously" (p.336). We are told by the narrator that he does not know what he is saying, that he is controlled by others, that he is not himself, that his memories may not be his, and that he should take note of his own thoughts. These meandering ruminations are always directed towards what must be said and which will not come to him.
Controlled by Creators

Beckett annihilates all his ideas as he creates them. This is necessary from his point of view, as he harbours the fear that he may be "alienated, depredated, expropriated, dispossessed, dislodged and or displaced by the 'other' he has created."32 Similarly, the character, or whatever it is that goes under the first-person pronoun in The Unnamable is intent to escape the false identity he feels he has been given by his creator: "Do they consider me so plastered with their rubbish that I can never extricate myself, never make a gesture but their cast must come to life?" (p.298). He refers to their tricks of "leaving him high and dry ... with nothing but the life they have imprinted on me" (p.303) at times when he adheres to their creation. He begs for his creator to become weary, to renounce the task of forming him. If he could become silent then so would Mahood and Worm who, in fact, come from each other. The silence is there, the hero says but this occurs only "when they're not pretending that I am speaking" (p.340). The Unnamable tells us that his creators say that he doesn't really want the silence he yearns for and he concedes "after all perhaps they are right, how could I want it" (p.351).

Rejection of Words

The persistence to go on and to be forced to use their language, the language of numerous emissaries who make him speak, is manifested within a fiction that is committed to failure. It is a drama of creation menaced by abortion; it is a fiction that finds a no-man land for its rejection of the words it creates. Consequently, as Mahood fades away, peace is not found, instead the talking goes on as the narrator is launched within the persona of Worm (p.317). The narrator regrets giving "tongue", but he knows as they tell him that words must continue because he has a "horror of silence" of "gulfs that all bend over" (p.320). The suggestion is, if silence is arrived at, then broken by words, it will never be whole again (p.336). Therefore, perhaps, it is to be sought only as an unreachable goal. And yet all this noise, all this talking, these empty words are construed as a sin "against the silence that enfolds us" (p.345).

Anti-Life

The Unnamable is set, however, metaphorically in Hell itself. The narrator speaks of Hell as dating from the revolt of Lucifer and concludes: "It is therefore permissible, in the light of this distant analogy, to think of myself as being here forever" (p.271). The circling of the house of his family, listening to their views on him, but unable to reach

them until they were dead is another pervading image in the novel. Primarily, it serves as humour, but it is black humour. His final arrival at the house is confirmed by his stamping under foot "the unrecognizable remains of my family, here a face, there a stomach, as the case might be ...". His quest is rewarded, only with his awareness that he is left with himself, a being without sense of his separateness. The return home cannot even be seen as evidence of some tenderness he may feel for his family. He returned home, because it was natural to do so, and he was aware that his family might have moved from that place. He discusses the fact of their screams of pain and the wafts of decomposition (incurred after eating poisonous sausages) with indifference: "... assuming I was capable of noticing them, they would have seemed to me quite in the natural order of things as I had come to know it" (p.295).

The narrator accepts life to be a time of "squirming forever at the end of the line" (p.311). It is accepted that, despite the quests, it is essential never to arrive anywhere; there is, the "hero" maintains, nothing to do but "stretch out comfortably on the rack, in the blissful knowledge you are nobody for Eternity." Worm will discover that there is nothing worth knowing (p.318) and that we are all diseased by a need to speak about what we are. In those rare moments of calm in *The Unnamable*, the narrator becomes suspicious, but is vindicated in his belief that peace is impossible when he understands this calm as being the point where life is "trying to get in" (p.335). The final irony is the narrator's recognition that the silence will never come that he will never "get born" (pp.352, 353).

**Rebirth in Fear and Hope**

The narrator who sees a rebirth in an end that would come with the embrace of silence also notes that even if he did appear again there would be "the old problems again ... how to live" (p.307). Beckett has his narrator viewing his life as a time of "becoming", he is to evolve towards his own personal self: "I am on my way, words bellying out my sails, am also the unthinkable ancestor of whom nothing can be said - convinced at last I shall never get born, having failed to be conceived" (p.324). The hero experiences momentary periods of optimism when, for example, he hopes that in becoming Worm again he might get somewhere. It is in probing Worm's beginnings, his type, his destination that the narrator might find himself (p.323). Worm, as it turns out, really is unable to amount to much, to know even the pleasure of movement, being as he is "less than a beast" (p.328). The hope for Worm to make a transit from "darkness to light" is followed by a description of him as being held in suspension neither dead nor alive "unable to stir, even though he suffers because of it" (p.329). Finally, there is nothing to be done with Worm or for Worm (p.336).
The birth and rebirth theme in *The Unnamable* is primarily concerned with trying to be, or become, alive when there is no reason to be alive. Aligned with this is the speculation by the narrator on what language should be used to express this paradoxical condition. It is a language that must seek silence, but only when all has been said; it is one that will explain how a "birth" occurs, when all has come to an end; ... "Only the shadows matter with no life of their own, no shape and no respite, perhaps its dawn, evening or night - for me the beginning, my end begins" (p.353).

**Without Hope, Without Tragedy**

In Tragedy the stories are immediately its form, content and essence; their simple essence re-affirms the possibility of an innate, universal "tragic pleasure" motif outside of philosophic complexities. This understanding or definition of Tragedy can be applied to Classical and Elizabethan drama but, as von Szeliski points out, modern drama [and modern fiction] is "too mean and depressing to be called Tragedy." His main argument is that Tragedy must embody a living humanism that in its nature is akin to optimism.

Von Szeliski believes that we affirm our lives by escaping, partially, their mortal conformity and by stretching their normal limits against submission. In Tragedy one witnesses an extension of life, made so by dream and hope, to see human possibilities fighting the forces of actuality. Von Szeliski's argument contains a plea for art, in representing a life to make use of the imagination. The hope that formed part of the early romantic literature turned to a romantic agony which, in modern literature, grew into a despair that estranged us from creating a Tragic literature.

Von Szeliski argues that we are always in this mystery of the present, which finds its actuality in an imaginative order often projected in myth or idealistic models. What he is arguing for is the symbolic that must always exist in representing the actual. It is that moment that art captures that contains all history, all time, and all that is human. The Tragic writer attempts to show, through imagination, dream, myth and fable, the side of man to which man's natural eyes are blinded. It is this fusing of a natural perception with an ideal moral one that allows the tragic vision to tolerate a "lie". The lie is the myths entailed in the invented story, and the expectations given to the tragic character. John Anderson speaks also of the need for illusion in Tragedy: Tragic drama must involve a peculiar human clash, "... it involves, therefore, some element of illusion, some clash of 'ideals' with reality, and the working out of the complication is the

34. See ibid., p.6.
35. See also Grant, p.58, who agrees with this point.
showing up of the Ideals ... Where he [the character] clings to his ideals, where he would rather lose life than lose his illusions, we have tragedy.\textsuperscript{36}

The search for an \textit{aesthetic order}, determined by a need for a life sustaining hope and an irrational faith, is the subject for parody in Beckett's \textit{The Unnamable}. Obviously, Tragedy cannot be based on nihilism, on a consciousness of nothing. And, yet, tragic themes lurk as shadowy presences in \textit{The Unnamable}. The "words" Beckett uses he sees as the falsifiers which damn him.

Beckett, in his essay on Bram van Velde,\textsuperscript{37} advanced a theory that fiction, committed as it is to failure, hovers between creation and its imminent abortion. In consequence, there is a need of the narrators to employ "jokes", "fairy-tales" and "lies", which might allow these spectres to find their way to the light. Beckett, however, negates his "lie" or fairy-tale, after it is told for fear that he may be alienated by the character he creates. Beckett does not want to transform reality, which is an element of Tragedy. He wants somehow to deal with reality as it is. His characters tell their stories in order to get rid of these beings that separate them from ultimate silence: "There's no getting rid of them without naming them and their contraptions ... I might as well tell another of Mahood's stories ... To heighten my disgust. I'll recite it. This will leave me free to consider how I may best proceed with my own affair ... It will be the last story. I'll try and look as if I was telling it willingly, to keep them quiet ..." (p.299).

The narrator returns to his various "identities" contained in "Mahood" and "Worm" by way of stories associated with them which he creates. He, however, remarks that "there's nothing to be got, there was never anything to be got from those stories" (p.349). Any return to playing at understanding life is characterized in \textit{The Unnamable} as a "return to the world of fable" (p.375). Beckett's fables, whether written or rejected, are more about philosophical complexities of \textit{raison d'être} and the means to express it than about the content of Tragedy.

\textbf{The Parody of Tragic Themes}

There is a general agreement among Beckett's critics and interpreters that his writing does not attempt to approximate Tragedy. In fact, it could be said that the world he sees is devoid of even potential tragic themes.

\textit{Endgame} has been interpreted as a "purposively aborted tragedy", with tragic


monsters replacing tragic heroes taking part in a despairing study of despair.\textsuperscript{38} Mitchell Morse notes that Beckett’s heroes are unfit for mortality and that this is tied up with their preference for the contemplative life to the active life.\textsuperscript{39}

It is generally agreed that Tragedy deals with living characters with plausible motivations and/or rational dilemmas. The extraordinary emotional poverty of Beckett’s world,\textsuperscript{40} in which the author seems to relish the torment his characters undergo, is not conducive to stories essentially concerned with human dignity, self-sacrifice and enlightenment through suffering. Hassan, when discussing Beckett’s humour, argues that it is “essentially metaphysical; it assumes the absurdity of the universe and eludes conventional tragedy or comedy by confronting the automatism of numbness with the cruelty of nightmare.”\textsuperscript{41}

*The Unnamable* reveals the artist making comments on art while making it; the hero is destined towards heroic absurdity. Beckett himself felt that at the end of this work there was “nothing but dust ... there’s complete disintegration”. No “I”, no “have”, no “being”.\textsuperscript{42} Beckett’s work has a peculiar blend of pessimism and optimism, a combination often attributed to tragedy. Beckett’s perspective, however, is divided between optimism and pessimism in a particular way that separates him from tragedians. If there is optimism, it is in his pleasure at communicating his feelings which stem from a philosophy of pure nihilism. Beckett sees the world, when he does see it, as a “mess ... a buzzing confusion”.\textsuperscript{43} The fact that he can express this, that is to find a form to accommodate the mess is not the kind of ‘optimism’ that Tragedy embodies. Beckett, nevertheless, with his obsession that the universe must “evacuate itself”, shows that language, in turning against itself, will touch in parody those thoughts that summon universal man and woman. In that Beckett’s work is a parodic reflection on Western history it includes the tragic themes of literature.

\textsuperscript{38} See Vivian Mercier, “How to Read Endgame”, *The Griffin*, VIII (June 1959), 10-14, for these views placed in a context in which the play is seen as being about the end of the world.

\textsuperscript{39} See Mitchell J. Morse, “The Contemplative Life According to Samuel Beckett”, *Hudson Review*, XV (Winter 1962-63), 512-514, where he also argues that the Unnamable is “Satan” as well as a “lonely God” invents others with whom to play.

\textsuperscript{40} See John Coleman, “Under the Jar”, *The Spectator* (April 8, 1960), 516, where he characterizes Beckett’s world as peopled by heroes, who are “senile, impotent, maimed, given to prurience, blasphemy, and amnesia: as devalued as the ’little porable things in wood and stone’ that they hoard.”

\textsuperscript{41} Hassan, “Beckett: Imagination Ending” in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, p.220.


\textsuperscript{43} Tom Driver, “Beckett by the Madeleine”, *Columbia University Forum*, IV (Summer 1961), 21-26, who argues that Beckett’s capacity to express a “perhaps” is not a “no”, and that finding form for modern confusion is testimony not to a despair, but to a love for human beings. Beckett’s humour, he argues, is irreconcilable with the despair and nihilism he is known for.
The Tragic Person: Neither Free Nor Fated

The existential concept of freedom, that is, that the human person, confronted by a metaphysical void, must become his or her freedom, is put in reverse in *The Unnamable*. Beckett’s nameless character is mostly acted upon and cannot make his own fate. The Unnamable is burdened with a “whole college of tyrants, differing in their views as to what should be done with me” (p.284).

The narrator, nevertheless, has moments when he sees himself as free, and ones when he recognizes he is the victim of fate, or others’ predeterminations: "The problem of liberty, too, 'says the hero' as sure as fate, will come up for my consideration at the pre-established moment" (p.310).

The tragic hero, according to Sewall, is neither free nor fated. Tragedy, Sewall argues, is "a mixture of guilt and necessity", which means that the tragic hero does not feel himself to be entirely free or entirely determined.\(^ {44} \) If he did feel one state more than the other his predicament would cease to be tragic. But he does not. Instead, he is a paradox and mystery, what Sewall terms the "riddle of the world". Beckett includes in the "plot" of *The Unnamable* this paradoxical situation known to all tragic heroes and heroines. The essential differences, of course, is that, whereas \( \ast \) tragic heroes of the Greek writers and the Elizabethan writers acted against what seemed to them wrong, oppressive or personally thwarting in society, Beckett’s Unnamable’s battle is to be given the freedom to be silent. Consequently, this tragic theme is, ironically, rendered in Beckett’s novel: "... before I can be free" says the narrator, "free to dribble, free to speak no more, listen no more ..." (p.284).\(^ {45} \)

The Unnamable is imprisoned not by some cosmic fate, set out by the gods, nor written by an unknown hand into the enigmatic workings of the universe but, instead, by his own creations: "Then my voice, the voice, would say, That’s an idea, now I’ll tell one of Mahood’s stories, I need a rest. Yes, that’s how it would happen. And it would say, Then refreshed, set about the truth again, with redoubled vigour. To make me think I was a free agent. But it would not be my voice, not even in part" (p.284).

When \( \ast \) Unnamable does assert his freedom, it is usually followed by a denial or seen within the situation to be a ludicrous freedom. The narrator discusses his "master", his creator, and apologizes for maligning him, after all, he may not, he

\(^{44}\) Richard Sewall, "The Tragic Form", in Michel and Sewall (eds.), *Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*, p.123.

\(^{45}\) See also Beckett, *The Unnamable*, pp.287, 288, "Why don’t they wash their hands of me and set me free ... Perhaps then I could go silent, for good and all" and further, p.307.
surmises be "free like one" (p.287). This is followed by a discussion of the people that control him. During The Unnamable’s ridiculous journey home, circling his house, he becomes aware that before his arrival there, he is fated, to be further reduced. The Unnamable, nevertheless, when seen to fall to the ground by his waiting family, is adamant that such falls were the result of free will (p.294).

The ultimate paradox for The Unnamable is that given his greatest desire is to be free, to be silent, he knows that his freedoms lay in being able to "say any old thing as long as I didn’t go silent" (p.364).

The Tragic Character: The Ambiguity of His or Her Nature

The tragic hero and heroine is usually torn apart by conflicting emotions. Hamlet curses fate that he was chosen to set things right. The ambiguity of his nature is one that is generally recognized as characteristic of Tragic characters. The conflict experienced is more than not related to values. Beckett’s characters see themselves as defective creatures and, as Hoffman points out, this makes them deeply suspicious of their creator.46 Human effort is seen by Beckett to be futile. Hassan shows how Beckett’s pessimism sends him to Calvin, Augustine, and Paul, to the Gospels and the Eucharist, in search of images of man’s ambiguous fate.47 The resultant search leaves him with the conviction that man is both damned and saved and that man’s sin was his birth.

The Unnamable, obsessed as he is with the act of creativity, both in that he is the object of a creator and that he too can invent, thinks about the process of creativity, not in terms of values, but in terms of "things". There is no inherent meaning in life, in people’s choices; there is no recognizable ontology: "... so one invents obscurities - These lights for instance, which I do not require to mean anything, what is there so strange about them, so wrong? Is it their irregularity, their instability, their shining strong one minute and weak the next, but never beyond the power of one or two candles?" (p.269). The ambiguity of nature, characteristic of Tragic characters in conflict over values, is here transferred to things.

The discourse goes on, we are told continually, purely because it requires a search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech. The Unnamable, rather than experiencing conflict over questions of value or truth, prefers to be delivered from such a position (p.275). He would prefer to encounter himself. In this encounter the Unnamable pinpoints the crux of all conflict, of all recognized ambiguity to be found in his being both creator and the created thing:

Perhaps it is time I paid a little attention to myself, for a change. I shall be reduced to it sooner or later. At first sight it seems impossible. Me, utter me, in the same foul breath as my creatures? Say of me that I see this, feel that, fear, hope, know and do not know? Yes, I will say it, and of me alone. Impassive, still and mute, Malone resolves, a stranger forever to my infirmities, one who is not as I can never nor be. I am motionless in vain, he is the god. And the other? I have assigned him eyes that implore me, offerings for me, need of succour. He does not look at me, does not know of me, wants for nothing. I alone am man and all the rest divine (p.275).

**Humankind: Glorifying in Its Humanity**

Beckett’s *Unnamable* despairs at not being able to annihilate himself. Tom Bishop argues that, as Beckett’s characters become less recognizably human within a progressively grotesque and parodic milieu, their insistent attachment to expressing their reality becomes an ever-greater act of heroism, of self-affirmation. It would be difficult to accept that this self-affirmation is a humanist one. In contrast, Allan Brick suggests that Beckett writes from the standpoint that perhaps man himself does not exist. In *The Unnamable* the character knows when attempting to discover the margin of self that it is “not I, it’s not I, where am I, what am I doing, all this time, as if that mattered.” The unnamable has no story; he is the anti-hero alien to himself and unable to have a relationship with any other person.

If there is a humanism in *The Unnamable*, it is one that is seen within the argument of the work, rather than in the representation of the human being "... Dear incomprehension, its thanks to you I’ll be by myself in the end” (p.298) says the narrator; and in a more-amused moment he exclaims "... its human - a lobster couldn’t do it” (p.342).

Where exactly does one place Beckett in relation to humanism? Robbe-Grillet was aware that the novel or play, involved in the creation of a literature of non-meaning, may be ”re recuperated” into a system of meaning by virtue of its ”tragic development”. Beckett does not keep his works free from the contamination of meaning; they do not remain intact and pure in their existential presence. The contamination, in the sense that Robbe-Grillet means it, is incurred though, not by the representation of the

---


50. See Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Nature Humanism and Tragedy", in *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, pp.75-95; see, also, Bruce Morrissette, "Robbe-Grillet as a Critique of Samuel Beckett"., in *Samuel Beckett Now*, ed. Melvin J. Friedman, where he argues that Robbe-Grillet in his article on Beckett was expressing a disappointment in Beckett who recuperated meaning in Endgame through a sort of tragic assimilation.
character in a world informed by humanism, but by the dramatization of an argument about the impossibility of it. As Wylie Sypher argues: "To be conscious of the meaningless is to have a metaphysical position that is privileged; and we do not seem to be able to abandon that position."51 This consciousness of a lost world informs Beckett's works; it keeps the self alive at a minimal level, and it is at this level that there exist the memories of a humanism, whose loss is felt as some kind of deprivation: "my old lesson ... Under the skies, on the roads, in the towns, in the woods, in the hills, in the plains, by the shores, on the seas, behind my mannikins, I was not always sad .... I speak, speak because I must ..." (p.280).

On one level of the novel, there is the strong suggestion that being humanized is injurious: "he weeps in order not to see ... The rascal, he's getting humanized, he's going to lose if he doesn't watch out, if he doesn't take care ..." (p.331). One learns that the voice that speaks of a world outside, presumably alive with human activity, is a voice "that accuses" (p.379). The Unnamable's most outrageous assault on "humanism" occurs in the scene after he finally arrives at his home. After poking through family remains, discussing the possible ownership of various rotting organisms, he asserts that all this is leading him into meaningful allegiance. In consequence, he exclaims: "There will be no more from me about bodies and trajectories, sky and earth, I don't know what it all is" (p.297).

When discussing the probability of being man, the Unnamable, is aware that his essence is dependant on his creators. He believes that they have "crammed him full of nonsense to prevent him from saying who he is, where he is, and from doing what he has to do" (pp.297-298). Yet, he suspects that, if he is not what they want him to be, he will be mere matter (p.319). The Unnamable, though, even with his creator's tuition, is unable to learn how to experience human emotions and passions: "I can't rejoice and I can't grieve, its in vain they explained to me how its done, I never understood" (p.324).

Despite the difficulty entailed for the Unnamable, when attempting to relate to some form of humanism, he does insist that he is some kind of man, even if, "just barely a man". He is "human to be sure" and certainly he is "sufficiently a man to have hope one day of being one" (p.289). Man may no longer be the centre of the universe but the unnamable, in parody of that concept, prefers to think of himself as "fixed and at the centre of this place ..." (p.271). This preference is uttered immediately after having described himself as in perpetual motion, like the Earth, with Malone as his moon. In many places the unnamable begs of his thought, or his reasoning, to assure him of his

His senses, or lack of them, serve primarily to mock his presence, whether they relate to his memory of sexuality conjured up when feeling like a horse (p.305), or when he longs to be "distinguished by some sense organs other than Madeleine's" (p.314).

In his constant referrals to his creators, the Unnamable is aware that they have attempted to teach him humanitarian attitudes: "But what they were most determined for me to swallow was my fellow-creatures. In this, they were without mercy. I remember little or nothing of these lectures. I cannot have understood a great deal. But I seem to have retained certain descriptions, in spite of myself. They gave me courses on love, an intelligence, most precious, most precious" (p.273).

The Unnamable's attitude towards the proprietress of the chop-house, whose duty it is to empty the receptacle in which he eventually lives, expresses, perhaps, the extent to which he learns about affection. He knows she looks after him mostly, because he contributes to her vegetable garden, but her small acts of kindness, such as they are, do not go unnoticed. In fact, he is reduced to tears when she covers him to protect him from the snow. He wonders if he should feel grateful, even though he realizes she did not act out of goodness (p.301). The unnamable begins to believe that if he died, given his being an asset, to this woman, she would be quite annoyed. This comforts him as he supposes that she may even place a melon where his head once was and this might mean that he would be remembered (p.302). As this "relationship" grows, the unnamable decides that "she loves him" and that there is "in her a void" that he "alone can fill" (p.316).

The Unnamable has a sense that to aspire to be human would be a good thing, but the "cud of longing" that may rise up in "the back of the gullet" (p.369) is always short-lived and directionless. Finally, this pre-human or post-human accepts that his humanity exists only in so much as he must go on seeking. What is sought is unclear, but it is clear that Beckett's hero is far removed from the tragic hero's glorification in his humanity.

---

52. See, for example, Beckett, *The Unnamable*, pp.276 and 288 "... I am here still at last a peace of reasoning that pleases me and worthy of my situation" and "... allow me to think of myself as somewhere on a road moving between a beginning and an end".
The Will to Suffer and Knowledge from Suffering

There is no doubt that the Unnamable suffers but it is not a kind of suffering that leads to enlightenment. 53 Beckett, in this respect, shares the concept, common in the philosophies of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Sartre and Camus, who see human beings' existence as solitary, suffering and anxious. The suffering incurred is generally seen as meaningless, inevitable and absurd. This is seen in the scene, where the Unnamable nears his home and hears the screams of pain of his family dying of poisonous sausages. His reaction to this is chilling as it registers no protest at this evident suffering, seeing it after all as in "the natural order of things such as [he] had come to know it" (p.295).

When making a dispassionate empirical description of how he knows, at one stage, that his eyes are open one learns that this is self-evident "because of the tears that pour from them unceasingly" (p.279). Suffering is a state that goes on relentlessly, neither related to some action or meaning; the Unnamable notes "... I never made anyone suffer, I never stopped anyone's sufferings, no one will stop mine ..." (p.350). If the Unnamable is in these instances brought face to face with tragic knowledge, he responds with a philosophic apathy, which Jaspers points out "fails to carry liberation far enough. Apathy is mere endurance". 54

Tragedy entails necessary suffering. According to Cox, 55 this suffering results when the protagonist must decide between two alternatives. One of these alternatives leads directly to suffering, while the other, which would normally be open to him or her, is eliminated because it would require the protagonist to deny his or her identity. In contrast to this, the unnamable has suffering imposed on him; there are not alternatives set out for him. The suffering is caused by his creators: "All these Murphys, Molloys, and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing ... They never suffered my pains, their pains are nothing, compared to mine, a mere title of mine ..." (p.278).

Yet, there are several instances in The Unnamable when the main character sees suffering as a necessary and positive experience. This is at one time attributed to the creators, who need to believe he suffers (p.333). The Unnamable, also, thinks at one

53. See Maxwell Anderson, "The Essence of Tragedy", in Off Broadway (New York, 1947), in which he argues along Aristotelian lines that tragedy must show discovery, which improves the hero as a human being, for the benefit of audience enlightenment. I would add that the enlightenment must occur in the character as well, who undergoes some form of suffering in order for it to come about.


point that, as long as he suffers, there is hope (p.337) though he is unable to be sure that they will know that he is suffering. This qualification tends to negate the value of his hope. There is a strong suggestion that the plight of anyone who wants to know what "living" is like, is fated to experience meaningless suffering. The Unnamable proclaims this idea in relation to one of the characters he creates, who may or may not be himself (pp.366-367). The Unnamable, who is unable, or refuses, to be consistent about anything also maintains that: "They say I suffer ... but I'm sorry, I feel nothing" (p.325).

In Tragedy, suffering is usually seen to bring about knowledge and some kind of enlightenment. In the novel this idea is parodied:

And it is a blessing for him he cannot stir, even though he suffers because of it, for it would be to sign his life warrant, to stir from where he is, in search of a little calm and something of the silence of old.

The suffering is one that involves being unable to live "unable to bring to live, and die in vain, having done nothing, been nothing" (p.329). The Unnamable cannot "stir". Later, towards the end of the novel, he supposes his lack of movement is due to "not suffering enough to be able to stir, ... to be able to understand, to have eyes to light the way" (p.379). Yet, one remembers that earlier he warns against the potential value of meaningful, articulated suffering: "... between them would be the place to be, where you suffer, rejoice, at being bereft of speech, bereft of thought, and feel nothing, hear nothing, know nothing, say nothing, are nothing ..." (p.344).

The context of the unnamable's suffering is the immediate present; it has no larger context beyond his experience of pain. There is an attempt to make it intelligible, usually followed by a negation of such attempts; it is suffering that is both noticed and ignored. Finally, there is no thesis about what role it plays as it is being rendered as both meaningful and meaningless; it becomes in the end nothing at all.56

The Gulf Between Desire and Attainment

The Unnamable concludes in an hysteria of can't, and must, and will. This ambiguous resolve, the comic-pathetic insistence of being, mirrors in ironic form that inevitable gulf experienced by the tragic protagonist between what one aspires for and what in fact one is able to achieve.

The gulf that the Unnamable experiences is one that separates him from being what he is from being a complete person: "It's true I dread these gulfs they all bend

56. See these points contrasted by Calarco, Tragic Being, p.9, where he proclaims: "Tragedy involves a paradoxical union of opposed illusions, whose purpose is to place man beyond naked, unmediated, suffering, and beyond the despair which he feels when suffering can neither be ignored nor made intelligible in some context larger than the individual experience of pain."
over, straining their ears for the murmur of man. It isn't silence, its pitfalls, into which nothing would please me better than to fall, with the little cry that might be taken for human, like a wounded wistiti, the first and the last, and vanish for good and all, having squeaked" (p.320).

The whole of the trilogy, and The Unnamable separately, involves some kind of hunt. The prey is identity, the seeker despairs of success but, nevertheless, explores every possible avenue in his quest for the conviction of life. The Unnamable says: "It's this hunt that is tiring, this unending being at bay" (p.318). He is referring to his creators who he believes are erroneously attempting to make him something other than what he wants to be but, nevertheless, this cry against definition that has been rendered meaningless by the past, is characteristic of all Beckett's heroes who seek life, however despairingly.

The gulf between desire and achievement is parodied with a great deal of humour, when the main character circles his house for years in a desperate bid to reach for his family: "So the seasons came and went. The children increased in stature, the periods of Ptomaine grew pale, the ancients glowered at each other, muttering, to themselves, I'll bury you yet, or, you'll bury me yet" (p.291). Like a tragic hero, the Unnamable displays resentful and dogged endurance. Unlike the tragic hero, the Unnamable finds that nothing is achieved, resolved or understood. After all, the Unnamable is the entity who has no voice but must speak. He is prey to himself, to "a genuine preoccupation, of a need to know as one might say" (p.270).

The Tragic Protagonist and Action

The Unnamable is a lyrical contemplative and discursive work. It does not seek to present man in action. The absence of action is noticeable in that the hero is fixed in what might be called a condition. When the hero speaks of "going on", of the compulsion to endure, what is being referred to has nothing to do with thought that would produce action.

The Unnamable wishes at one point that he "had something to do" (p.265), but only because this might take away the anguish of being compelled to speak. Action, on a common sense level, of course, is simply impossible as the unnamable has no body. Consequently, he is unable to flee from himself or his preoccupations: "I have nothing to do, that is to say nothing in particular. I have to speak, whatever that means" (p.288). Although at one point, he thinks that he should have fled, this thought is followed by "... by where, how -" (p.335). The questions asked in The Unnamable are very important ones: who am I, how do I relate to other objects, and do these objects exist outside me, or are they the products of my mind, if I have a mind, if I am I? These questions, which are not answered, form the "action" of the novel.
A Shared Religious Vision and the Sense of Order

The beautiful experiences of life like "love, music, the smell of flowering currants" are seen by the narrator as pretty conventions (p.280). They are the inevitable results of the imagination, which in need of a moment of calm creates God, "fomenter of calm", to black out the more insistent reality. Such creations, being, as they are, invented things, cannot be shared. Even if by some remarkable coincidence two people "created" such things, simultaneously, one must question whether in fact that was a trick of the mind.

Beckett's representation of life and thought has as one of its basic promises the somewhat sad acceptance that there is no ultimate order to this unknowable cosmos. The order that was inevitably restored in ancient Tragedy and expressed in a defined literary form is but a dim memory in Beckett's artistic creations. Yet like Nietzsche before him, Beckett implies an admiration of the elements of reconciliation in early tragedy that give order to elements of chaotic conflict. The suffering of Beckett's characters, when they concede to experiencing it, appears to be more the pain of the mind than of the soul and the body. In that it is not suffering that can be remedied by social change, which characterizes much of nineteenth century fiction, and given that it is not suffering that can purge itself in some kind of Catharsis, Beckett is left floundering, looking for resolution, though knowing only its absence:

Having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak. No one compels me to, there, is no one its an accident, a fact. Nothing can ever exempt me from it, there is nothing, nothing to discover, nothing to recover, nothing that can lessen what remains to say .... For any old thing, no, that doesn't work, that should work, but it doesn't. Labyrinthine torment that can't be grasped, or limited, or felt, or suffered, no, not even suffered ...

(p.888).

Beckett advanced the theory himself in his essay on Brum van Velde that there was something beyond his control that makes him speak, that comes from "elsewhere" and that frightens him.57

Beckett's insistence on the lack of order, and the non-existence of some absolute creator, and his commitment to artistic failure depend for their content on some kind of concept of order. When the unnamable cries: "Here all things, no, I shall not say it, being unable to. I owe my existence to no-one, these faint fires are not those that illumine or burn ..." (p.269) he does so with some kind of recognition of the absence of something.

The Unnamable arrives at a place which he defines as having "an unexceptional order which has prevailed here up to date" (p.270). Although he is not here concerned directly with cosmic order, one is aware that any pocket of order that the Unnamable might discover, engenders for him, however fleetingly, a flicker of hope that there might be some ultimate sense or order. At one point of enjoying such a state he decides that he is safe, that order prevails, that life might (as Newton proclaimed it) be predictable after all. The lights that exhibit some kind of disorder, he decides, must be the illusion. He decides quite definitely not to notice any changes (p.271). In this frame of mind the unnamable begins to worry about the relationship between the existence of the place he is in, and his consciousness of it. What comes first "the place" which let me know when it was ready for me, or "did it wait for me to come and people it" (p.271). He discovers he can only answer the question in terms of what answer is more useful for him. The material becomes more and more elusive.

The Unnamable is a victim to a creator he refers to as the master, who is perhaps made "in the Unnarnable's image", who is "so used to giving orders and to being obeyed", and who always has been ever since the unnamable came into the world "possibly at his the master's instigation" (p.286). This section is amusing and seems to cover the whole gamut of questions that philosophy has ever asked of "God" relating to both his existence, his reason for being, and the meaning, usefulness or absoluteness of the ethical standards he supposed to embody and endorse. This is, of course, all beside the point as the Unnamable long before his play with the idea of God has decided that it is all lies: "God and man, nature and the light of day, the heart's outpourings and the means of understanding, all invented, basely, by me alone, with the help of no one. Since there is no one to put off the hour when I must speak of me" (p.278).

The End of Modern Allegory

What is this "me" that Beckett creates. What final situation is the reader left with at the end of this novel? When the Unnamable asks Worm "Will I ever get born?" (p.323) what exactly is Beckett implying by must "get born"?

I believe that midpoint in the The Unnamable, Beckett begins to discuss, however playfully, the birth of something new in literature. The Unnamable calls himself an "unthinkable ancestor of whom nothing can be said"; he knows that he cannot be born if, in the first instance, he is not conceived (p.324). The kind of things the Unnamable knows he must, if not come to terms with, at least accept without relinquishing the hope of expression and of being born, are: "the facts" that we are what we are because we are given names for them ("... if I speak of a head, referring to me, its because I hear it being spoken of ..."). That the things of the present are dependent upon people expecting
them to change ("... They hope things will change one day, it's natural" p.324); the
difference between truly suffering or feeling suffering when told to expect it ("They say I
suffer ... I feel nothing ... I felt ... the sawdust under my stumps ... when they were
mentioned to me"); the problem of knowing life when what one sees, feels and hears can
change when the mind is engaged in a different subject ("But can that be called a life
which vanishes when the subject is changed?"); and the difficulty of being a thinking
person, a spiritual person and a feeling person at the same time ("They want me to have
a mind where it is known once and for all I have a pain in the neck ... and that the
heavens can do nothing to help ...").

These problems of the mind and spirit and their relationship with the body and
the world have been the subject of philosophy, science and poetry for all time. The age
of the Enlightenment gives them a comprehensible framework that reached its strongest
point in the nineteenth century, known as The Age of Certainty. Beckett has
dramatized most of its effects: the splintering of self and world, idea and feeling, theory
and imagination, goodness and utility, and man as a machine in his humorous allegories.
Something is emerging from this modern allegory though, that signals its own death. If
the Unnamable dies it is the end of form; when he is condemned to silence though, there
remains "stricken babble of the condemned to science" (p.326). This is the state
between allegory and "new realism". Even the Unnamable is dramatized as suspecting
that any calm is suspicion because it is "the calm that precedes life, no, no, not all this
time, its like slime, paradise, it would be paradise, but for this noise, its life trying to get
in, no, trying to get him out, or little bubbles bursting all around ...").

In the first page of the novel the Unnamable is driven towards a final threshold.
He says: "all this time I've journeyed without knowing it, its I now at the door, what
doors, what's a door doing here, its the last words, the true last, or it's the murmurs, the
murmurs are coming ...").

The Unnamable knows he must go on using words until those words find him. It
is clear that this last page deals with a possible re-birth, that the Unnamable believes
that the powers that surround him (God? the human spirit? history? self-survival?)
have carried him to the threshold of his story. The last three words of the novel are
"... I'll go on" (p.382). Beckett has played out the modern allegory. There is little left
to be said. The question that remains is whether or not there is something endemic to
the last part of this century that will cause writers of all kinds to be drawn away from
modern allegory towards the representation of life, instead of debates about states of
being.
CHAPTER 5
THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN

The works of Beckett epitomized the crises of inwardness; they more than any other writings explore the full terrain, the shock, the sickness and the creative possibilities of modern existence. The shock, however, is by the mid-twentieth century almost absorbed. The endeavour then must be the pursuit of new forms. Christina Stead’s *The Man Who Loved Children* moves beyond the stalemate arrived at in Beckett’s literature. It is impossible, nevertheless, and perhaps even unwise, to exorcise the Socratic element out of the artistic arena. Stead’s art, although moving headlong towards the recovery of a tragic protagonist, works within a theoretical framework of thought so characteristic of Beckett’s art. Yet a weaning process from his kind of dramatized abstraction to an art form that might capture humankind "doing things," instead of caught in intellectual solipsism, is seen at work in Stead’s *The Man Who Loved Children*. The novel shows in its form and subject matter the tension between its theoretical concerns (dramatized symbolically in the main characters) and its wish to create a character who, in search of authenticity, may become a modern tragic persona.

As already argued, Tragedy was not likely to be written while literature acted out the drama between the artist and her character, or, put another way, while the character was, as a means of primarily representing intellectual preoccupations of his/her maker. Somehow the writer and the world he or she wished to create had to discover a new relationship, one that had more to do with representing characters in action and in thought in an environment that could be described for their own sake and not only to illustrate an idea.

The form that Tragedy takes reflects the peculiarities of its time. The old vision of Tragedy became obsolete because of vast historical changes. Whether one characterizes these as the destruction of a known order, either cosmic or religious, or that instituted in the family and other social structures, or as the age of positivism, secularization and "the death of God", or aesthetically as the split between Romanticism and Classicism, or the loss of union between the Dionysian artistic source and the Apollonian artistic form, the fact remains that such an intense historical upheaval occurred. It was one that must eventually express itself in the forms that art uses to communicate its vision.
The content of changed history is, nevertheless, seemingly easier to grasp and accept than the dissolution of forms that upheld a past era. It seems that the critical tradition is unable to reject a form that once upheld political, religious and social certainties, even when these "certainties" are understood as obsolete. Writers in the twentieth century when discussing the possibility or impossibility of writing tragedy continue to use as their models of prevailing excellence in tragedy those belonging to ages long since ended, the implication being that these models continue to be applicable. One must concur with Raymond Williams's argument against this tendency to take a body of work from the past and to use it as a way of rejecting the present.1 If art lost its capacity to give tragedy written expression, it was not because human beings had lost their capacity to experience it and be enlightened.

This is not to suggest that the absence of Tragedy was and is merely a problem of art, it is also a problem associated with the nature of modern life. Artistic tragic form went underground whilst men and women were driven by the forces of change into themselves. *The Man Who Loved Children* explores this problem of art and of life at both its symbolic and literal levels. Part of this relates to the way Louisa's growth towards maturity involves the rejection and some acceptance of the alternative life styles and philosophies represented in Sam and Henny Pollit. Stead, unlike Beckett, is not striving to produce a theoretical work that argues against theory. The work, nevertheless, in exploring and acknowledging the facts of change that inhibit the creation of new forms, seems to have a theoretical framework. This is, perhaps, an inevitable element in the process of discovering a new "realism" that might artistically communicate tragic experience.

Literature before it can appropriate a new tragic form must first come to terms with what is inappropriate with the old forms. Stead's novel, at its exploratory and theoretical level, does dramatize that human nature is not static, that "men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence".2 Raymond Williams pinpointed the illogicalities in theories of tragedy that assume that tragedy in being a single and permanent kind of fact must be so because human nature is universally and essentially unchanging. His rejection of this leads him to believe in a variety of tragic experience throughout time, which can be interpreted by reference to changing conventions and institutions, and not to a static view of human nature.3 Although in agreement with Williams that tragic experience persists throughout each era and that *The Man Who Loved Children* does dramatize tragic experience, it does not follow that this novel is therefore a tragedy.

The novel is somewhat preoccupied with the problems of art and of life. Stead, however, is not merely dealing with abstraction. In order for Louisa to emerge at the end of the work as a potential creator of new values, as a potential tragic protagonist and as representing an authentic human being she must, if only unconsciously, act out certain insights about the fact of historical change. This is achieved within the theoretical or symbolic structure of the novel by Louisa being posited against two diametrically opposed orders. Sam and Henny represent each order, and subsumed in each there exists two streams of thought, one pertaining to aesthetics and the other to socio-political structures. Nietzsche asks in *The Birth of Tragedy* whether there is an eternal conflict between the theoretical and the tragic world view. The Man Who Loved Children dramatizes this question.

The kind of realism that exists in Stead’s novels comes, simultaneously, before and after Beckett’s writings which were essentially an outgrowth of naturalism. Stead’s works are unlike Beckett’s in that they are not entirely stripped of Darwinism, of some adherence to absolute values, of the narrow boundaries of human action and the folly of hope. Neither do they show men and women as the mere victims of circumstances locked within the horizons of destiny defined by heredity and environment. Sam, Louisa and Henny exist on a naturalistic level. Their actions and thoughts, nevertheless, have metaphorical significance. Inevitably, Stead’s understanding of historical change, and her conscious enactment of it through her characters, indicates an epistemological self-consciousness.

In watching Louisa’s growth towards authenticity, one also observes a character evolving out of an environment at the cross-roads of intense historical upheaval. Her growth into adulthood, and birth as an artist, depend on her response to a complex network of opposing socio-political and aesthetic ideologies. Essentially Louisa’s actions (and those of Henny and Sam) are occurring within quotidian existence. There is no metaphysical basis to the action; there is no Christian version of eternity to give a shifting relation between historical and ahistorical elements. When one first looks for the possibility of identifying "tragedy" or "tragic heroes", one becomes aware of the absence of an order. Instead, there is displayed both the disintegration of order, attempts at establishing a new one and the development of an artist/person with specifically new kinds of creativity, values and ahistorical perspectives. Tragedy of the past provided a valorization of a tragic hero’s existence and suffering. The Man Who Loved Children joins a quest in modern writing to do something quite different: there is

---

no movement beyond despair when her suffering can neither be ignored nor made intelligible in some context larger than her individual experience of pain.

Her tragic vision does not surrender to inappropriate form. Instead, a form is sought that will express the facts of disorder, fragmentation, and that search for authenticity within a world of apparent chaos. As long as writers are driven by the nature of their world to seek answers to questions about old forms giving way to new possibilities, the content of their work will remain at least in part theoretical and, therefore, in conflict with the creation of tragedy as apart from the experience of it.

In The Man Who Loved Children there is no tragic hero/heroine. There is, however, a tragic visionary who has usurped the traditional role of the hero. Louisa, as tragic visionary, has the role of protagonist on the literal level. On the symbolic level, however, it is the evolution of the psychology of the artist that is of interest. Whereas in Beckett the loss of a sacrosanct, cosmic order is replaced by a dramatization of the characters' view and preoccupation with this loss, in Stead the artist's preoccupations are with creating new possibilities unrelated to past disintegrations. The disintegrations, nevertheless, that Louisa grows out of are explored in depth in this novel. This does not involve a recognition of social crisis as tragedy that is a form of tragedy that is a response to social disorder as understood by Raymond Williams. Louisa is apolitical and, although spiralled out of circumstances that embody opposed eco/social forces, her fight for freedom and dignity is Nietzschean rather than Marxist.

Louisa, in finally rejecting Sam and Uenny, rejects science and tradition. In rejecting these she rejects two alternatives open to modern writers when seeking appropriate forms for new content. She is not to base her philosophy of life on either traditional values or forms, or on Sam's kind of scientific knowledge which, in turn, leads to social positivism or, when seen as not providing a meaning to fill the void left by "the death of God", to cynicism and nihilism. Instead, she places her entire faith in personal power, in overcoming self and with learning how to live in order to create.

Louisa in rejecting the life represented in Henny is on a very basic level refusing to

---

5. See Murray Krieger, "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision," in Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism, p.145, who argues that this surrender to tragic form, as understood to exist in a Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, is now impossible; instead "the balance of necessities between the tragic and the ethical must continue as the primary mode of dramatic conflict".

be exploited by men like all the women in her life. Henny, despite the energy of her Dionysian view of the world, her engagement with mystery, poetry and imagination, is finally a figure of despair. When Henny resolves that game of patience she has been playing all her life she symbolically expresses the end of all hope. Simultaneously, Louisa evolves to the point of defiance with her father that heralds her as Henny's replacement against Sam's tyranny. As Henny fades away, Louisa, armed with her own unique indomitable spirit, rises up in opposition. Louisa grows out of Henny's experience of despair as much as out of reaction to Sam's positivism. She carries with her the experience of Henny's pain as well as Henny's artistic capacities. But it is the energy and not the content of Henny's maddened speech and vision that Louisa inherits. Henny's traditional world decays and there is nothing to fill the void but her vision of despair.

The alternative world embodied in Sam is rejected even more vehemently by Louisa. This despiritualized, practical world of order, bustle and activity based on scientific axioms and subjective political laws is abhorrent to Louisa. Her world of imagination is by nature at odds with Sam's personal vision in which all things are reduced to empirical observation and scientific measurement. Neither Sam nor Henny has a balanced perception of reality; the content of their visions is, on the aesthetic level, a parody of Dionysian and Apollonian artistic sources that can never find union. Henny's potential Dionysian vision is distinctly without form and, consequently, its intrinsic "Dionysian" love and "Dionysian" wisdom are difficult to identify. Sam's Apollonian one is distorted and perverted by a Socratic madness.

Each of the three protagonists in this novel represents either a particular order or the disintegration of an order. Alongside this theoretical structure the question of whether or not each of the protagonists is a tragic hero/heroine, although intrinsically connected to this central structure, forms another interpretative level within the work. Fiedler's definition of tragedy considered to be the most applicable definition to a wide variety of artistic work is useful in showing in which ways Sam, Henrietta and Louisa fail as tragic figures within the traditional understanding of what constitutes a tragic hero. It also demonstrates how the actions and qualities of the characters relate to the theoretical question focussed on the need for "order" in tragedy.

7. See Graham Burns, "The Moral Design of The Man Who Loved Children", The Critical Review (Melbourne), 14 (1971), 46, who points out examples of this: "Apart from the dreadful force of Henny's imprisonment by Sam and her abandonment by Bert Anderson, we are offered Old Ellen discarded by her husband in favour of a younger mistress, Hassie, turning a blind eye to the unfaithfulness of her husband, Bonnie left pregnant and suffering, and the more minor but consistent instance of 'Uncle Barry's' refusal to marry the suicidal girl he has made pregnant".

Leslie Fiedler believed that tragedy is consummated when the dream of innocence is confronted by the fact of guilt, and acquiesces therein. The dream is understood to entail a vision of good against evil, a yearning for better future things, accompanied by a vision that is inspired by an enigma and which inspires articulateness, resilience and pride. It is through the vehicle of words that Sam and Louisa seek to imprint their uniqueness on the world. Louisa’s choice of epigrams that she proclaims to her father daily reflects characteristically the qualities of Fiedler’s dream: “The world stands aside to let the man past who knows whither he is going. - David Starr Jordan”, pronounces Louisa and continues with, “Perhaps there is no more important component of character than steadfast resolution. The boy who is going to make a great man or is going to count in any way in after life ... must make up his mind not merely to overcome a thousand obstacles, but to win in spite of a thousand repulses or deaths - Theodore Roosevelt. The Strenuous Life” (MLC, p.78). Louisa does not have a sense of moral good at this stage of her development but, instead, a determination to know freedom which will enable her to love.

Sam’s pride, articulateness, drive and vision of good are seen to be hypocritical, irrational, egocentric and naive. He speaks of his “only dream” which is “to make a little nucleus of splendid men and women to work for the future” (p.159). His ambition is “to be of those who spread the light ...” (p.163) and he tells Evie that one must “always be in love with human beings ...” (p.64). It is Sam’s desire to fight for goodness via science (p.371) and to have trust in man, nature and the evolution of a perfect society. Despite these grandiose proclamations, Sam is seen to contribute more towards the unhappiness and despair of those around him.

According to Fiedler the dream is one of innocence: “Innocence is inclusive of the urge to be free, to escape the inhibitions of mortality and mutability and evil, of finiteness and contingency and competition and waste and shame, to be one’s own self, to fulfil one’s potential, to be man par excellence, to be like God”. Louisa as a young adolescent is aware of an inner power that she feels will, like a splendid sunrise, “flash in her in a few years” (p.93) and, like the ugly duckling, she would one day be free “on the lily rimmed oceans of the world” (p.94). Louisa has a contempt for those around her, an innocent contempt, that was recognized by them. Even, within the family circle, she is desperate for moments for herself, for her solitude, her freedom (p.67). To some extent this is discovered at Harpers Ferry during the summer when for “three months of the

10. See Christina Stead, The Man Who Loved Children, p.478, where Louisa proclaims “I love. Love. I only know about love.” All further references to this text will be cited as MLC.
year she lived in trust, confidence and love" (p.189). As Sam and Louisa become more and more locked in battle Louisa becomes more desperate in her desire for freedom and in her need to be herself: "You must let me leave you", Louisa cries to her father, "you must give me freedom", she insists as he attempts to imprison her further within his world (p.479).

Henny is aware early on in her marriage that she had married a child "whose only talent was an air of engaging helplessness ..." (p.336). His essential innocence is demonstrated by his refusal to fight the slander that surrounds him in his department and by his naive belief that truth will find its own victory without any active help from him. Sam wishes to be free from the Collyer idea of financial success; he wishes to escape the traditional world to which Henny belongs. Henny wishes that "he would not always try to show himself superior to everyone” (p.77) but Sam, in a moment of self-satisfaction, by implication is able to compare himself with Christ.12 Finally, Sam sees himself as a "forerunner of a truly great man" (p.526), a kind of "radio-saviour" who will begin by touching the hearts of the radio people whom he naively believes to be people primarily interested in truth.

Such as they are, Sam and Louisa do have dreams of innocence. There is, however, a movement away from "confrontation by the fact of guilt" and there is no evidence of acquiescence. Confrontation for Louisa is not expressed in action but, instead, it involves a recognition of the limitations imposed on her by living with her family. Although Louisa has moments when she sees herself as unworthy and foolish (pp.439-440), these momentary senses of failure are less notable than her fierce determination to be, to capture her freedom. Louisa is not overwhelmed by guilt. Instead she attempts to create new values and not acquiesce to an order upheld by old ones.

Sam, in his egotism and self-righteousness, does not experience guilt of any kind. Sam is more the organizer than a man of action,12 as Louisa’s story of "Sam the bold" demonstrates (p.227). Confronting the world for Sam involves, at best, mere words striking out at the object in conflict with him or, at worst, a faith in truth pitted against whatever seems to him to be wrong, oppressive or personally thwarting. The commitment Sam and Louisa make to their lives does not grow to be more than personal. Unlike traditional tragic man neither of them becomes universal man.14

12. See ibid., p.475. "It seemed to Sam that nature was licking at his feet like a slave, like a woman, that he had read of somewhere that washed the feet of the man she loved and dried them with her hair."
13. Ibid., p.511; note Sam’s five-year plan for his creditors.
The presence of evil and the fact of guilt are usually connected with or made sense of within a moral universe. Kafka has shown us that to deprive humankind of guilt is to deprive it of the chance for vision, but this is understood within a world dependent on a known order, even though humankind in Kafka’s world is alienated from such an order. Camus, in *L’Étranger*, argues that man is innocent, that evil is thrust upon him, and that his response to it can only be the dignity of indifference. Meursault, however, is condemned by a society which will not allow him to be free of guilt. Stead does not explore the tragic possibilities of man’s guilt and his paradoxical relationship with evil. There can be no final reconciliation, perception, salvation and quietness in the face of the mystery brought to epiphany. With the death of Henny there comes the death of the last remnants of the old world that was comprehensively constructed on a known moral, social and economic system.

Henny’s dreams and aspirations are lost somewhere in a buried past. Her final acquiescence is with suicide which cannot be construed as tragic action. One can understand the point in time that Stead posits her characters by looking at Hebbel’s idea of tragedy and seeing in what ways Louisa, Henny and Sam are driven outside its framework. For Hebbel, tragedy is the conflict between the individual in his most general human capacity, and the “Idea” which through social and religious institutions, both shapes and limits him. The individual’s ideal claim grows within and yet comes into final conflict with the embodied “Idea”, towards which his attitude is necessarily critical.\(^\text{15}\)

The social and religious institutions that have shaped Henny have disintegrated; there is nothing there either to shape or limit her. Not only has the ethical been separated from the social and the political, which means that Henny’s “ordinary suffering” cannot be seen as tragic,\(^\text{16}\) but her social and political world no longer exist. She has no separate essence with which to create a new order. Sam, on the other hand, has rejected Henny’s world and any of its lingering values completely. If his ideal is in any way shaped by Hebbel’s ‘Idea’, it is by being born into absolute opposition with and reaction away from it. Louisa, in turn, is the result of evolving from within and, finally, out of these two worlds that Henny and Sam embody. The final epiphany of *MLC* is the figure of a young “artist” crossing the bridge into an unknown world where she might discover new values. In order to understand the kind of consciousness Louisa has at the finale of the novel, it is necessary to understand the content of Sam’s and Henny’s worlds.

\(^{15}\) Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, p.36.

\(^{16}\) See *ibid.*, p.48, where Williams, although not in agreement, shows how tragic theory throughout time has not given ordinary suffering a place in the realm of tragedy either in relation to the action or the ideology attached to the action of the “ordinary” person.
Sam’s New Socio-Political Order: His Public and his Private Life

Hannah Arendt describes how in times of antiquity man could act either on behalf of the State (his action thus having universality) or he could act on behalf of the family (acting as a particular being), and there could be a synthesis or fusion of such actions.17 Within the ancient family man was not in any sense a master, a citizen or a warrior. He was a particular father and, although this particularity was recognized in and by the family, it was not considered a humanizing attribute or related to human action. One’s “Being”, one’s biological existence, although the object of love by the family, was unacknowledged in the public sphere. The tragic character in ancient times experienced the conflict between the demands of public life and the demands of private life. He was unable to renounce the family, i.e., the particularity of his Being, nor the State, since he could not renounce the universality of action. Hannah Arendt demonstrates how in modern times family concerns becomes public and the border-line between the private and the political becomes blurred. She shows how the emergence and victory of society does not entail the emergence of the “realm of freedom”; instead, Society devours the private household, the political and private, as well as intimacy. The life process itself is channelled into the public realm.18

Within Sam Pollit’s world we see all kinds of reaction to this modern world. Sam attempts to build a new order based on the "scientific" view of things. His ideal society is to some extent the expression of "the rise of the social" with its levelling demands and the conformism it inevitably entails. Sam’s wish to reach "a community of minds" through radio (p.106), his insistence with his male children that all men must fight (p.116), and that the world should do without those that deviated from the norm (p.163), reflects this levelling process which in its most insidious form attacks the private and intimate world of individuals. Although Louisa, at one time, laughed at the idea that her father knew her thoughts (p.366) she is continually invaded in her privacy by Sam who wants to make her conform, to make her comprehensible within his view of what behaviour should comprise: "He poked and pried into her life, always with a scientific, moral purpose, stealing into her room when she was absent ..." (p.340).19

Sam sees himself as a public figure cast in the mould of those public figures of antiquity; he too would like to distinguish himself by action. Sam, however, belongs to an age in which behaviour is seen to replace action. Hannah Arendt explains how when

19. See Stead, p.58, where Sam looks at Louisa through the window without her knowledge; p.339, when he insists Louisa must share her thoughts with him; p.341, when he creeps up on her while she burns private papers; p.351, when he secretly watches her play; and, pp.367-370, when he reads her diary.
society conquered the public realm, distinction and differences became private matters for the individual, instead of the reason for action in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{20} The resultant equality that emerged was based on a conformism in society and was possible because behaviour replaced action as the foremost mode of human relationship. Sam's scientific ideals are not harmless; they speak of a society which by becoming submerged in the routine of every-day living comes to be at peace with statistical uniformity, with a scientific outlook inherent in its very existence.

The public self Sam would like to be is one who takes advantage of his power (p.54). His public position, prior to his dismissal, however, is one without power. It is purely administrative, which is a state of being that Sam accepts of given his preferences for "a bureaucratic state socialism" (p.327).

Sam exists in a time when nobody rules except axioms of correct behaviour. State and Government have given way to pure administration, where society's victory over the public realm has led to rule by that invisible hand of conformism. Sam, nevertheless, as Henrietta well knows, "fancied himself a public character and a moralist of a very saintly type" (p.50). It is significant that the loss of his position is not because of a power struggle, or due to conflict of interests over moral issues, but simply because he irritated someone senior to him: "... Colonel Willets decided to get rid of the irritating young man. He had no very good reason for it ...", (p.320). Sam, in his deluded state, prefers to believe otherwise and even believes that "they got rid of" him because they feared the truth: "... they feared me, for wickedness fears Truth" (p.387).

Sam is simply irritating; there is no incisive action that brings about a tragic downfall. Despite Sam's need for public recognition in the classical sense, he is forced to be a man of his times. His situation is not without contradiction. Sam proclaims that "There is a faith men live by; I have it in me. I cannot sully it by entering the forum of public debate, much as I believe that all things in the republic should be aired in the public eye" (p.324). The facts of Sam's existence, the state of the society that determines his behaviour, pushes him into the private arena where his social, scientific and intellectual views are made to intrude into the family. Historically, modern man's capacity for action and speech has lost much of its former quality, since the rise of the social realm banished these into the sphere of the intimate and the private.\textsuperscript{21} The fact remains, however, that the public realm must remain the only place for the realization of excellence. Appearance - something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves - constitutes reality. Sam's final demise on radio is an ironical comment on the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, p.41.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.49.
\end{itemize}
state of the public realm in modern life. Sam actually believes the advertisers of radio programmes were "wonderfully humane people because ... they wished to entertain and educate the people" (p.516).

Louisa, as the evolving artist-figure, has an importance in relation to this need of a public realm. To some extent it relates to the problem of finding appropriate form for modern content. It is true that compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life (the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses) lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, de-privatized, and de-individualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance. At the end of MLC, Louisa is ready to discover that form for such artistic transpositions of her individual experience. Compared with Sam's radio renderings of his fascist "good" laws, her possibilities assume the promise of new realities, of an art form that will present the essence of the human being in action and in thought.

Sam's Ideology: Science and Morality

Sam’s new order is one that exists beyond the disintegration of Henrietta’s traditional world. He is representative of a time characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by what Max Weber calls "the disenchantment of the world". What Sam is unable to comprehend is that his "scientific view of things" is not only a cause of this disenchantment but, also, responsible for "the retreat of the ultimate and most sublime values from public life into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations". Within Sam’s private world these values are further eroded, despite opposition from his family. What Louisa's struggle towards authenticity shows us is that the spheres of reason, order and justice are terribly limited and that no progress in our science or technical resources will enlarge their relevance. The increasing intellectualization and rationalization do not indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives. As Weber points out, "The savage knows more about his tools” than modern man. Science has not shown us "the way to true being”, "the way to true art”, "the way to true nature”, "the way to true happiness”. Tolstoy, Weber argues, has given the simplest answer with the words: "Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important to us: 'What shall we do and how shall we live?'" Louisa demonstrates

22. Ibid., p.50.
24. Ibid., p.143.
how Science does not give an answer to this question. Louisa, who was "intended for the holy life of Science" (p.341), was more like a "burning star", a creature of passion, who learns more about sex from ancient mythology, poetry and tales of Belgian atrocities than from the *The Origin of Species* (p.388).

Stead via Sam raises the questions of worth of both science and morality. Sam is proclaiming continually his dedication through science to the love of mankind and to universal good. "... I have sacrificed my whole life, and would again, had I a thousand lives. I love, all my life has been love, love to me is the whole world - love of nature, man and mankind's good ... there is no need of revolution, but only of guidance, and through evolution and good laws by wise men administered, we will reach the good world" (p.371). The concept of science is used loosely by Sam. He often uses it to mean what is rationalized or organized. His preference for a government run by "a bureaucracy intricately engineered" (p.327) is an example of this. This "scientific" approach he naively believes will cure all economic and political inequalities, thus making revolution unnecessary. His theoretical perspectives ride far above his living reality: "Sam never talked about money or property ... thinking it a vile thing" (p.137). He sees the desire to possess money as the root of all evil. Simultaneously, within his own home, his wife is dying in her attempt to cope with money problems. His hatred of that desire to possess, when juxtaposed with his desire to possess Louisa's soul, must be treated with disbelief. Poverty is actually beautiful for Sam (p.338), even though for his wife "it was something worse than death, degradation and suicide" (p.338). His concept of the good of others inevitably excludes consideration of their daily suffering. "Poverty isn't a disgrace" he states when approaching Clare's house as if this somehow justifies or negates Clare's pain, humiliation and misery.

Lucien Goldmann says of tragic man that he finds the world as it normally is both non-existent and inauthentic, and that he lives solely for God; finding nothing in common between Him and the world.\(^{25}\) If we substitute Goodness for God one finds that Sam is a kind of parody of tragic man. As Sam says, "I do not believe in gods, only in good, gods demand sacrifices: good gives to all" (p.240). Sam's concept of good, at best, is based on ideals held by a naive and irrational man and, at worst, conceived in egotism, pride and hypocrisy. In the first instance, Sam's naivety is demonstrated at such times as when he says to Evie that if you love people, all people, you will be happy and good (p.64), in his belief that all human evil and misery could be obliterated by a world "permeated by simple jokes, and ginger-ale, horse-play, tuneful evenings, open-air

theatres and innumerable daisy chains of naturalists threading the earth ...” (p.247), and
in his belief that "plain truth will win through” in all situations (p.323). Like tragic
man, Sam "is aware neither of degrees nor of a transitional plane between nothing and
everything, because for him anything which is not perfect does not exist".26 ’’... I
believe earth is heaven” (p.324) Sam says to Saul one evening when retelling a
conversation he had with Naden. Appropriately, Saul comments "when you talk, you
know you create a world ... I can hardly believe in the workaday world” (p.324).

Sam’s goodness, nevertheless, embodies such intolerable conceit. Sam’s trip to
Malaysia is important within the meaning of the text as it dramatizes Sam’s "morality”,
i.e., his sense of goodness in such a way as to emphasize it as hollow and corrupt.27
Despite Naden’s satirical treatment of him, Sam believes that Naden and his people see
him as something like a god (p.235). Sam’s discussion with Naden about the plight of
the black people in a white man’s world shows Sam to be the worst kind of racist
(pp.240 and 241). He patronizes Naden with his convictions that Naden would prefer to
be light coloured and that ancient peoples with complex cultures could not possibly have
been black but, instead, “pale (coppery at best)” (p.241). Despite Sam’s good
intentions, his comment “You are but an ebonized Aryan, Naden, and I am the bleached
one that is fashionable at present” (p.242) is insufferable. In fact, it is evident that Sam
sees these black people as inferior to and different from his own kind. Sam’s
overwhelming pride gushes forth when he charms them with his flashing smile: "What a
gift he had been given, he thought, to love and understand so many races of man”
(p.236).

Sam is continually overpowered with his own sense of superiority and power,28 as
he seduces Henrietta into yet another child, he tells her of his strength that should be
used for “our good” (p.175). Hannah Arendt writes about goodness as something that
by its nature should be hidden or kept private. "Goodness can exist only when it is not
perceived, not even by its author, whoever sees himself performing a good work is no
longer good. Goodness must go into absolute hiding and flee all appearance if it is not
to be destroyed.29 To be conscious of one’s own goodness is no longer to be good. The
only witness to good acts can be God and not the person doing them. Henrietta

26. Ibid., p.281.
27. Burns, "The Moral Design of The Man Who Loved Children”, 40, argues that the novel
could have done without the trip to Malaysia as it serves no importance to the central argument.
To the contrary, one is able to see Sam, not only in a completely new environment outside his
family but, also, from the perspective of detached characters who come into contact with him.
28. See Stead, p.270, for the children’s attitude which shows how deluded Sam is; while in
Malaysia his children “had never given one thought to their father’s schemes and ideas”.
29. Arendt, pp.74-75.
characterizes Sam as a hypocrite; Sam sees a "moral high-minded world" (p.47), and his constant avowals of his own goodness, of his capacity for good acts, and of his belief that goodness can be achieved via science and public administration characterizes him within Arendt's scheme as corrupt.\textsuperscript{30}

Graham Burns, correctly I think, pinpoints the so-called "moral" polarities of Sam's world as aesthetic ones.\textsuperscript{31} It is not surprising that in Malaya, given the opportunity, he gives in to the essential sensuality of his nature and collects beautiful artifacts of the orient. Sam's dreams of scientifically achieved universal peace and the brotherhood of man, although seemingly idealistic and constructive, are in fact the opposite of that. Not only do they lack human content, but they are merely the proclamations of a childish man's tastes. This contradictory character, that more than not is not what he says, is symbolically used by Stead to explore many aspects of the modern world: the way in which the distinctive qualities of the public and private realms of human activity have become blurred, the substitution of behaviour for action, and the rationalization and secularization of the world, which has led to questions concerning the origins and worth of beliefs and concerning actions based on Science and on morality. It is a world in transition, in the process of change when one order is being replaced by the forming of another.

In ancient tragedy the presence of mythology played an integral part. The myth was a source and articulated a fundamental mood or style of life. The presence of "mythology" in \textit{MLC} is not involved in the action as heroic legend or in the Nietzschean sense of a supra-rational source of spiritual wisdom. Instead, as Sam gives Frazer's \textit{Golden Bough} to Louisa, he tells her that they will show her "the anthropological side of the question" (p.385). These are not myths used as metaphors which is their usual role in modern "tragedy" but, instead, even further removed as things to be analysed by reason. The old tragic polarities of Apollo and Dionysus are no longer celebrated as ecstatic religious ritual, instead they become objects of rational analysis. But Louisa is a person of passion and she does not view these myths with cold calculation; Louisa responds to "the unspeakable madness of sensuality in past ages and concealed imaginations" (p.386). The content of mythology, i.e., what it has to say about human nature, is that to which Louisa is attuned. Unlike Sam and Henrietta, Louisa does not exist surrounded by the ghosts of a past era. It is this fact that makes her a potential tragic figure.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p.77.\textsuperscript{31} Burns, p.47.
Henrietta: The Disintegration of Social Structure

Henrietta represents on one level a disintegrated social order and, on the other, she embodies the elements of a Dionysian descent with her confrontation with pain. In the first instance, Henny is seen as a person losing the form and structure for her existence. The abyss of despair this loss leads her to portrays her as a Dionysian figure inebriated with the horrors of her nature. There is no consoling form of either an Apollonian or a Socratic type. The writers she reads are unrealistic with their heroes, and she wonders why they do not write about dead beats like her (p.445).

Henny is alien in this transitional world with her "boarding school graces" (p.69). She comes, as Sam proclaims to their children, "from the stupid old world" (p.339). Even Henny's supposed infidelity in the second year of their marriage is explained by Sam as being the direct result of her "vicious upbringing, that of a rich wastrel ..." (p.150). From Henny's perspective we see a woman trampled on by a conceited man unaware of the suffering of a woman's domestic life: "He boasts and screams about ... what he gives up for the kids! He writes poems to himself on the subject: and what about me? I'm the heiress: I'm the rich woman who can stop up all the holes and darn all the tatters in her underwear and borrow old coats from her sister and beg old-fashioned jackets from her cousins, and I don't sacrifice at all" (p.123).

Against the odds, Henny struggles to maintain an identity founded on a social position she no longer enjoys. Consequently, she is seen on one hand with stoic determination, darning holes in lace covers inherited from Monocacy, her old Baltimore home (p.43) and, on the other, driven to sell her silver to settle her debts. It becomes impossible both ideologically and physically for Henny to untangle the financial mess in which she eventually finds herself. She, like her brother Barry, an inebriate, personifies the collapse of a whole system. Just as Monocacy's gardens are let run wild, returning to a state of uncontrolled nature, so Barry and Henny, without a moneyed structure to sustain and give meaning to certain social functions, are seen in their most animalistic states. Henny, once the fine lady with correct social graces, becomes quite uninhibited in her language about her life, and Barry "devoted himself to drink ... his only occupation" (p.190). It is not that Henny has forgotten to behave; instead, for her, the absence of wealth makes social niceties impossible. When Miss Aiden comes to visit, Henny is determined to act in accordance with their real situation "... to let Miss Aiden see how the little girl really lived ..." (p.404). Reality for Henny now was living in an "ugly old castle comedown" (p.331) in poverty. This not only meant the loss of all social standing, but it meant being ashamed of "having too many children" and of being "ordinary" (p.336).

Henny is, from the beginning, lost to another life. Those games of solitaire that
take her back to the comfortable and socially exciting days prior to her marriage are never without their bitterness (p.49). Henny is unable to make "herself a little life" apart from the domesticity that enslaves her and robs her of herself. By the end of the book everything that could in some way suggest identity in Henny is gone. This loss of identity erodes with each sale of a Monocacy object, whether silver, jewellery or clothes. These things are the only public statements of reality Henny knows: without them she has no means of distilling her passionate nature; without them she is like an animal possessed.

**Henny: A Dionysian Descent**

The protestant ethic, that gave a moral basis to the moneyed world of the Collyers, thrived on a denial of the Dionysian side of man. The denial of Dionysus was often implied inversely by a prevalence of crude puritanism or an almost religious adherence to a correct form of social behaviour. When the social forms are taken away from Henrietta, a previously banished Dionysian spirit is seen to emerge not only as amoral but bestial. Henny embodies a combination of opposites that can be seen as a kind of Bacchic madness. Henny oscillates from being the wild hunter of *The Bacchae* tearing at other species and, after, relaxing when the animal impulse is fulfilled, and becoming again quiet, orderly and even loving.

Henny is consequently seen at one moment dreaming, gracefully languid, when suddenly her eyes would shoot out a "look of hate, horror, passion, or contempt" (p.44). In a moment of self-hatred and disgust with the world she attempts to strangle Louisa (p.57). Henny in one of her rages directed at both Louisa and Ernie reaches her worst point of bestiality in both language and in action. Louisa is the victim of her tongue: she came at her screaming "that she'd kill that stinking monster, the white-faced elephant with her green rotting teeth and green rotting clothes, and she'd tear out her dirty filthy hair by the roots ... the great big overgrown wretch with her great lollipping breasts looked as if she'd rolled in a pigsty or a slaughterhouse, and that she couldn't stand the streams of blood that poured from her fat belly ..." (p.442). As Louisa goes upstairs "blubbering", Henny "went on to the worst possible outrages possible to her vivid imagination". Henny then rushes at her son Ernie and begins to beat him across the head, screaming at him, "Die, die, why don't you all die and leave me to die or to hang ... I beat my son to death: it's no worse than what I have to endure" (p.443).

In both these instances Henny's insanity emerges at the sight of Ernie and Louisa's appearances. Their tattered, dirty poor clothes are the final proof that she has lost her social position and the structure of her life that goes with it. The Bacchic madness, nevertheless, is tempered by a gentler, loving Henrietta. Although she maintains she
would have been better off without the children (p.53), she displays, at times, different kinds of love for them, whether it be her passion for Ernie (p.53), her inarticulate love for an infant (p.459), and in her "pleasure" in seeing that Miss Aiden cared for Louisa (p.404). Henrietta, Louisa observes, expresses "kindness in sickness" (p.69) and, although Henny believes that there is no point in teaching children (they were inevitably what they were [p.46]), she is active in attempting to protect them from Sam's education. Consequently, she refuses to allow the children to spend the night watching the fish cook (p.470) and takes their watch, despite the fact that the smell of fish nauseates her (p.471). Henny desperately tries to find money to clothe her children (p.119); in borrowing she becomes a victim to the "loan-sharks". Henny is loved by her children. Leaving them to go shopping creates an atmosphere of excitement, exchanged affections; the children are ever eager to endow her with kisses and other endearments (p.215). Henny performs endlessly the duties of a caring mother, despite the hatred of domestic labour. Sam drives her to the point that she seeks time away from him at Hassies but, even then, her mind is with her children whom she checks on every two hours by phone.

On the third day away from them, she returns home: "It was Saturday. She saw the little ones on the lawn jumping up and down and, for all she had to face, her heart beat faster. How odd that this tumbledown windy mansion in which she had to live with a despised man was home!" (p.456). I disagree that our sympathies are held distant from Henny. An essential part of Henrietta's spirit is always absent as if it detached itself from her as the appropriate form for her life is shattered. This absence of self creates a perplexed character who is "there" and "not there" in ordinary everyday existence. Anger ignites the bestial Dionysian nature but, in calmer moments, Henrietta is detached from her present life, only occasionally tuning in on it. This can be seen in the scene between Ernie and herself when in response to Ernie's offer of his shawl to comfort her she responds "'No, Son'. She looked at him straight, as if at a stranger, and then drew him to her, kissing him on the mouth" (p.53).

**Henrietta: Confrontation with Despair**

Ultimately, Henrietta lacks that Nietzschean moral strength to look horror in the face and still say "Yes" to life. Her decision, however swiftly arrived at, to take up the opportunity to kill herself, comes at the end of a nightmarish existence. Her life was in chaos, and there was no way an order could be imposed on that life to give it meaning. Sentenced to life confinement in her house, her only occupation not related to

32. See *ibid.*, 45, "... and in so far as Christina Stead makes us strongly aware of this process of selection, our sympathies, while real, are held distant from Henny."
motherhood was her solitary game of cards. Although "household anarchist by divine right", she was also like the dead marlin boiled away, squeezed of all life's source. The game of solitaire gives her something to aim for so that when the game comes out she is seized by a violent nausea (p.472). Henrietta in that instance becomes aware of the emptiness and aimlessness of the game which is as much an awareness of the aimlessness of her life. That "dread power of wifehood" (p.173) which had kept her as washerwoman, kitchenmaid, bodyservant within an "endless eternity of work and poverty and an early old age" was ebbing away.

Henny had always lived within the marriage at the edge of the maelstrom, and there came the time when there was nothing to prevent that sinking down. "How can this go on another week?" Henny screams and Louisa, standing there with her cups of poison, provides her with her escape. On the theoretical level, Henrietta embodies the chaos of a distinTEGRATED social and economic order. Simultaneously, she embodies the fate of Dionysus in a modern world where Apollonian form, the god of order, is imprisoned in the petrified structure of classicism and a godless morality. In her married life, Henrietta represents Dionysus, the ancient god of ecstasy, doomed to an ignominious existence in the murky corners of unbridled demonism. Sam and Henrietta can never come together in harmony; at best, their physical union can be described as their being "locked in each other's grasp till the end - the end, a mouthful of sunless muckworms and grass roots stifling his blare of trumpets and her blasphemies against love" (p.173). Henrietta sinks into her abyss, a "tragic" figure without form, not a heroine but a "dead beat".

**Henrietta: A Source of Art for Louisa**

Henrietta's social descent shatters the formal framework of her life; it releases, nevertheless, not only the bestial side of a Dionysian source. It brings forth, as well, that aspect that touches artistically the source of life.

For Henny there was a wonderful particular world (p.47) and when with Henny the children saw it through her eyes: "they saw the fish eyes, the crocodile grins, the hairlike birch broom, the mean men crawling with maggots, and the children restless as an eel ..." Her descriptions of her trips to town would fill the children with awe. They would listen to these wonderful adventures for hours "always with new characters of new horror", creatures "who swarmed in the streets, stores and restaurants of Washington, ogling, leering, pulling, pushing, stinking, over scented, screaming and boasting, turning pale at a black look from Henny, ducking and diving, dodging and returning ..." Louisa was enraptured by Henny's tales and believes them to be an accurate view of the world (p.47). Henny's room is seen to reflect her mysterious spirit. The children like to touch
her things that seem to impart an enigma. "A murky smell always came from Henrietta's room, a combination of dust, powder, scent, body odours that stirred the children's blood, deep, deep" (p.68). Beyond Henny stands a mystery. When the children question her she gives them an answer, not to the point like Sam's, but one that intrigues, enchants and bewilders them. Henny is sensual; she is natural law and without the coating of wealth and social graces she embodies a raw Dionysian vision without a hint of form.

Henny is an essential forerunner of a post-modernist tragic heroine. In embracing the abyss, expressing in terrible realism her predicament, she heralds a path for Louisa's search for authenticity. Henny dies and there is no consolation. There is an absence of catharsis, because Henrietta does not experience a higher enlightenment, as she refuses to hide from the terrible knowledge of her existence. Tragic drama in ancient times, Nietzsche points out, was the transformation of a terrible knowledge into an ecstatic slow drama. It was a means of hiding the fact that when man came to know and reflect upon his ephemeral state he lost his oneness with the world. Henrietta's wild renderings have something of Dionysian knowledge or wisdom. According to Nietzsche, this wisdom "is an unnatural crime, and that whoever, in pride of knowledge, hurls nature into the abyss of destruction must himself experience nature's disintegration".33

Henrietta does not believe that there is any point in liberating and protecting her children from this knowledge: "Henny was beautifully, wholeheartedly vile: she asked no quarter and gave none to the foul world, and when she told her children tales of the villainies they could understand, it was not to corrupt them, but because, for her, the world was really so. How could their father, said she, so fool them with his lies and nonsense" (p.48). In relation to Louisa, whom she says she detests, she nevertheless wishes her to have the benefit of knowing the truth about her marriage to Sam: "Let her know for herself what it is; then she won't look back to me as the one who tricked her. I beat her, but I don't lie to her" (p.155). This is in contrast to Sam who was "greedy for the daylight hours" where the realities of his desires could be more successfully repressed. The "fevers of the dark" (p.61) were to be kept at bay, but even Sam is aware that those snake dreams (pp.80 and 309) are symbolic of the dangers that beset him in daylight hours. After each dream he desperately attempts to bring order, harmony and affection to his family. On one level Sam believes that, in his love of science and youth, he is a discoverer interested in unravelling the mysteries around him. More often than not, however, Sam represses any emerging truths that shame or

33. F. Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, p.61.
embarrass him (p.341). He is anxious to repress Louisa's sexuality, yet when it is evident that Louisa is ignorant about sex and its connection with the conception of a child, he ridicules her (pp.368 and 369). Louisa may be unenlightened about sex but she is attuned enough to the reality around her to know that in essential matters her father does not know anything (p.476). Despite his scientific zeal to discover, he doesn't want the truth. Henny is greedy for the full horror of truth. Her view of the world may be "grotesque, foul, loud-voiced, rude, uneducated, and insinuating, full of scandal, slander, and filth, financially deplorable and physically revolting ...", but it bore more relationship to reality than Sam's world of "good citizens, married to good wives" (p.48). Henny's terrible Dionysian insights into the worst aspects of human behaviour are resounding echoes in the abyss of despair. Louisa emerges from her knowledge of Henny's world and begins to seek a form to express it. "Life is nothing but rags and tags and filthy rags at that. Why was I ever born?", Henny proclaims, and in that instance she states the kind of knowledge that humankind ultimately is unable to accept. Post-modernist tragic heroines must, unlike earlier ones, confront this pain in order to create authentic art. The catharsis is not to find its epiphany in traditional tragic form.

Louisa's empathy with Henny is a necessary growth experience for her. Although Henny often expresses hatred for Louisa and humiliates her unmercifully, it would be a superficial interpretation to ignore an affection and admiration she has for the girl that emerges involuntarily from time to time. These, initially, stem from the fact that they shared a common plight; Henny "like the little girl, she was guilty, rebellious, and got chastised" (p.72). And later after a bitter fight with Sam she says of Louisa: "she's the only decent one and that's because she's like me - no good - good because she's no good" (p.465). Louisa is always the one on hand to comfort Henny after her faints (p.70) and Henny is receptive enough to Louisa's type and presence that she seems to know when she is eavesdropping (pp.195 and 205). Henny cares enough for Louisa in that she attempts to protect her from the ramblings of old Ellen (p.206) and refuses to allow her, at one time, to do heavy housework: "I won't let you turn into a drudge" (p.223), Henny declares. When Miss Aiden comes to visit, Henny refuses to make an effort with the food or decor but, more importantly, she does "accept Miss Aiden's visit with grace, avoids losing her temper at the table" and "seems genuinely pleased that the teacher takes an interest in Louisa" (p.421).

34. See Stead, p.340, "... he wanted a slim, recessive girl whose sex was ashamed".
35. See ibid., p.57, where Henny calls her "a boiled owl" and attempts to strangle her, p.70, Henny's dislike of her physically and, further, p.122 and 125.
36. See ibid., when Henny tells Louisa to get her "fat belly out of the sink ..." and p.442, when she refers to Louisa's clothes as being "smeared with filth".
Henny, despite her diabolical criticisms of Louisa, harbours a deep sympathy for her. She detests the girl, she tells Sam, but she is sorry for her and she does attempt, however feebly, to make Sam aware of Louisa's developing sexuality and by implication her mounting vulnerability (p.155). Henny takes from Hassie's home two Dresden figures. She recalls that Louisa had adored them from babyhood and decides to give them to her: "the poor kid, who always liked them so much. It is a rotten shame, when I think that the poor kid is dragged in" (p.455). At Henny's lowest point in her relationship with Sam this statement shows the fact of her sympathy for Louisa. Louisa certainly would prefer to identify with her stepmother than with the Pollits, and needs Henny's advice not to be like them.

Whenever her irritations got too deep, she mooched in to see her mother. Here "... was a brackish well of hate to drink from a great passion of gall which could run deep and still, or send up waterspouts, that could fret and boil, or seem silky as young afternoon, something that put iron in her soul and made her strong to resist the depraved healthiness and idle jollity of the Pollit clan" (p.275).

Louisa takes a strength from Henny's despair; it is a courage to confront the experience of despair and dramatize the knowledge that comes with it. It is in Louisa's nature to understand the nature and meaning of pain. During the incident when Henny attempts to strangle her, Louisa doesn't attempt to escape; instead she "questions her silently, needing to understand in an affinity of misfortune" (p.57). Louisa is perceptive enough to know that Henny's worst utterances against her have causes unrelated to her (p.72).

Louisa: In Search of Form

In the sense that Louisa is constantly seeking her own reality, her own structure within seemingly impossible circumstances, she embodies Henny's own despair. Henny cannot tolerate Louisa's appearance as it reflects her own loss of identity. Henny, nevertheless, at the moment of her death recognizes Louisa's courage "to be". There is rarely any doubt in Louisa's mind that she will find her authenticity. Louisa, nevertheless, is portrayed throughout the novel in a similar way as Arthur is in Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala*.37

Arthur, too, embodies the Dionysian energies but is continually described as being big, spongy and ugly.38 Similarly, Louisa is seen either by Henny, Sam and herself as being physically "a barrel of lard" (p.346) as "large with a fat pink face" (p.66), as "a

---

38. See *ibid.*, pp.274, 294, 276 and 278.
great flapping monster” (p.348), and as a great big overgrown wretch with “lolloping breasts” (p.442). As well as being fat she is considered eccentric, ugly and awkward (p.105), with a mulish disposition (p.426) and always sulky and gloomy (p.480). Louisa, however, knows she is the ugly duckling. Arthur in The Solid Mandala looked towards Waldo to provide him with Apollonian form to transpose his insights into Art. Louisa, however, must go beyond this kind of union. In order to find the appropriate form for her life and her art she must be freed from alternative orders represented in Sam and in Henny. Louisa, however, takes with her that “iron in her soul” that was sown in her relationship with Henny.

Louisa’s search for an enlightened, love-filled adulthood exists within two separate, though related, streams of her character. She is at once an embryonic Nietzschean "superman" searching for authenticity and an artist in an early evolutionary stage. Her growth, seen as dramatized from her relationship with Henny and Sam, is treated less theoretically than the orders that her parents represent. Louisa carries within her the promises of the present and the future; she looks for a means of existing and creating in a way that is unique to her. She is a precursor of literature's inevitable move towards a post-modernist realism.

Louisa: Zarathustra’s Disciple

Nietzsche prophesied in Thus Spake Zarathustra39 the kind of quest in store for those who hungered for fulfilment of all human potential in a secular, post-modernist world. Louisa as a potential modern tragic heroine must stand with her integrity as an individual outside the universal. Krieger questions whether this kind of stand fulfils a proper human function.40 Perhaps the answer to this is unknowable. The point is, however, that the universal values no longer exist. Krieger, like Nietzsche and Hegel, admires in early tragedies those elements of reconciliation, but this reconciliation cannot occur in a fragmented moral world. Louisa’s search of self is Nietzschean in that her horizons are pitched through herself, the particular, the purely personal. Her quest is more for authenticity than for a restored world of absolute values.

Nietzsche shows in Zara that the spirit of gravity is rooted in man’s fear of becoming a true self in a world which is, if not hostile to man, at least utterly meaningless. The Man Who Loved Children is an affirmation of life despite the grim decline of Henny. The futile agony of the Pollit parents is offset by the burgeoning idealism of Louisa; as fast as their world shrinks, Louisa’s world expands. It expands to accommodate a person, like Zarathustra, who will not accept limits.

40. See Krieger, "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision".
Part One of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* begins with a parable, illustrating the spiritual development of the forerunner of the superman, the philosopher, who is the creator of new values. The parable divulges how the spirit must become a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child. The camel is the weight-bearing spirit which takes upon itself the burdens of humanity and hurries into the desert. The camel is able to "suffer hunger of the soul ... for the sake of truth". The camel is self-sufficient; he must face the folly of his wisdom, and the ugliness that co-exists with truth. He must love also those who despise him (Zara, p.54). The seeming "incompatibility between the pure, ambitious inner self and the clumsy, even sordid facts of Louisa’s physical person" 41 embodies an essential paradox of experience that Louisa must know.

Louisa accepts the horror of her existence as if it must play an important part in her growth. She is proud of her capacity to endure pain and indignity as is seen when she deliberately subjects her finger to the burning flame of a candle: "Nothing hurts me if I don’t want it to" (MLC, p.391) she tells her watching family. Similarly, when Henny attempts to strangle her, Louisa accepts the pain of the assault and attempts to understand the cause of it (p.57).

Louisa has a sense of her uniqueness in her ability to "take on the burdens of humanity" and to accept the ugliest of truths. When a young girl in the neighbourhood is pregnant with her father’s child, Louisa "got the idea that she had run up against one of the wickednesses of the universe, an internal middle kingdom of horror that she alone could stand" (p.388). Louisa is able to look at those who hate her and find her "hideous, revolting" with self-possession and know that she is sustained by deeper passions than those who criticize her (p.183). Unlike the traditional tragic heroine, Louisa, although a carrier of burdens, does not take the guilt upon herself. Ultimately, she will not sacrifice herself for others. She, like Zarathustra’s spirit, which becomes the lion, must "capture freedom, like the lion she must struggle with the great dragon, once known as Lord and God and replace the Lord’s 'thou shalt' with 'I will'" (Zara, p.55). Louisa’s will towards creativity is steeled by anger, for the whole painful ugly situation of her family life provides her with the right to be indignant and to feel wronged.

Louisa does have a sense of being one of the **Elect.** Her acceptance of the vengeance within her, her belief that she will be herself and not Sam (MLC, pp.164 and 364), her knowledge that "she only counted" (p.86), and that sense of her own genius, which alone gives her reason to survive (p.87), all contribute towards her final "capturing of freedom" when she crosses the bridge to the outside world. Louisa is alert, like the night rider, to an inner sense of life. Louisa and the rider of the red mane were

---

41. Burns, p.53.
wakers (p.61); they rode "ker-porrop! Ker-porrop" when all others slept like logs as if they alone knew of a destiny beyond ordinary conception.

This destiny Louisa holds within her is connected with her belief that, although she is now darkness, she will become a "splendid sunrise" (p.93) and that, like Zarathustra, she would eventually travel away from the restriction of self imposed by her family: "But when a swan would never come sailing back into their village pond, she would be somewhere away, unheard of, on the lily-rimmed oceans of this world" (p.94). In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche likens Zarathustra to the sun just as Louisa equals herself to a sunrise that will break out of the darkness. The sun in Nietzschean terms is above Socrates, but there is nothing above Zarathustra, except possibly the self, which he can yet become. Louisa’s motto on her wall, "By my hope and faith, I conjure ye, throw not away the hero in your Soul - Nietzsche" (p.340) expresses the strength of purpose associated with her expectations of life which were infinite (p.426). After contributing towards Henny’s death, Louisa reflects that she should have done it before "But had not the insight nor the will. Everything [she recognizes in a truly Nietzschean resolve] was will" (p.502).

In Thus Spoke Zarathustra the lion evolves out of the camel as the camel's renunciation and reverence is not enough. The lion, although incapable of creating new values, can at least "create itself freedom for new creation" (Zara, p.55). The lion must seize the right to new values. But, ultimately, the lion must become a child.

The child is innocence and forgetfulness, "a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes" (p.55). The spirit now wills its own will, the spirit sundered from the world now wins its own world.

Louisa craves freedom. One night, whilst she hears scuffling downstairs she, in her innocence, assumes murder has occurred instead of a sexual embrace (MLC, p.437). Her first thoughts are of the freedom she might know if both her parents were dead. Not long afterwards, Louisa, actually plans to kill them for the good of all: "If I kill them both we would be free" (p.499). When Henny is dead, Louisa informs Sam that she is her own creator, and that she must be free to explore all possibilities of life: "'Well, I'm my own mother,' Louisa said without emotion. 'And I can look after myself. I want you to let me go away'" (p.521). In order to be freed from her family Louisa is involved in destruction. Just as she is elected by Mrs Kydd to kill the cat, so circumstances make

42. See Stead, The Man Who Loved Children, p.426, "There was a book called Great Expectations which she had never read: she supposed, though, that it referred to something like her own great expectations, which were that of a certain moment, like a giant fourth of July rocket, she would rise and obscure all other constellations with hers."
the destruction of Henny necessary. Similarly, she destroys all traces of affection that imprisons her towards her father: "She no longer thought of Sam as her father: she had not thought of him as anything but a mouthy jailer for months" (p.501).

Louisa, as a Nietzschean creative individual, must also learn to evaluate, but to do so as an individual and not as others do (p.84). In order to create, one must evaluate and also destroy (p.85). Nietzsche believed that the goal for humanity is difficult to discover because humanity must reclaim humanity. The herd will make it difficult for the enlightened one and it will dissuade the person who goes away alone to seek answers (p.88). One does not go in order to be free from the herd, but to be free for one's own creating. The plight of the isolated one is difficult. He must be able to construct his own good and evil; he must be his own judge and avenger of his own law; "It is to be like a star thrown forth into empty space and into the icy breath of solitude" (p.89). The solitude will weary and break the courage of the one alone. But he will overcome himself and soar beyond his own ashes (p.80).

Henny is derisive about Louisa's wish for a distinguished new dress (p.74) and sneers at her dreaming of a "Superman" (p.459), but she is perceptive enough to recognize at the moment before her death that Louisa has an admirable courage. Miss Aiden's conviction that Louisa will certainly be famous (p.426), and Sam placing her among the aristocrats of the human mind (p.362), indicate that Louisa is considered different and talented by people outside herself.

Louisa understands that she must separate herself from others in order to grow. She is even grateful for Henny's neglect as it gives her the solitude she craves (p.70). As it is impossible to have solitude in a world inhabited by Sam Pollit, her desperation to leave home to be free for her own creating obsesses her and becomes possible after the "killing" of Henny. She could live with the terror of her act, as an outsider in the family, by believing that "she had done the only right thing, the only firm thing, and that fate itself had not only justified her but saved her from consequences" (p.514). Louisa could no longer sit with the family at meal times and listen to Sam's "misbegotten notions and morality with its mistaken examples". Instead, she would eat on the front lawn; she would obstinately and even mutely sit there, self-righteous, proud, and contemptuous (p.515). Consequently, solitude is given to her; she is like Nietzsche's "star thrown forth into empty space and into the icy breath of solitude" (Zara, p.89) but, nevertheless, happy to find herself in this separation. She was, as Sam earlier had

43. See A.P. Thomas, '"Nightmare World': a study in the fiction of Christina Stead" unpublished Master of Arts dissertation, Perth, University of W.A., 1970, p.104, where he points out that Mrs Kydd's cat and Henny look similar at death.
learnt, "a burning star, new torn from the smoking flesh of a mother sun, a creature of passion" (MLC, p.340). Louisa's hopes lie in a future for which she believes her present life is a preparation. She sees the chaos around her as a young adolescent, when her father ceases to hypnotize his older children with his aura. Appropriately, she quotes Nietzsche at Sam: "out of chaos ye shall give birth to a dancing star".

The Man Who Loved Children dramatizes in Louisa the Nietzschean concept that it is through experiencing the lightning of madness that man can be cleansed and give rise to the superman (Zara, p.44). Louisa knows that the quarrel between Henny and Sam was ruining their moral natures; she knows intuitively that out of this horror and misery something "good" must evolve. Her intuitions come to her in those "hours of lightnings, when the universe split from heaven to hell and in the chasm withered the delirium of glory, the saturnalia of which explained her world to her ..." (MLC, p.343). Louisa's manic letters to Clare express a kind of insanity that causes Clare to exclaim: "I would give the top of my head to have the madness of your little finger" (p.439). In these letters Louisa writes almost meaninglessly: "I am mad with my heart which beats too much in the world and falls in love at every instant with every reflection that glimmers in it."

This madness or chaos within Louisa is eventually transferred into action. Henny is about to be killed and Louisa with a Nietzschean spirit proclaims that "Everything was will: 'The world stands aside to let the man pass who knows whither he is going'" (p.502). Her creative struggle is one that affirms constant change, rather than coherence and order. Like Zarathustra, Louisa's actions demonstrate that "the world should be formed in your image by your reason, your will, and your love!" (Zara, p.110). Pauline Nester shows that Louisa's decision is in no way inconsistent with her moral sense in that the reader does understand the causes as Louisa does. Her decision arises from a characteristic courage and integrity that chooses to remedy an intolerable situation in the only way she knows. In order for Louisa to live a life consistent with her belief in love (MLC, p.478) she, like Nietzsche's creator, must suffer "the pains of the mother in order to be the child new born" (Zara, p.132). Louisa evolves out and away from the abyss of despair, which is known intensely by Henny and shared empathetically with Louisa. Henny's co-operation in her own death contributes to one believing that Louisa's act reflects courage, love and reason.

Louisa in her growth towards authenticity overcomes a lot in herself that acts as an obstruction to her liberation. Her determination to be herself and not like Sam, is

seen in her abhorrence of his naivety, hypocrisy and vacuity. Sam embodies the worst aspects of modern man. In Part Three of Thus Spake Zarathustra, Nietzsche launches a bitter satirical attack on modern mankind. He scorns those characteristics that Sam is seen to embody: the sham iconoclast who apes "advanced" views, but by no means practices what he preaches, and the man who has lacked the courage of his convictions and has retreated into piety. In order to be a creator of new values Louisa must learn, like Zarathustra, that there is much to overcome. Like him, she must reject the prophet who comes to make him prey to his sin of pity. So that when Sam tells Looloo that he doesn’t know what to do and he begs her to stay: "You see, you see Looloo? You see why you must stay by me forever? I have had too many burdens" (MLC, p.482).

Louisa is silent in her resolve to leave home as the dawn breaks clear overhead. Like Zarathustra, Louisa must reject the "sorcerer", "the ugliest man" and "the shadow" who are symbolic representations of the atheist\(^45\) and the free thinker respectively. Louisa, barely into adolescence, in being herself, has rejected the kind of thinking Sam displays, but he is to her always a kind of sorcerer who can bewilder and tantalize her. Even when he pries into her documents and she begs him to return the writings, "He looked handsome, bewitching, never so handsome as when teasing ..." (p.430). Despite all the reasons Louisa has for despising her father, she does love him simultaneously and irrationally. The night she hurts him deeply with her page of "shut up, shut up ..." which she writes as he philosophizes at her, she also experiences pain at hurting him: "Sam flung himself into his armchair and then got up and went out. Louisa heard the screen door close and felt a pain in her heart" (p.372). To read The Man Who Loved Children and to forget this scene is to fail to comprehend the utter complexity, not only of their relationship but, also,\(^5\) what Louisa must overcome in order to cross that bridge to freedom.

The nameless, sightless nightmare that is inexplicable, but gives off memories of hardness and softness, reflects the two directions of Louisa’s life. She enjoys the children and is benevolent with them when left alone (p.41). She is even happy in those rare moments of solitude she steals from the day for reading and contemplation; her loyalty and sympathy for Henny are such that she allows Sam to blackmail her to stay home but Sam is also an attraction. His children enjoy his games and happily respond to his teasing and jokes (pp.62-69). Their love for him is demonstrated by the care with which they prepare for his birthday (p.397). His breaking the news of David Collyer’s death is sensitive and imaginative (p.310), and his kindness to Bonnie and his criticism of Jo’s

\(^{45}\) See Stead, p.183, when Reuben refers to Louisa as "seed of a disobedient daughter and an atheist".
inhumanity to Bonnie (p.465) show him to be a man who is not to be condemned without qualification. Just as Sam is capable of terrible cruelty, he is also capable of caring for and perceiving the positive qualities in his daughter. He understands that Louisa will inevitably make life unnecessarily difficult for herself: "... even Looloo here what has the burdens of the world on her shoulders, which is only right because she makes the poor old world heavier herself ..." (p.312). And yet, when speaking of her, he acknowledges that ultimately Sam is a negative force in her life. Like Zarathustra, she must rise above these "highermen"; they must be seen as bridges that are to be stepped across. In the end of Thus Spake Zarathustra, Zarathustra triumphs over the efforts of the highermen to seduce him to pity them. Similarly, Louisa, like Zarathustra, becomes "the lion" and recognizes that "This is my morning, my day begins: Rise up now, Rise up, great noontide!" (Zara, p.336). And just as Zarathustra proclaims that the superman is coming into being, Louisa has a new sense of life as she leaves home in order to grow:

She smiled, felt light as a dolphin undulating through the waves, one of those beautiful, large, sleek marine mammals that plunged and wallowed .... How different everything looked, like the morning of the world, that hour before all other hours which Thoreau speaks of, that most matinal hour. "Why didn’t I run away before?" she wondered. She wondered why everyone didn’t run away. Things certainly looked different; they were no longer part of herself but objects that she could freely consider without prejudice (MLC, p.522).

Louisa is now free to create.

Louisa as Artist and Parable

Louisa, like Arthur in Patrick White’s The Solid Mandala, is Dionysian in her search for a form that will give expression to her sense of life. The psychological processes of the artist, true to Plato’s maos are frenzy and inspiration, but in order to become communicable they must be transformed into consciousness and, finally, into an artifact. Louisa exists as both "parable" and character. As a parable she dramatizes the problems involved for an artist in modern times. No longer able authentically to bring merely new content to an inherited art form he/she must discover new form. There are ideas endemic to tragedy, ones that determine form and that remain the same, despite historical change. These ideas include the sense of ancient evil, of the mystery of human suffering, of the gulf between aspiration and fulfilment, and of the hero/heroine’s unconditioned will to truth.

Louisa, with tragic knowledge, acts out her own personality and a struggle towards selfhood. In doing so, she dramatizes the problems of the artist (i.e., Stead) retaining what is continuous in human experience whilst, simultaneously, attempting to find an appropriate form that will accommodate what is new to modern-day experience.
Stead is not interested in a mechanical copying of some ideal notion of classical form. An Apollonian and Dionysian unity cannot occur where the main character does not adhere or submit to a shared religious or communal vision or a known order. Louisa does not turn away from the knowledge that Dionysian wisdom confronts; there is not a withdrawal behind an imposed aesthetic form. Krieger argues that the modern writer must not identify completely with either the ethical or the tragic vision. He argues that if the author cuts himself off from man's communal need, in surrendering to moral chaos, he surrenders also the only possibility left him to impose aesthetic form. But this assumes there cannot be a form that reflects man becoming attuned to fragmentation. The tension that exists in Stead's work is not Krieger's aesthetic tension between the ethical and the tragic vision, but that between the author's need to dramatize in characters literary and philosophical ideas and the need to achieve a new detachment that will allow a character, like Louisa, to exist on a realistic level. Krieger's tension, finally, denies historical change, whereas Stead's embodies a movement towards post-modernist tragedy.

Louisa's play is written in a secret language. "This was a good idea, she thought: so that she could write what she wished, she would invent an extensive language to express every shade of her ideas. 'Everyone has a different sphere to express, and it goes without saying that language as it stands can never contain every private thought'" (MLC, p.391). On the literal level, Louisa is simply seen as an artist attempting to discover a new form that will correctly communicate her world view; on the symbolic level, one witnesses Stead's consciousness philosophically engaged with aesthetic problems. Louisa finds her attempts at discovering a new form to be a failure: "But she was only a weakling and a mental dwarf now as before, and the new vocabulary did not exceed a few hundred words ..." (p.391). Stead dramatizes the problem of novels reaching a point where the concerns of the inner psyche, in particular those of an artist exploring a world symbolically, become incomprehensible, and are reduced to signs and shadows. In MLC, it is Louisa's anguish at her melodramatic nature and her fear that she might always be like this (p.410) that take the dominant note in the novel, rather than Stead's symbolic exploration of the possibility of creating a new language. The heroine's ordeal has prominence over the author's. It is not, however, an Olympian distance of the past that is present but, instead, a post-Socratic detachment in the process of being born.

There is a great deal of interest among the critics in Christina Stead's relationship

to Louisa being of an autobiographical kind.\(^{47}\) In the final analysis this is not of central importance. The fact that the characters are, as Clancy points out, dispassionately observed\(^{48}\) has little to do with Stead’s wish not to over identify with her character, Louisa is beginning to become a reality outside a symbolic framework, unlike other novels of the twentieth century with artist characters.\(^{49}\) Stead moves away from the tendency in modern artists to reflect upon themselves to the extent that the real subjects become the theory of their own composition. Louisa, when she fails to create a new language about her inexpressible situation, is perplexed, not for art’s sake, but for the sake of her reality that she desperately wishes to make known outside herself. Louisa (and Stead) are looking not for the return of that mystery in words which lay at the source of tragic poetry but, instead, a reincarnation of that mystery garbed to accommodate the present. Her play is not the work of an impassioned romantic intoxicated only by an inner private world.

The intoxicated man withdraws from contact with others as individuals, whereas Louisa in her reaching out to Henny, Sam, Miss Aiden, Clare and others is intent on living a full life within herself and with life outside herself. As a post-Socratic heroine she gives promise to what the highest degree of consciousness and self-consciousness might transform itself. Nietzsche hoped that it would be a new spontaneity that would overcome pessimism.\(^{50}\) Certainly all of Louisa’s passions, her reason and actions are directed towards this end. And, of course, we are aware of Stead’s machinations towards this end. Louisa’s failure with her play is perhaps also Stead’s recognition of her failure. Louisa, however, is adolescent and has yet to cross the bridge. Stead is working (perhaps unconsciously) towards a realism unsuffocated by authorial experimentation.

**Louisa as Artist-character**

Louisa’s growth towards authenticity occurs simultaneously with her growth as an artist. Like the artist-type, she feels at odds with the world around her even “clumsily and shamefaced in the face of nature ... many a time [she] felt like banging her head against the wall in order to reach oblivion and get out of all this strange place in time where she was a square peg in a round hole” (p.93). Louisa, nevertheless, finally

---

47. See Burns, pp.41 and 42.
acquires confidence to seek artistic fulfilment, despite the obstacles in her path. In her finest moments of freedom Louisa is described as being at one with the natural world. In an earlier section of the novel Louisa is momentarily jubilant to be left alone to enjoy her reading: "She could read it as she sifted in the oatmeal. It was a glorious hot morning; the birds were now in the full middle of their music. The shadows were diluted light; the air was hot and moist; sweet air from flowers and humus and pines drifted in" (p.67). Similarly, on the final morning when Louisa leaves home forever, "everything looked like the morning of the world ..." (p.522).

At Harpers Ferry, the home of her Maryland relatives, Louisa finds a biblical simplicity associated with the "shadows from moon shine and trees, [which] seemed pure as the water of a river over sandstone" (p.181). There she was unquestioned and not called forsaken. The time she stays there she "lived in trust, confidence, and love" (p.189) and, consequently, is at one with the natural world. Nine months of each year, however, was spent with "trivial miseries, self-doubts, indecisions, and all those disgusts of pre-adolescence, when the body is dirty, the world a misfit, the moral sense qualmish, and the mind a sump of doubt". And during this time Louisa, apart from those rare moments of freedom, seems to be in conflict with every element of the world about her.

Louisa's artistic growth is posited against Sam, or theoretical man, who believes that he has a kind of omnipotence in the face of nature: "It seemed to Sam that Nature was licking at his feet like a slave, like a woman, that he had read of somewhere that washed the feet of the man she loved and dried them with her hair" (p.475). Sam loves trees and cannot endure the thought of living in the bureaucrat's suburb without trees (p.317). Sam rationalizes nature, whether in the task he gives Louisa, while he is in Malaya, to keep a record of the visits of birds and animals (p.107), or in his nature school with him as the leader of children (p.362), or in his excursions with the naturalists looking for lizards and salamanders (p.41). Ironically, it is over his supposed omnipotence expressed in his control of the weather that his older children Ernie and Louisa begin to rebel against his authority and express their independence (p.313). It is also a creature of nature, the eagle that Louisa thinks she sees dash against her window, that signals Louisa to come to her decision to kill her parents (p.518).

It is in contrast to Sam that one sees what is unique in Louisa and what qualities constitute her artistic self. Sam is described at one point as having a voice, whereas Louisa is described as having an ear and therefore more open to learning and growing than Sam. Louisa is mortified when Jo pronounces Sam to be "our only genius" (p.291); Louisa sees him more accurately as a "tyrant" who becomes an arbiter, not only of Henny's fate, but of hers as well. Although Sam at one time laughs at Louisa's poetry calling it "nauseating stuff" (p.430), there are occasions when her artistry surprises him
and "a kind of humility" creeps into him. The competition between Sam and his daughter is such that Louisa, noticing his humility, would "flash a look which said, plainer than speaking, 'I am triumphant, I am King!'" (p.351). Louisa is not incapable of recognizing a cleverness in her father, as is evident in her response to his theory of a futuristic world, composed of people worked out by formulae. Although Louisa’s artistic talent is something that will only flourish away from her father, her art does owe something to Sam’s cleverness with words. What distinguishes Louisa, both as an artist and a person and in contrast with Sam, is her ability to perceive with sensitivity and intelligence.

Her sensitivity towards Clare is revealed in many instances. Louisa understood that Clare’s self-effacing clowning was her way of coping with her poverty (p.352), and that the sad Mrs Kydd in her own way loved her, despite her use of her to kill the cat (p.113). Despite her unqualified love and idolization of Miss Aiden, Louisa is able to perceive her imperfections.51

As the horrors of her daily life whirl around her, Louisa continues to make steps along the path towards an artist’s existence. Her self-awareness of her capability is seen in her contempt at Jo’s poem which she knows to be unworthy of acclaim52 (p.273). The Aiden Cycle at school is a reason to keep practising her art53 and the books Sam gives her kindle her imagination. Milton’s Paradise Lost and a "beautiful book of Metaphysics" found on her father’s desk give Louisa her magical "walking out with beauty and destiny" (p.214). Clare’s insistence that she should become a socialist falls on deaf ears. It is Louisa’s destiny to recreate reality, magnify its truths, undermine its imperfections and ultimately understand and fulfil her destiny. The story of Hawkins, which she tells the children, dramatizes a fear in Louisa that she may throw away her central spirit in order to survive more easily under her father’s leadership. The horse and the rider in her dreams that she hears at night represent her secret knowledge of her artistic destiny. The horse in the "Hawkins Story" is stripped of life, bit by bit, just in order that its owner may eat. When the horse has been entirely destroyed, the owner knows he is left without soul, without reason for life itself. Similarly, Louisa knows why she must fight for her freedom.

Louisa’s play which is written for Sam on his birthday is the "Tragedy" Louisa cannot write in English. She can barely find a form for the story of her immediate life.

51. E.g. see Stead, p.412, "... but afterwards she felt a little disappointed in Miss Aiden; it was improper in the goddess to respond."
52. Ibid., see further, p.87, "If I did not know I was a genius, I would die: why live?"
53. Ibid., see p.350. "The Aiden Cycle would consist of a poem of every conceivable form and also every conceivable metre in the English language".
Clearly, the play is about her relationship with her father. The *Tragedy of the Snake-Man, or Father* encompasses the worst aspects of Louisa and Sam’s relationship. Sam, we know, is a man who in his dream state is tyrannized by snakes (pp.80 and 309). Whether it is consciously known by Louisa, she at some level of her perceptions sees him as repressed. Sam understands his snake dreams to signify that enemies are at hand. From Louisa’s perspective Sam is his own worst enemy in never knowing what he is and what effect he has on others. Within the structure of the play, Louisa portrays the father figure as believing that he is giving love to his daughter when, in fact, what he gives was a form of death. His prying into the private corners of his daughter’s life is justified as having a scientific moral purpose, but as Louisa proclaims in her play "I see you are determined to steal my breath, my sun, my daylight. The stranger will kill you" (p.409). Within the play the stranger is also the father and the snake. Louisa is arguing here that Sam is a dangerous stranger to himself and that his destruction towards her, his murdering her solitude, however vicious, is primarily unconscious.

The play disturbs Sam but, such are the strengths of his repressions, he is unable to understand it. Louisa, on the other hand, has embodied in her tragedy the reason for her torture. Her blackmailing, sanctimonious, cruel, conceited father is so unaware of his own nature it becomes almost impossible to blame him or leave him. It is why she feels a pain in her heart after she has in the past hurt him "terribly" with the truth (p.372). The snake-father murders his daughter with what he believes to be this love. This is the love Louisa must escape from in order to be free to create and to live.

At the end of *The Man Who Loved Children* we are left with Louisa, who is more a character than a parable. Stead’s choice is towards realism and away from abstractions, but this choice involves dealing with "the parable".

Courage and defeat are brought into unity. Louisa’s courage is shown in the way she lives within the family and in her eventual escape from it. Her defeat is seen to rely on the theoretical aspect of the novel in that it refers to that "new form" she searches for in art. Her struggle has a grandeur in its conceptions and, as we watch Louisa and her parents, terror and pity are caught in equal balance.

Louisa, in the end, chooses to leave home but, equally, she is driven out by the restrictions it places on her. At this point, Louisa, like Zarathustra at noon, is about to launch into tragic action. The text has shown that Louisa’s fate will be the result of forces working from within and without. Her fierce determination to be herself is bound to come into conflict with a world of people who impose a relentless conformity on those who challenge "ordinary" behaviour. Whereas, in antiquity and Elizabethan times, some of the forces from without were Divine or of an enigmatic nature, the forces that Louisa has and will continue to contend with are totally human ones. The enigmatic
forces, those mysterious elements that modern man endures as much as ancient man, forces that threaten to split man apart, come in this novel from within Louisa. These divisive and contradictory elements, if reflected in the outer world take the form in ambivalent human love, in human folly and in the inadequacy of man to cope with the gap between desire and fulfilment.

This potential tragic heroine is not without fault. Louisa has shown in her fight for self against the orders embodied in Sam and Henny an almost inflexible dedication. Sam, like an ironic chorus, sees Louisa’s determination as stubbornness, arrogance, fool-hardiness or irrational blind rage. He judges this behaviour as the chorus and second chorus often did in ancient drama of their heroes and heroines, as outrageous, wicked and blasphemous against his concept of order.

Louisa’s actions do not threaten traditional, communal and religious values. Something, nevertheless, is threatened. In Greek Tragedy the threatened order is seen by the chorus to be challenged by an unregenerate will, or by one who assumes the prerogatives of the gods. Louisa assumes the power of Nietzsche’s superman, who is coming into being. Her will is directed towards creating new values and not challenging old ones. The old ones are dead. There is no question of this. Consequently, one becomes aware that, in the modern tragic form that will evolve, there will be no catharsis or purging. If one experiences heightened and contradictory emotions, the experience will be one that does not subside within the form or structure of the novel as aesthetic delight.

In traditional tragedy the price the hero pays for his/her exceptional action, his greatness and his virtue, is suffering and death. In the modern novel (a potential tragic form), the price all men and women pay is meaningless suffering and meaningless death. The tragic hero will be the person who openly acknowledges the agony of living in a fragmented world, yet who will, nevertheless, struggle, however hopelessly, towards meaning. His response to the challenge which confronts him is acted out in his daring and his ability to bear the worst that the earth can devise. The focus is on Louisa’s grandness, rather than on her goodness. It is her human spirit in opposition to the power of a world setting up deluded orders that is to be admired.

Whereas Henny resigned herself to numb passivity, Sam to sheer folly, and Clare to buckling under her burdens, Louisa, as the potential tragic protagonist, will, it seems, grow stronger and bolder with each new challenge or stroke of fate. Characteristic of all tragedy is that bewilderment, helplessness, and transformation of values we associate with the tragic experience. There will not be any rational justice for the tragic protagonist: her only reward will be the knowledge that life has not been ignored, and that it has been known completely.
It has been argued in this thesis that the way in which Sam and Henny respond to life’s challenges embodies theoretical questions posed by the writer. These secondary characters, as in ancient tragedy, help to place the hero’s struggle in perspective, to afford us norms of visions or judgements by which we can judge it. Krieger outlines the choices that are left for modern people, given the upheaval of the traditional world. These choices are dramatized both theoretically and on a realistic level by Sam, Henny and Louisa. Krieger\textsuperscript{54} characterizes these as being the alternatives for post-modernist man.

Krieger argues that ethical man must yield to "infinite resignation", a point when the Dionysian spirit dies in the face of Socratic cynicism and abdicates from tragic heroism. Henny chooses this alternative as she floats into death. The second alternative is dramatized by Sam: he is the insistent naturalist, a believer in structured social morality and in social progress. At the end of \textit{The Man Who Loved Children}, after the disintegration of family life reaches a climax at Henny’s death, a new order is re-formed Sam, as the god of radio, spreads his message of progress with science; he also reorganizes his household with a new spirit of optimism. In contrast to this, there is Louisa who is an extension of Krieger’s third alternative, which is that surge toward the demonic. Louisa, however, is more, in the last analysis, than an embodiment of the essence of the tragic vision. Whereas Krieger believes these alternatives to be held in a precarious balance or tension, Stead, in giving Louisa the character of the wandering Zarathustrian artist, insists on coming to terms with modernism and all that it implies in life and in art.

Angela Carter points out that Christina Stead "does not subscribe to any metaphysics of the Word. The work of her maturity is a constant, agitated reflection upon our experience in \textit{this} world".\textsuperscript{55} For Stead, language is not an end-in-itself in the current, post-modernist mode. Fiction is to be the exposition of real structures on which lives are lived. The freedom Louisa achieves is an intellectual one taken against the grain of human feeling. Louisa, however, is not ultimately trapped by the circumstances that formed her. There is no self for Louisa other than the one she will discover by force of will outside herself.

Louisa is the new post-Socratic Dionysus. She is not vanquished into an acceptance of outmoded aesthetic forms, when Apollonian form does not find an authentic unity with Dionysian content. Instead, Louisa searches beyond the tragic vision. Dionysus, in ancient Greece, was the god principally associated with the death

\textsuperscript{54} Krieger, pp.18, 19.
and rebirth of the year. From the outset, his basis is communal and ritualistic, its medium poetry, and its accompaniments dance, song and spectacle. Louisa, like ancient Dionysus, associates her view of life with a sense of mystery or wonder. Louisa, however, rather than being related to the death and rebirth of the year is, instead, associated with the death and rebirth of the world. Stead has dramatized a weaning process away from Beckett’s artists as hero, and the preoccupations of the artist. Stead creates Louisa who is an artist in her own right. Stead is detached from her and with this return to “realism” Louisa begins a journey as a potential tragic heroine. Tragedy is about to be reborn.
CHAPTER 6
UNDER THE VOLCANO

Under the Volcano is undoubtedly a book that deals with tragic themes. The Consul’s battle with life, with his wish and yet incapacity to live and love, his terrible sufferings, his awareness and horror at the enigma of life and the serious questions this book asks about one’s place in the world are all elements that go towards making a tragedy. Yet this novel refuses tragedy finally; its modernism is such that the writer is as obsessed with the processes of his creativity, as he is with the demon that destroys his main character.

Lowry asks serious questions, not only of life at a particular time in history but of art which is also seen to have its history. There is a great deal of critical opinion that regrets this latter preoccupation. It leads to accusations that Lowry failed to create "fully rounded characters" due to his obvious manipulation of them. The Consul’s life is seen to be invaded and cannibalized for art, and the text is seen to be over written with a deliberate significance. There is no doubt that Under the Volcano is a carefully structured novel; Lowry’s famous letter to Jonathan Cape, outlining his intentions in the work, the complexity of symbolism and the relation of the parts to the whole is testimony to that. Lowry, however, is not merely playing games with language within modernist frameworks, nor is he writing a book to fit a theory, nor to demonstrate the complexity of creating a modern art-form (even if this is one of the results he may have achieved). Instead, this story is the drama of the interaction between mind and things, between language and the world. Each of his characters seeks to interpret his or her world and to create something from this. When Lowry is exploring the ontology of their consciousness, the external world is not made merely to obey the machinations of a writer and provide mere metaphors for interior thought. Instead it is seen to exist in its own right as a presence and a force to which a reader must respond.

2. Charles Morley Baxter, "Black Holes in Space: The Figure of the Artist in Nathaniel West’s Miss Lonelyhearts, Djuna Barnes’s Nightwood, and Malcolm Lowry’s Under the Volcano", Ph.D dissertation, State Univ. of New York, p.131.
It is true that Lowry is not oriented towards action in an Aristotelian sense though his character, Hugh, demonstrates his interest in its potential. The main drama, nevertheless, occurs in the mind of the author and his persona. As this does not sum up the whole picture it makes the novel more problematic. There is drama going on in the outer world. The novel is after all about the forces in humankind that cause "him to be terrified of himself. It is also concerned with the guilt of man, with his remorse, with his ceaseless struggling towards the light under the weight of the past, and with his doom". Such a great theme must be played out against a "real" world of social, political and psychological activity. This world is allegorically conceived as a kind of Garden of Eden from which Lowry believes we deserve to be ejected. 

Lowry is a modern novelist and can also be said to be writing in that self-conscious genre. Yet his work is not self-conscious in the same way as Nabokov, Borges, Beckett, John Barthe and Robbe-Grillet. Unlike, for example, Nabokov's Lolita and Pale Fire in which repeated allusions to poets, to conventions of the novel, to other elements of a literary tradition are made to fuse with the actual fictional predicaments of the protagonists - with the way they construe their worlds.

Lowry's use of the content of literary figures' thought (whether it be James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, or Goethe), and his use of mythology (whether it be the Faust descent into Hell, the Renaissance concept of the wheel of fate, or Jewish Cabbala patterns) is there to illuminate a present reality of a tragic situation, rather than to provoke thought about the literary elements of his work. Of course the latter will occur, but this is only one of many necessary responses to this novel. Lowry makes one aware that the past (both actual history and the history of thought), the inner philosophical queries of individuals, the processes of creativity and thought, and the actual physical presence of the world, both acting on and received by a mind that, in turn, acts on it, are all part of this moment. This moment, in this context, is the point from which a modern writer must create.

One of the consequences of becoming involved in this novel is to experience an art-form that expresses the way in which a writer (and any person for that matter) experiences his or her world in both an objective and subjective manner. The world we

6. Ibid., p.66.
7. See for example Nabokov's Lolita and Pale Fire in which repeated allusions to poets, to conventions of the novel, to other elements of a literary tradition are made to fuse with the actual fictional predicaments of the protagonists - with the way they construe their worlds.
enter is one of chaos, best illustrated in the drunken consciousness of the Consul. It gives us a vision of an "empirical world" that is not positivist and reminds us by the nature of its metaphorical use, that we are not passive recipients of perceptual sensations. The horror of the Consul's alcoholic existence is always in the forefront of our consciousness. Yet, within this central metaphor, within this horror, is involved an awareness of the dissolution of the old order, of the "drunken madly revolving world", of which Hugh says, "Good God, if our civilization were to sober up for a couple of days, it'd die of remorse on the third". This refers to a political and social disorder, but it also entails a more general concept of disorder with which modern artists attempt to grapple.

Modernism, since the late nineteenth century, in all the arts, has expressed its reaction to the scientific law of entropy. This law refers to the physical state of a physical system, and it is a measure of the disorderliness of this system. What Lowry draws attention to in his art is that the "disorder" we are conscious of is not a wholly objective property, or one understood through a disarray of physical properties. In this context I am referring to all kinds of disorder, whether it be moral, political, psychological, cosmic, or the disorder which emerges from an individual's attempting to perceive his or her world aesthetically. The human observer cannot be excluded, because the idea of order is inextricably linked to the mind's awareness. Chaos also, is in the mind of the beholder: Lowry gives us the "subjective" and the "objective" view at once. The Consul's drunken states show metaphorically a kind of "entropy" as a probability that operates as the hinge between matter and mind, where one is knotted to the other, and reacts on the other.

Apart from the Consul, the story of this novel is worked through the perspectives of three main characters, which in a sense, gives different kinds of order which is wrung desperately out of chaos. The novel structurally begins with an "order" arrived at one year after the main character is tossed with disinterest down an abyss.

This chapter will explore the idea that Lowry's double perspective of an "objective" and "subjective" rendering of the physical world, his political views on the state of his world, his fears for the modern protagonist in both his or her active and interpretive states, creates a novel that discusses tragedy and enacts the embryonic state of a "new realism" that will eventually permit the rebirth of Tragedy in art.

8. See A.J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp.36-83, who explains how and why the logical positivists, who believe that statements about the world could be reduced to sense experiences, which could not be falsified, have been proved to be misled.

9. The twentieth-century in art gave birth to expressionism a kind of plunge into chaos; in literature there was/is a need for demolition of language - a look for a new language which chaos would bring forth - e.g. James Joyce, Finnigan's Wake.
Setting the Theme of the Novel

*Under the Volcano* is concerned with the events of a single day, *The Day of the Dead*, which is also the day of Geoffrey Firmin’s death. He is the British Consul in the town of Quauhnahuac in Mexico. This town is situated at the base of the two volcanos of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. It is not long after entering Lowry’s novel that one becomes aware that this is a novel about hell.

The novel begins through the perspective of Laruelle. It is from the point of view of a failed/frustrated artist that one learns that the Hell motif has a multi-levelled significance. Lowry’s vision of Hell is not only related to what threatens a modern world, but what threatens a modern mind, in particular, a mind that wishes to create. Connected to these modernist themes, a less intellectualized, though more universal theme surfaces as Geoffrey Firmin attempts to understand the frontiers of his hell. This is the fact of love, its necessity and yet the appalling difficulty entailed in giving and receiving it.

Yvonne, the object of the Consul’s love, returns after a year’s separation from him. The events of the novel take place on the day of her return. The Consul’s passion for alcohol displaces his desperate need for her love. The day involves the presence of Jacques Laruelle, the movie maker, who was a former lover of Yvonne’s and Geoffrey Firmin’s brother Hugh, ex-reporter and sailor, now about to run arms to Spanish loyalists, who is also “in love” with Yvonne. Hugh spends this day with Firmin and Yvonne going with them to a bull-fight. When Firmin, in search of alcohol, becomes separated from Hugh and Yvonne, they pursue him by way of a forest track. It is in this forest that Yvonne is killed by a wild horse which, ironically, the Consul has let loose just before he is shot. The plot of this novel is thin, but its meanings have an imaginative and philosophical richness.

Chapter One, which is a year after the day’s action of 1938, begins with Dr Arturo Diaz Virgil and M. Jacques Laruelle remembering the dead Consul, the dead Yvonne and the bereft Hugh. The Consul, that is Geoffrey Firmin, is identified with Dr Faustus early in the novel through the consciousness of Laruelle. Jacques Laruelle, a movie producer, who has known Geoffrey since childhood, has been considering the possibility of making in France a modern film version of the Faustus story with some such character as Trotsky for its protagonist*.10 The Consul is purposely being presented by Lowry as both a Trotsky-like and a Faustian figure. Trotsky, who is also an exile and who has the Consul’s short-pointed beard is murdered in Mexico City ten months later.

---

10. Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p.33. All further references to this text are cited as UTV.
The Consul on the night of his "murder" will be called Trotsky. Laruelle, after his
discussion with Virgil, goes into the town, where, in a small cantina attached to the
cinema the barman returns to him a book of Elizabethan plays which he had left there.
He had borrowed this book from the Consul to further his research for his proposed film.
Laruelle opens the book and, in reading the following lines from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the theme of the novel is set: "then will I headlong fly into the earth: Earth,
gape! it will not harbour me!" (*UTV*, p.40). At the back of the book Laruelle finds a
letter written by the Consul to Yvonne which was never sent. In this letter the Consul writes:

No, my secrets are of the grave and must be kept. And this is how I
sometimes think of myself, as a great explorer who has discovered some
extraordinary land from which he can never return to give his knowledge to the
world: but the name of this land is hell (*UTV*, p.41).

The letter is a microcosm of what is to happen within the novel. It cannot be fully
appreciated, nor understood, until one has lived through "the day of the dead"
experienced by all the main characters exactly one year before. In this letter we learn
that the Consul is possessed by a demon, whether it is caused by alcohol, or causes his
alcoholism is left ambiguous. He writes of grappling "with death" and taunting
imaginary characters and howling dogs. He acknowledges his sorrow and his guilt at
Yvonne's departure and the "vulture sitting in the wash basin" (p.41). He names the
land of his existence as a Hell that is in his heart, and of a physical suffering in which
the soul dies (p.42). The letter imagines a place of happiness, which he and Yvonne
might still find, if she returns but, also, of his struggle against his love for her (pp.42,
43). We know that for most of the letter he is drunk and that, in this state, he
recognizes his need for Yvonne's love, and his need to find answers to all-embracing
philosophical questions. The letter ends by begging Yvonne to return, which she does.
When she does, she, along with Laruelle and Hugh, will experience all that this letter has
mentioned.

It is not accidental that this letter is read only by Laruelle. The film he would
have liked to make to change the world through art could have been about the Consul
who is both a "Trotsky" and a "Faust". The letter the Consul has written contains the
elements for the expressionistic film that Laruelle would like to make. Earlier, before
reading this letter, Laruelle simplistically states that the Consul's tragedy is the tragedy
of love which "came too late" (p.10). The letter shows the other dimensions to the
tragedy and shows the superficiality of Laruelle's outlined view of the Consul's life.
Having read the letter, one is alerted to the dubious nature of Laruelle's view and his
incapacity as an artist to see life as it is and, therefore, the reason for his incapacity to
translate it into an art-form.
Laruelle has made one film based on Shelley's poem *Alastor*. This poem could be interpreted as being about the destructive power of the imagination. The Consul's satirizing of this film, which he maintains Laruelle "shot in a bathtub ... and ... stuck the rest together with sequences of ruins cut out of old travelogues" (p.206) strikes other chords of the other destructive imaginations in the book, including his own. Laruelle and the Consul like Shelley's *Alastor* are "artists" and exiles in a country that fails to nourish their creative faculties. The Consul quotes some lines from Shelley's poem: "God, that the dream of dark magician in his visioned cave, even while his hand shakes in its last decay ... were the true end of this so lousy world". He has misquoted the line, the last line of which should read "were the true law of this so lovely world". What is implied is that something is amiss in the relationship between artist (the black magician) and the world. The artist's hand shakes because it no longer can be the vehicle to capture in poetry/art the law of this once lovely world. The end is nigh for a humanity, which cannot translate its consciousness of life into a recognizable art-form.

Laruelle has forsaken the art he believed in because his *Alastor* film could be understood only by himself. His move to Hollywood meant that he made films for a comprehending public but he was no longer, in his own estimation, creating an authentic vision of the world. After Laruelle has read the Consul's letter, he like the poster advertising the current film, is an artist with murderer's hands. This is further emphasized by his burning the letter - a letter that ideally might have formed the nucleus of the film he had wanted to make.

Lowry and "Realism"

The letter tells the story of the sheer complexity of being a person who is able to see inside and outside himself. It shows that the human being creates his own anguish, as much in thought as in action, and that he is neither a spectator nor a participator. These are not mutually exclusive states of being; they hinge on each other like mind and matter. Lowry's focus is on this relationship. *Under the Volcano* poses the questions "What is reality?", "What is truth?" continually throughout the text. Lowry does this via the impressions of his characters which are recorded in long Proustian sentences,


12. The poster advertising the film *Las Manos de Orlac*, which was showing exactly one year ago when the Consul was killed, is deliberately placed by Lowry to present a many-tiered symbolic message: "... the man with the bloody hands in the poster, via the German origin on the picture, symbolizes the guilt of mankind, which relates him also to M. Laruelle and the Consul again, while he is also more particularly a foreshadowing of the thief who takes the money from the dying man by the roadside, in Chapter VIII, and whose hands are also covered with blood" (*Letter to Jonathan Cape*), p.69.
which create a confusion of inner and outer, and through memory, of past and present. Geoffrey's own hallucinations are interrupted by fragments of external reality.

This external reality has a physicality as "real" as the interior dramatized life of Lowry and his characters. Like Proust and Conrad, Lowry is not interested in merely describing things, to what Proust referred to as "a wretched summary of their lives and surfaces". On the other hand, the Consul's question as to the existence of an ultimate reality, external, conscious and ever present, does not from Lowry's point of view mean simply the renouncing or the acceptance of the existence of an external world. He wrote in his letters that "unquestionably what one is after is a new form, a new approach for reality itself". Robbe-Grillet, no doubt, would find Lowry's approach to reality in his art-form false, in that, Lowry works within a tradition that puts meanings into objects that do not really have these meanings.

The physical world that *Under the Volcano* draws us back to is there but it also consists of landscapes which are correspondences to mental states. One can sympathize with Robbe-Grillet's disagreement with modernist writing in which the visible world is always seen as inferior to the allegorical meaning to which it is referring. To move to a position, however, where characters are supposed to come "face to face" with things and, yet, not be affected by what they see, or in any way determine what is seen, is to move to a new, yet just another, modernized way to be unrelaxed before the phenomena of experience. It is also at odds with the findings of modern physics. I mention this because Robbe-Grillet has stated that "Science is the only honest means at man's disposal for finding out what is inside things". Physicists now, in contrast to a Newtonian view of the world, see the universe as harmonious and indivisible, as a network of dynamic relationships that include the human observer and his consciousness. Robbe-Grillet has an intolerance of novels with "messages". Given what language has inherited in its structure, Robbe-Grillet, in order to avoid any messages, has to employ devices which create fiat statements, describe scenes that do not have any real relation to the action and do not make the reader see.

Lowry does see life as a forest of symbols, but he maintains that the objects or people he "uses" to give meaning beyond themselves do actually belong quite naturally to the scenes he creates. He writes "The madman futilely and endlessly throwing a

---

15. See Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, p.82.
16. Ibid., p.159.
17. Ibid., p.92.
18. Ibid., p.91.
bicycle tyre in front of him, the man stuck half way up the slippery pole - these are projections of the Consul and of the futility of his life, and at the same time are right, are true, are what one sees here". 20

Lowry's symbolism throughout the novel explores the Consul's consciousness as it attempts to break through the "final frontiers of consciousness" (UTV, p.139). The novel also dramatizes Lowry's own knowledge that the novel cannot become that secret knowledge, a text of passionate poetic writing that fills in the gap absented by God. 21 Yet it does succeed in showing that enigmatic, dynamic relation between the universe and the human consciousness. When one re-reads chapter one, after having completed the novel, it is evident that the Consul, although physically dead, inhabits this chapter as a state of mind. This is done by creating a scene that re-creates the "action" of the night of the Consul's death. The horse that Laruelle jumps clear of, at the time of day in which the Consul was killed, during an impending storm is identical to the one that accompanies his death, is a "real" horse that exists outside Laruelle's consciousness. Its presence and actions (the rearing at the car lights contrasts with the rearing of the horse at lightning a year before) inhabits the scene as a natural occurrence, but also as a symbol that pervades Laruelle's consciousness.

Ursula Brumm argues that Lowry uses symbols as an escape from reality, thus negating and inverting the relation between symbol and meaning. She believes that Lowry represents the empty dead end, not the high point of symbolism. 22 The "empty dead end of symbolism" is to be found in modernist works, where symbolism is used to debate ideas where, in fact, symbolism has become allegorical. 23 Although I agree with Brumm that "symbolism" as used by most modernist writers has reached an "empty dead end", I suggest, however, that Lowry's "symbolism" heralds a new interest in the connection with his mind and matter and moves towards an "Actualism" that will require new and fresh re-definition of symbolism itself. The movement towards "actualism" will inevitably include the awareness that consciousness can be a disease. In its final form, Actualism will have discarded this or, at least, the awareness will belong to characters acting out their life with their attitudes, instead of referring back to a philosophical preoccupation of the author.

Under the Volcano is not meant to be interpreted only as a network of symbols. Instead it is the literal level that must be responded to - only then do the symbols Lowry

20. Ibid.
23. See Chapter One of this work for development on this point.
uses serve their purpose - only then will the symbolic meanings make sense. Scholes writes that "For the post-World War II fabulators, any order they impose on the world amounts not to a symbol of the divine order that God imposed on the cosmos, but to an allegory of the mind of man [woman] with its rage for an order superior to that of nature." Allegorical works sever the human person from the value of identifying a natural world. Self no longer dominates the world. If a photographic likeness is not always recorded in Lowry's poetry, it is often because his art is a study of nature as an operation of people's awareness of nature, or vice versa, people's awareness as an aspect of nature. The consciousness of the character loses itself in the world without either renouncing the world or seeking to master it. This goes beyond nineteenth-century realism, which wanted to dominate things. The setting of the book, for example, is in Mexico. Lowry deliberately renders a landscape as pertaining to sadness. Mexico is presented as a country of a slow melancholy tragic rhythm being, as well as the symbol of the world itself, or the Garden of Eden or both at once. The story opens on "The Day of the Dead". It is in this scene that we have Laruelle's consciousness whose every view of the surrounding country-side recalls his past.

Lowry's landscapes are alive with symbolic meanings which Baxter argues refuse to unveil their significance; they tantalize but never reveal: "Like Shelley's underground passageway, the Consul's garden has an iron mine running underneath it and, though the "slimy caverns of the populous deep" (Alastor, line 307) ought to disclose principles of high consequence, they never do". Baxter implies that the Consul, in being obsessed with reaching out for meanings in nature, robs these objects in nature of their physical presence. The exterior world Lowry describes is inevitably made to co-exist with an interior one. Yet his hero does move through landscapes of destruction and waste, and landscapes that mirror his inward journey towards Hell. Inner and outer moments are experienced as one; often, it is difficult to discern a division between them. It cannot be said, though, that nature is subservient to the symbolic meaning nor vice versa. The tragic element in UTV derives from a sense of necessary identification with that external world. Denis Donoghue argues that Lowry turned realities into symbols because he didn't see realities outside himself. One must disagree with this. Lowry saw the "realities"; he, however, could not see them as separate from the consciousness that was brought to them. It is not that he constitutes his own phenomenology in terms

of his surroundings and that nature is an externalized consciousness but, rather, that the mind and nature are seen to be indivisible and contingent upon each other.

One can trace the use of any physical entity in *UTV* and discover this indivisibility. The consciousness that is extended into the two volcanoes, for example, becomes indistinguishable from them. This, however, does not suggest the volcanoes are less "real" in the physical sense. From the beginning of the novel, as Laruelle "remembers the Tragedy that occurred a year ago" (*UTV*, p.11), the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl "rose clear and magnificent into the sunset", and are felt to be protagonists in the story that is to follow. The nature of Geoffrey Firmin’s tragedy is experienced in the presence of these mighty figures in the landscape. As the Consul is being shot he "reeling, saw above him for a moment the shape of Popocatepetl, plumed with emerald snow and drenched with brilliance" (p.373). It is somewhere between the volcanoes and the ravine that the Consul desperately seeks a resolution to the forces of love, embodied in Yvonne, which draws him up with her to beauty of the volcano’s summit, and those of his own spirit that draws him down into the abyss. The ravine or Barranca which the Consul in a drunken state almost falls into, is to him at one point of the story a "... frightful cleft, the external horror of opposites! Thou mighty gulf, insatiate cormorant, deride me not, though I seem petulant to fall into thy chops" (p.134).28

The volcanoes loom large and beautiful at all the most important moments of the day. Yvonne on the day of her return to the Consul claims them as "her volcanoes, her beautiful, beautiful volcanoes" (p.49). They appear within the consciousness of both the Consul and Yvonne as emblems of both their faith in and their pessimism for their relationship. Meaning does exist in their presence, as if they mirror the experiences of the characters. The Consul in a more optimistic moment sees the volcanoes as "that image of the perfect marriage".29 Yet he is also seeing them "clear and beautiful ... under an almost pure morning sky" (p.97).

At the bull-fight the volcanoes are used structurally as a device to show the way in which the Consul and Yvonne were both united and divided. It occurs within moments of Yvonne and the Consul expressing their love for each other and agreeing to leave Mexico and begin life anew. While they exchange endearments and promises, Hugh is

---

28. See also *UTV*, p.22, where Laruelle remembers when the Consul had "... spoken to him about the spirit of the abyss, the god of storm, hurricane, that testified so suggestively to intercourse between opposite sides of the Atlantic" and also on the bus trip just prior to the experience with the dying Indian, Popocatepetl beckons them forward but is immediately contrasted with the appearance of the ravine (p.239).

29. See also *UTV*, p.243, where the volcanoes are described as being representatives of man and woman: "Popocatepetl loomed, pyramidal, to their right, one side beautifully curved as a woman’s breast, the other precipitous, jagged, ferocious."
tackling the bull. There is an instant in which Yvonne believes Hugh has been hurt and in her anxiety she "... pulled herself from the Consul ..." (p.280). This movement breaks the bond and the Consul has lost faith. Immediately Popocatepetl appears; dark clouds appear behind it, yet they are "purple masses" shot through with "the bright late sunlight, that fell too on another little silver lake glittering cool, fresh, and inviting before them ...". Yvonne sees this "lake" and notes that it is something she has not seen before. Although she does not express this observation, the Consul responds to the scene as if he knows her thoughts. His response explains that what they are seeing is a mirage: "The distant prospect of Cradle Mountain had consoled him a while, and then he saw this water ... Unfortunately it turned out to be sunlight blazing on myriads of broken bottles" (p.280). The mirage, in fact is created by a broken green-house roof belonging to El Jardin Xicotancatl. One becomes aware that the possibility of Yvonne and the Consul coming together is an emotional mirage made impossible perhaps by "those broken bottles", which are both the symbols of the Consul's alcoholism, as well as the demon that causes it. The "lake" at the foot of the volcano, which doesn't exist, creates in Yvonne's mind the lake in Canada, the shores on which she sees that ideal house for them to live out their days. Within her dream, however, the elements of it are not in harmony with each other: "It was only that the litte boat of their conversation had been moored precariously; she could hear it banging against the rocks ..." (p.281). Consequently, although we know Yvonne and the Consul are together and, in the presence of this beautiful volcano, we are engaged with what their consciousness of it ignites imaginatively and emotionally. In another earlier scene in the novel the volcanoes are presented as representatives of themselves related but separated:

Beyond the barranca the plains rolled up to the very foot of the volcanoes into a barrier of murk above which rose the pure cone of old Popo, and spreading to the left of it like a University City in the snow the jagged peaks of Ixtaccihuatl, and for a moment they stood on the porch without speaking, not holding hands, but with their hands just meeting, as though not quite sure they weren't dreaming this, each of them separately on their far bereaved cots, their hands but blown fragments of their memories, half afraid to commingle, yet touching over the howling sea at night (UTV, p.72).

Popocatepetl will, on each of its appearances, make Yvonne want to yield to share herself completely with the Consul (p.69) yet she also knows that she is made sentimental by the volcanoes (p.257). The Consul tends to see in their invasions into his vision the remnants of a hope that belongs to a lost love30 (UTV, p.80). The volcanoes make him aware not only of the fact that his marriage to Yvonne is over, but they also remind him of the "Himalayas from where his father never returned" (p.82).

30. See UTV, when, after failing to make love to Yvonne the volcanoes and vultures invade his vision.
The volcanoes, appearing as they do at intense moments of the plot, give testimony to the potentiality for Tragedy: "Everywhere ... were attestations to Popocatepetl’s presence and antiquity" (p.241). The volcano with its eruptions was a complete mystery (p.242). The volcanoes are precipitous; they draw nearer to the Consul as he takes his last walk towards death: "They towered up over the jungle, into the lowering sky - massive interests moving up in the background" (p.316).

The volcanoes appear also as a backdrop to Yvonne’s and Hugh’s relationship. For Hugh they are there to be climbed. Although the Consul had considered this possibility as well, it was lost as the idea is replaced with the nature of the thing itself which, also inevitably is made to equal the meaning of his relationship with Yvonne: "Yes there it rose up before them with all its hidden dangers, pitfalls, ambiguities, deceptions ... The Consul conceives that the notion of climbing the volcano" had somehow struck them as having the significance of a lifetime together (p.291). The volcanoes are said to dominate the landscape and one sees that they do, but they are also seen to be the landscape of the mind of both the characters and the writer. Lowry is showing how one is doomed to the landscape of the mind.

Yet this method can, and does at points, come dangerously close to dealing with abstractions, even though this may not be Lowry’s whole intention. An example of this can be seen in the way the ferris wheel refers to the creative processes of the writer of the book. It demonstrates how Lowry falls victim to the modernist tendency to allegorize. One can accept that the ferris wheel could in its presence, its historical relevance and in its linguistic heritage be made to represent "Buddha’s wheel of the law" or: "... eternity, it is the instrument of eternal recurrence ..." but when Lowry has it equal to "the form of the book” he is writing an allegory of the mind of a human being. It is in instances such as this that Lowry’s novel of great tragic theme is refusing tragedy.

Ruthven argues that myths are allegories of goings-on in the universe around us. In a sense the artist’s view of creativity and its limits, the indefatigable interest in self have become the modern allegory. Although Lowry is interested in this he also works beyond it. The characters in *UTV* cannot escape the "real" physical landscape, but neither can they escape from the way it becomes part of the inner process, the reflection and the prediction of their destinies. The outside world mirrors their thoughts and also

---

31. See, for example, *UTV*, p.128: "Hugh felt a pang. On the way down he'd entertained a quite serious notion of finding time to climb Popo ...".
32. See further examples pp.236, 255, 317, 318 and 373.
causes them to change. The Consul, for example, in looking at his surroundings, notes how his "low white bungalow ... its long porch like the bridge of a ship" makes a little vision of order (p.132). As he makes this observation, however, he simultaneously becomes aware of another scene of the volcanoes "with a high indigo sun multitudinously blazing south-south-east" which, in essence blows asunder the first experience of order. The mind and experiences of the characters move between order and chaos as they also learn of hope and despair, and these states are never seen to be mutually exclusive. Kingsley Shorter argues that Lowry is concerned only with common experience - persons and things outside himself - only to the extent that his interior world is coexistent with it. 35 Although it is to be agreed with Shorter that we are dealing with the author's conscious pilgrimage through his interior landscape, it is not the case that the outside world is merely being used to focus on the interior life. The landscape, Lowry believes, does act on us and stimulates us to new thoughts and actions as much as our thoughts and actions look to the landscape for symbolic representation.

Lowry, within such a philosophical context, deals with specifically a modern consciousness within a modern world. Robbe-Grillet 36 may berate a view of the world that falsely humanizes (at least from his perspective) external phenomena, but all his protestations cannot change the fact that literature has increasingly, since the enlightenment and secularization, shown human beings as seeing the world in this way. The Romantic imagination fought a mechanical view of the universe. It insisted that what was unknowable was an essential element in the world, and not to be denied by a scientific view of that world. Human consciousness and its relationship with the world is "the unknowable" area that obsessed the Romantics, caused rebellion among "the Realists", and became the nucleus of modernism. Lowry is comfortable about writing a book that does not deal specifically with "character" in the traditional sense (but deals, instead, with "the human spirit of man") as explored in the consciousness and predicament of four "characters", 37 because he is writing a modern novel. The representation of character in twentieth century fiction is seen to have its philosophical problems. There is no inner and enduring truth of self to be grasped, and no presiding, universally-accepted pattern of order or unity for her or him to be placed within. Consciousness is seen to be in a perpetual process of becoming which is impossible to describe in any precise way.

My argument with Modernism, and how it has refused Tragedy, shares something in common with Robbe-Grillet's, in that it is critical of the kind of modernism that

36. See Robbe-Grillet, Snapshots, p.78.
replaces the empirical world with the symbol, as if the former no longer exists. The emphasis on consciousness has tended to create a distrust in treating the world as an entity that does have some kind of "objective" or empirical reality. Robbe-Grililet, however, argues against any kind of identification with objects which implies that those objects have a meaning that brings them into communion with humankind. He argues that "man sees things and he notices, now that he can escape the metaphysical pact that other men made for him in days gone by and that, by the same token he can escape slavery and fear". Consequently, Robbe-Grillet argues against any symbolism or imagery that has the writer putting or seeing meaning in things/landscape or people. It is not the presence of symbolism that is objectionable; as Jeremy Campbell notes, even in science it has been discovered that it is genetic symbolism that enables living matter to step outside the constraints imposed by physical laws. The objection is to the phenomenological world's being utilized by the writer to represent philosophical abstractions. This causes a break with nature, a movement away from humanism and the impossibility of Tragedy. Therefore, it is only a particular kind of symbolism, one which becomes allegorical, that is the enemy to tragic artistic expression.

Lowry is guilty of this, as already noted, when dealing with artistic processes, but his symbolism generally goes beyond this and suggests an attempt to break through the abstraction-filled literature to another kind of "Realism". In writing about the role of self in modern literature, John Macmurray notes that it is when the self is seen as the spectator of all time and all existence that it becomes then a mere idea, since it is excluded from participation in what it contemplates. Lowry's characters see their world but, contrary to this "modern self" Macmurray writes about, they are not excluded from participating in what is contemplated. Instead, their contemplation is seen to participate in what is being seen. Lowry's interest in the act and shape of expression includes his awareness of this interaction between "character" and nature. The Consul recognizes that there are no means of holding the world in suspension long enough to apprehend it. The Consul is seen to be constantly interpreting what he sees and feels. He is seen to experience the agony of consciousness. Lowry is always, however, conscious that he is writing, and as he explores the anguish of the Consul, attempting to deliver himself from the prison of himself, he is simultaneously exploring his own imprisonment. In calling his readers' attention back to the physical world and its endemic symbolism he draws attention to the disease in modernism - one which he fights as well as contracts.

38. Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots*, p.82.
Whereas some modern writers\textsuperscript{41} believe that in the face of a world where things are falling apart ontologically and historically, artifice is perhaps the only reality one can count on, Lowry, explores the nature of the modern consciousness which performs both dubious and actual operations on the content of experience. He is not as optimistic as his forebears. His protagonist, the Consul, is also Shelley's "dark magician" from \textit{Alastor}:

\begin{quote}
O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world (Lines 686-692).
\end{quote}

The Consul misquotes "end" for "law" in his rendition of this and it is a significant misquotation. Whereas Shelley invokes the possible death of the artist, Lowry (via the Consul) sees, in the death of the magician/artist, the end of the world. He is invoking also the end of the possibility of art. This is presented as tragic and seen to coincide with the despoliation of the world of humankind, and the condition of the serious spirit of the modern world. As Malcolm Bradbury characterizes it: "His heroes move through landscapes of destruction and waste, landscapes of hell in which symbolic ruination abounds, seeking the restitution of the paradisical garden".\textsuperscript{42} It is the ideal arena for a Faustian tragedy. The Faust archetype is used in \textit{UTV} (by reference to Marlowe's \textit{Dr Faustus} and Goethe's \textit{Faust}) as a means of watching Geoffrey Firmin in his roles as a man fallen from Grace and that of a black magician cum artist. Th subject matter of \textit{UTV} deals with the fall of man and his struggle for some kind of redemption. His struggle is seen to be occurring under the weight of the past. One becomes conscious of how there is both a continuity with the plight of the Faust figure of the past and a dissimilarity with it. The dissimilarity with it is evident in the way Lowry, within the modernist framework, uses the archetype to explore the "battle for the survival of human consciousness",\textsuperscript{43} rather than for its literal dramatization in a character.

The actual design of the book reflects Lowry's interest in understanding consciousness. We are not told in the first chapter that Yvonne and the Consul are dead. In fact it is not clear until the book is read that the narrative precedes, and not follows, the conversation between Virgil and Laruelle in Chapter One. It also, in the final analysis, draws attention to the presence of dead people and history as being part

\textsuperscript{41} For example, Proust, Joyce and Virginia Woolf.


\textsuperscript{43} The Consul implies in these words to Laruelle that this battle is more important than coming to terms with his love for Yvonne; see \textit{UTV}, p.221.
of present consciousness. In particular, Lowry is interested in the final frontiers of modern consciousness. The Faust archetype sets the scene, not only of the man sick at soul, but also one existing in a sick era.

There are three kinds of consciousness explored in this novel.

(I) The first concerns the processes of consciousness. It is where the subject matter is the creative awareness of the writer. It involves the attempt to understand consciousness at work as it sets up its artefact. Lowry’s letter to Jonathan Cape shows the extent to which this was his intention. Lowry tries to describe the process whereby meaning is posited. It is not, as Corrigan pointed out, a logical meaning that Lowry pursues but, instead, an ontological one. It is in this sense that Lowry becomes victim to a form of modernism that leads the vision away from human action and towards abstraction. One is aware of this most when the characters become emblems for Lowry’s thought processes, and when the Consul, in an alcoholic state, characterizes his consciousness as an abyss of modern man.

(II) The second kind of consciousness dramatizes the relationship between the human being and nature. It shows that the perceptions of the characters affect the world around them as much as they are affected by them. It is a literary manifestation of the scientific principles of Quantum Mechanics. In scenes in which this occurs Lowry is pushing beyond the limits of modernist views of consciousness. It does present the world as enigmatic, yet not via abstractions but, instead, by demanding an acceptance of the physical reality of the phenomenal world and the part it plays in our sense of self.

(III) The third kind of consciousness entails the personalized moral, political and psychological sensibilities of the characters. Lowry tells a story in which the characters act out an awareness of the inextricable tangle of guilt, pain, suffering, and helpless involvement. One accordingly understands the meaning of the Consul’s intense identification with the pelado on the bus. The pelado, drunk and impoverished, has stolen the dead Indian’s money; ”pelado” means ”peeled one” - one who is both victim and victimizer. The Consul remarks in this context: ”What’s the use of escaping from ourselves?”. Under the Volcano dramatizes the lack of communication between the four

45. Each of the characters is a failed artist of some kind. Their experiences of failure echo the Consul’s though on different levels and with different levels of intensity.
46. UTV, p.35.
47. See chapter three of this thesis for an explication of this scientific theory.
characters, and their inability finally to communicate their art-form to the world. This is the literal level in the book and includes each of the characters trying to make sense of life. They are seen to do this by drawing from their past experiences, by trying to analyse them in order to sort out the extent to which they are hindered by them or nurtured by them. Thus Yvonne thinking of “the circumspect endeavours to obtain one’s bearings in a world now frankly hostile” (p.261) thinks interchangeably of the relationship she had once with her father and now with the Consul. It is all a puzzle and implied in the contrast is the repetition of certain patterns from her past to her present. The failed father, who made numerous attempts to succeed at living, had spent years brooding and eventually had lost his mind and was characterized as “being strictly alcoholic in character” (p.262). Yvonne re-experiences the emotions of the period and one is aware of the way that they are being repeated in her present life:

[Yvonne] ... glanced again at the Consul who was sitting meditative with pursed lips apparently intent on the arena. How little he knew of this period of her life, of that terror, the terror, terror that still could wake her in the night from that recurrent nightmare of things collapsing .... (p.262).

The retrospective quality to the novel, personified in the characters analysing their past, is seen against Lowry’s analysis of the weight of history on consciousness in a more generalized sense. The three kind of consciousness that I have outlined are all set within historical and political frameworks. The writer, and his characters, are deliberately written into the text as products of both a personalized history and larger historical forces.

The dramatization of these three kinds of consciousness does not result in the creation of a Tragedy. It does, nevertheless, draw attention to its possible rebirth in the way it seeks to discover a new kind of realism. Lowry attempts to re-unite language and experience by emphasizing the impact of an empirical world on the processes of consciousness and vice versa. Modern science has discovered that the establishment of complete neutrality between the observer and the observed in order to manipulate nature is now an obsolete, scientific approach. The world is seen by Lowry, in keeping with modern scientific thought, as a complexity where everything is part of a dynamic

---

48. This is apparent in many ways: Letters are lost, not delivered, or delayed by the postal system; the Consul and Yvonne are unable to tell each other of their love and they are unable to achieve a sexual union; Laruelle and Hugh both fail in their love for Yvonne.

49. See Lowry, *Selected Letters*, pp.330-31, where he writes “... unquestionably what one is after is a new form, a new approach to reality itself”.

50. Baxter, argues on p.3, that Lowry’s attempt to reunify language with experience leads to an increasing weight of self-consciousness which in turn paralyses his relation to words and things. I think that this is the case when Lowry is dealing with the character as a modern artist (i.e. consciousness one) but not when they are acting out their views of life (consciousness three) or when the latter is done by the character relating to nature (consciousness two).
flow. And yet, although he may dramatize a Heisenberg viewpoint in presentation of character and nature, it did not result in withdrawing language from an empirical world that was discovered once more to be physically unknowable. The lessons of the new physics of the 1920s were taken too far by the arts, which reflected its discoveries by creating art-forms, based on irrationality, chance and intuition. Heisenberg made his colleagues realize that one could not define something if one could not measure it. However, this did not mean that the object is not there. Although the electron in physics is not measurable, its observers know more about it after it is observed than before observation.

The Consul’s alcoholic state captures this dual image of being unable to define strictly the external world yet, necessarily, being a part of it. Geoffrey Firmin’s drinking may on the literal level of the text suggest his evasion of responsibility - his wish to be separated from life and a means of denying love and faith in life but, as a writer-character, it suggests levels of meaning that relate to the twentieth century. The modern writer is characterized as a mystic who has abused his powers. The Consul’s alcoholic state makes absurd the possibility of his being able to discover his identity as with traditional tragic heroes. This was once the aim of Tragedy, but Modernism brought about a poisoning of the mind that caused an obsession with its capacity to think and severed it from its drunken state that Lowry, via the Consul, hopes to recapture and reunite with the empirical world. Perhaps then it would be less blinded by rational reflection. These wishes, though, are seen to be ungranted. Hugh recognizes that it wasn’t “drinking somehow” (UTV, p.121) that the Consul was solely engaged in, when in these drunken states. Instead, it is as if he, as the mystic who knows he has abused his creative powers and lost touch with meaning, might find in this state a means of returning to a sense of the Divine:

Ah none but he knew how beautiful it all was, the sunlight, sunlight, sunlight flooding the bar of El Puerto de Sol, flooding the watercress and oranges, or falling in a single golden line as if in the act of conceiving a God, falling like a lance straight into a block of ice (UTV, p.95).

The Consul’s alcoholism is a vehicle that gives expression to his alienation in the world and, also, it serves to illustrate the problems that plague the consciousness of a modern artist. The "God" in the Consul’s block of ice is one, as far as modernists are concerned, that belongs to a lost ice-age. The Consul would like to have completeness,

51. See Fred Alan Wolf, Taking the Quantum Leap, pp.20-23, where he explains his analysis of Werner Heisenberg’s principle of Interdeterminism which brought to scientific method the end of the idea of the passive observer. It was realized that every time the tiniest of particles was observed (the electron) that this act of observation was influencing what was seen.
52. Lowry, Selected Letters, p.71.
to have his world (however blurred) and his God, the body and the soul, but the twentieth-century human being made God originate in man. When the modern scientific and artistic imagination failed to replace the metaphysical God there was no realm of transcendence from which to draw.

The major theme of the book stems from Lowry’s awareness of the burden of the mind’s obligation to interpret. Although one part of the book dynamically shows his characters in contact with nature, the other half acts out what Lowry recognizes to be the destructive powers of the intellectual imagination which, in modernism, violently detaches itself from external reality. Lowry invokes the history of art to serve as a backdrop to a presentation of four artists (the Consul, Hugh, Laruelle and Yvonne) who are unable to create art or live life. They are all like Shelley’s Alastor (line 77), in that they seek "strange truths in undiscovered lands”. Lowry, however, joins his "characters" in their journeys. His preoccupations become woven into the symbolic network of the book and are difficult to distinguish from the thoughts of his characters.

Lowry and his characters, either look at the creation behind the "poetry", or debate the problems of how to live and act. This makes them incapable of experiencing life and love. Under the Volcano, nevertheless, explores all those elements that are usually present in great Tragedy. Yet, as this is done, there is the prevailing absence of all the old gods; we enter an absurd universe where, as Lowry’s mind pushes towards a new frontier of consciousness, the Consul’s awareness moves towards suicide.

**Action and Politics in Under the Volcano**

At the beginning of the novel as Laruelle relives the events of the year before we are introduced to the potentiality for tragedy in the following thought:

What had happened just a year ago today seemed already to belong in a different age .... Though Tragedy was in the process of becoming unreal and meaningless it seemed one was still permitted to remember the days when an individual life held some value and was not a mere misprint in a communique (UV, p.11).

The individual life that is referred to here is perhaps Yvonne’s, or perhaps the Consul’s. In terms of the whole book this does not matter as the characters tend to be parts of that last individual, splintered into parts for Lowry’s investigation. The absence of action prevents any full development of character. However, there is much reconsideration of action. The character Hugh is deliberately construed as being a person with a capacity for action. The contrast with the Consul is obvious, as he does not suffer from the Consul’s metaphysical longing, and is not as self-conscious. Hugh wishes to help his fellow man by political action. The Consul wishes to refurbish the world with a magical essence. In combination they might be equal to an "individual"
from Greek Tragedy in which the sacred and the political were integrated within the social structure.

Hugh is meant to represent:

... the youth of every man. Moreover his frustrations with his music, with the sea, in his desire to be good and decent, his self deceptions, triumphs, defeats and dishonesties ... his trouble with his guitar, are everyone's frustrations, triumphs, defeats, dishonesties, and troubles with their *quid pro quo* of a guitar. And his desire to be a composer or musician is everyone's innate desire to be a poet in some way, while his desire to be accepted at sea is everyone's desire, conscious or unconscious to be a part - even if it doesn't exist - of the brotherhood of man.53

Despite Lowry's protestations that Hugh is a man of action, *Under the Volcano* does not dramatize this. Instead, it discusses and explores this other side of man, abandoned by the Consul, the side that would in combination with the Consul's spiritual concerns make a tragic character.

Hugh does not, again in contrast with the Consul, see his own art as being isolated from the political sphere. Yet the text implies that they do not connect well, and it is in this implication that one hears the voice of Lowry questioning the disjunction between art and contemporary events. Hugh is obsessed with being of value but as a modern man, he questions all his attempts at authenticity:

... And yet it is nothing I am beginning to atone, to atone for my past, so largely negative, selfish, absurd, and dishonest? That I propose to sit on top of a shipload of dynamite bound for the hard-pressed loyalist armies? ... Though what on earth he expected it to be, if none of his friends knew he was going to do it, was not very clear (*UTV*, p.156).

Hugh is also able to admit that the Consul's answer to this, that the whole stupid beauty of such a decision made by any one at a time like this, must lie in that it was so futile, hinted uncomfortably close to the truth. Hugh wanted to stand out as an active, participating hero, who could say he did something for humanity because he felt it should be done. He was not to be accused of being carried away by the popular wave of enthusiasm from Spain; he was acting for loftier motives.

Hugh becomes frustrated with his ambition to be the spokesman of the political victims through his music. In brooding on his past, he decides his music is a front, a screen for bad faith and, finally, that his music is apolitical. Yet, at another point, he wonders at his rejection of his music which, after all, could be sung "if only to recapture some early joy in merely singing, and playing the guitar" (p.186).

Hugh's exploration into the past, his experience as a sailor, as a Cambridge

student, and as a journalist lead him to believing that he is haunted by his tendency to look for a pose: "Accept it; one is a sentimentalist, a muddler, a realist, a dreamer, coward, hypocrite, hero, an Englishman in short, unable to follow out his own metaphors" (p.186). Yvonne characterizes Hugh as submitting to "that absurd necessity he felt for action ..." (p.277). Hugh may not, like the Consul and Laruelle, dramatize his exploration into the inner processes of his art, but he does dramatize the obsessive questioning of a modern human being attempting to be whole in a splintered world. Lowry presents Hugh somewhat ironically. He is Lowry's metaphoric response to the realist school in literature. Lowry seems to be arguing that, being worried about the republican cause alone, is to be living only one aspect of life. On the other hand, Lowry is concerned with his political world. The text seems to explore its place in relation to the more metaphysical concerns of the Consul. Under the Volcano is constantly drawing into its symbolic world the concerns of politics. We are left at the end of the book with the two sides of the human being. The Consul, from the beginning, has been "teetering over the awful unbridgeable void" (p.39), as he seeks to sustain some kind of equilibrium through mastery of the magical as set out in the Cabbala. His dread is that experienced by all modern artists, who have sought reality through symbolism. It gives rise to the query that perhaps there is nothing beyond the frontiers they attempt to see beyond.

Hugh, on the other hand, is modern man seeing the fact of political questions and the impact they have on a caring person's mind. In contrast to Hugh's concern, we have Laruelle, who "had few emotions about the war, save that it was bad. One side or the other would win. And in either case life would be hard. Though if the allies lost it would be harder. And in either case one's own battle would go on" (p.15). Laruelle, interested only in his art-form and his failure with it, sees political characters and events as elements to be used for his art.

The political condition of the world enters most of the conversations throughout the book. The conversation between Yvonne and Hugh on their ride together includes Yvonne's repeating the Consul's opinion on the sentiment that drove people to die in Spain for the Loyalists (p.105). It is in this conversation between Yvonne and Hugh that we learn that Hugh has lost two close friends to political causes. Their deaths have

55. See, for example, UTV, p.33, how Laruelle thinks of using the character of Trotsky for his film.
56. See, for example, UTV, p.83, when the Consul and Hugh discuss the war and further on pp.112, 120-121, 187, 191, 301-305, 309-313, 372-373.
affected him profoundly and, thus, the Consul's view about sentiment contrasts two very different perspectives. What draws them together is that in one sense they are both romantics. The Consul appears at points actually to enjoy and need his suffering as he pursues his magical vision of the world. Hugh, on the other hand, dreams his romantic dreams of "steering now ... the world, out of the Western Ocean of its misery" (p.108).

After his ride with Yvonne he looks out over the landscape and hears in it a cry that threw back into the wind, some youthful password of courage and pride - the passionate, yet so nearly always hypocritical, affirmation of one's soul perhaps, he thought, of the desire to be, to do good, what was right. It was as though he was grazing now beyond this expanse of plains and beyond the volcanoes out to the wide rolling blue ocean itself, feeling it in his heart still, the boundless impatience, the immeasurable longing (p.128).

The Consul's drinking, which Yvonne recognizes "isn't drinking, somehow", and Hugh’s desperate need to act towards the good of the world, are equally tied to a romantic sense of self, or driven by that "immeasurable longing". Yvonne’s dream to take the Consul to Canada is paralleled in Hugh’s mind as having as much probability of success as his decision to take arms to the Ebro (p.125). In this moment of hope that Yvonne and Hugh share, Hugh conceives the Canadian shack as perched on a lake, and the forest nearby in his vision becomes "a crystal forest". Hugh, in this state of exultation, also, feels redeemed from his political betrayal of Juan (p.126).

The Consul, Hugh and Yvonne travel together on a bus to see the bull-fights. On the bus journey Hugh experiences his political convictions in many forms. The landscape that passes quickly by with its burnt out Cathedrals is, of course, related to revolution which, in turn causes him to daydream about being a "Hero of the Soviet republic" (p.242). It is in this context that the bus comes across a dying Indian. Everyone is frightened of involving themselves and their excuses and discussion of the reasons for their withdrawal became "more and more theoretical, till at last the discussion began to take a political turn" (p.248). Hugh is unable to do anything. His awareness of his helplessness in the situation, and of the evident disinterest of all the passengers for a dying man, works as a commentary by Lowry on the state of the world. The fact that Hugh concedes that perhaps nothing would have done any good for this dying Indian (whom Yvonne, the Consul and Hugh had seen at different times of the day) makes it "worse than ever" (p.252). "

The Consul's last drunken conversation parodies and mocks Hugh's humanitarian gestures towards the down-trodden. He points out that this era is without a fundamental moral or political philosophy (p.311), that people act heroically for reasons of self-interest and vanity (p.312) and that great literature (e.g., by Tolstoy) taught humankind that interference was destructive, not creative (p.314). The Consul's stand
against Hugh's political views moves to incorporate Yvonne whom he also accuses of interfering with his own interests of drinking his way to Hell.

As the novel ends the Consul is seen in his last actions on Earth to behave in the way Hugh would have condoned. He accuses the police, who are undoubtedly fascist, with some vague relationship with the elusive Weber figure,57 of killing the Indian. He shows, in fact, an ardent interest in political and moral issues that he a few hours prior to this moment had mocked. Thus he yells at these officials: "Only the poor, only through God, only the people you wipe your feet on ..." (p.372). His words do not make much sense. In essence the words are irrational and could not be seen to represent a coherent stand. The Consul is inebriated; nevertheless, the spirit of his jumbled words of accusation and political jargon associates him with the plight of the down-trodden and the politically exploited. This does not mean that the Consul's attack on Hugh for his political zeal and "interference" in other people's causes, for hedonistic purposes, is without value. Lowry shows the futility of both involvement and detachment and leaves the question of right or wrong suspended. If Lowry makes any value-oriented statement, it has more to do with a world in which there is the need for the "pelado",58 and no help for him. When the Consul is killed he feels "he had become the pelado, the thief - yes, the pilferer of meaningless muddled ideas out of which his rejection of life had grown ... Now he was the one dying by the wayside where no good Samaritan would halt" (p.375). Lowry dramatizes both the ontological condition of humankind in this world as well as the political one in which, finally, people are unable to care for each other or make sense of either their own actions or those of others. Although, supposedly, Hugh is the man of action in the text, the novel explores the problems of acting in this world, rather than the dramatization of any action, and so Yvonne is led to comment on Hugh's antics in the bull-ring: "I don't think he means to show off, ... No, he was simply submitting to that absurd necessity he felt for action, so wildly exacerbated by the dawdling inhuman day" (p.277). Hugh can fight the bull, but he is unable to fight the forces that kill the Indian and exploit the poor.

57. Weber is met by Hugh who refers to him as an "American semi-fascist bloke" (p.101). Weber's voice speaking of "bloody revolution" returns to Hugh's memory, while looking at the Mexican landscape (p.503). At the bull-fight Yvonne asks the Consul who "the man in dark glasses" (p.275) is. It appears he is following them. The Consul doesn't answer the question though his response although, supposedly, referring to the bull in a bull-fight, appears to answer the question if indeed the strange man is Weber: "Strange about the bull ... He's so elusive - There's your enemy, but he doesn't want to play ball today .... Next time you meet him you might not recognize him as an enemy at all" (p.275).

58. The pelado refers back to the Indian dying by the wayside. It is the person whose dying is treated with general indifference (p.246), around whom was a quiet rustling of futility" (p.247). Generally, it was agreed that his imminent death was somebody else's business (p.248).
Is the final descent of the Consul left deliberately ambiguous? Although the dead dog sent flying down the abyss after the dead Consul makes for a nihilistic interpretation, there is, nevertheless, the suggestion, however faint, of a redemptive meaning. Dick Harrison points out that in both Christian and Cabbbalistic imagery the Consul is potentially a saviour: "Followed in his drunken rambles by an uncanny succession of pariah dogs he comes to suggest the messiah on the first card of the tarot pack, the divine fool followed by a dog". The Consul dies, because he allows the officials to think he is Hugh. Perhaps he is, somewhat ironically, dying for his people, or perhaps he is reaching the inevitable dissolution at the end of a Faustian descent in pact with the devil. Early in the novel, we are told that the events of a year ago approximate a tragedy in that "the horror of the present world" (p.11) has not swallowed it up like a "drop of water". This quote, which has Faustian overtones, sets the scene for tragic possibilities. The question as to whether the Consul is doomed or redeemed at the end of the novel reverberates back to this approximation or possibility of tragedy. The Consul has expressed his wish to get back to Hell at the end of Chapter Ten but, in all of his descents throughout the novel he also wishes to ascend and escape his doom. In his final descent, he sees the summit of the volcano, and imagines fleetingly that he had found succour after all.

*Under the Volcano* contains poetically and, in its literal content, both a downward and upward movement. The calling from the abyss and from the above places humankind as balanced precariously between two alternatives. The laws of a tragic universe are uncodified, but the values that emerge in tragic action are the objects of exploration and moral curiosity. When Hugh is worried about the Republican cause and the Consul is worried about the cosmic structure, neither of them is thinking or feeling outside a system that has moral concerns. The Consul in search of a "secret knowledge" is perhaps aspiring upwards towards a poetry that will contain Divinity. Simultaneously, the Consul is aware (as is Lowry) that God's imagination will never be in the speech of humankind, that perhaps, inevitably humankind is dragged down into an abyss when fully confronted by such a reality. Early in the novel, the failed film-maker, Laruelle, looks into the ravine whilst remembering the dead Consul: "... looking down.

60. See Anthony R. Kilgallin, "Faust and *Under the Volcano*", *Canadian Literature*, no. 26 (Autumn), 1965, 44, where he notes that the novel opens on a metaphor reminiscent of the famous line of Marlowe's *Faustus*: "See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament", as Faustus pleads for one drop of blood to save his soul. The opening scene Kilgallin is referring to is "a gigantic red evening, whose reflection bled away in the deserted swimming pools scattered everywhere like so many mirages" (p.10).
It was too dark to see the bottom, but: here was finality indeed, and cleavage ... wherever you turned the abyss was waiting for you round the corner" (p.21).

Lowry's choice of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as the ideological framework of the novel is understood in relation to an artistic state that knew its source to be found in both hell and in paradisical tranquillity. The symbols of Hell that abound in the novel are matched with symbols of release and freedom. Images of flight and beauty are, primarily, associated with Yvonne. It is true, however, that if the focus is on the Consul, whom in every way conceivable has abdicated from life, it is difficult to find hope in what Yvonne represents. The final demise is, after all, at the hands of the Consul, who frees the horse that tramples her to death. The serious questions the novel asks about political action, individual freedom and the possibilities of art are not answered in any form by the indignity of the Consul's death. Yet what one is left with even in the final descent is a vision of towering volcanoes that aspire forever upward. It is part of Lowry's art to suggest a state as definite as Death\(^\text{61}\) and Damnation and then to shift the focus towards its opposite condition. Birds and butterflies appear in relation to Yvonne but when connected with the Consul they too are often seen to plummet. Even the writing of the Consul's letter that Laruelle reads at the cinema bar has this paradoxical movement to it:

But there was no mistaking, even in the uncertain light, the hand, half crabbed, half generous, and wholly drunken, of the Consul himself, the Greek e's, flying buttresses of d's, the t's like lonely wayside crosses save where they crucified the entire word, the words themselves slanting steeply downhill, though the individual characters seemed as if resisting the descent, braced, climbing the other way (UTV, p.41).

When Laruelle walks to town at the beginning of the novel his recall of his love for Yvonne is accompanied by the swarming of birds (p.19). But they are ugly, black birds and remind us, retrospectively that the birds associated with Yvonne throughout the book could no longer soar in expectation of her dreams being fulfilled. Yvonne had arrived in town surrounded by butterflies, "zigzagging overhead" (p.49) and she is filled with the spirit of her own flight that had flown to meet the Consul (p.50). Yvonne, as if to meet the Consul on his grounds, is moved by her understanding and they embrace "or so it all but seemed, passionately". Lowry does not let this moment remain poised,

\(^{61}\) Death is a major theme throughout the novel. The action occurs on the Day of the Dead. The Consul speaks of his soul dying, and reference is made to Yvonne's dead child. The Indian, who appears many times throughout the day ends up dying on the road, an event around which political, as well as metaphysical questions, are posed. On Yvonne's arrival in town there is a strange reference to the "shipping of a corpse". The palace Maximilian is in decay. Geoffrey recalls Dr Faustus's death, vultures, and pariah dogs appear, and the ravine appears continually in the text as a reminder of the abyss that awaits every one both in philosophical speculation and in death itself.
instead, it is followed immediately by: "somewhere, out of the heavens, a swan, transfixed, plummeted to earth" (p.75). As they face each other desperately attempting to prevent the wrong word or nuance collapsing any possibility of relationship they argue about the identity of a red bird. The silence that follows this exchange is broken by the telephone, but not before these little red birds are used to describe the Consul’s state: "The movements of some more little red birds in the garden, like animated rosebuds, appeared unbearably jittery and thievish. It was as though the creatures were attached by sensitive wires to his nerves. When the telephone rang his heart almost stopped beating" (p.81).

When associated with the Consul these creatures of flight are ominous. As he approaches Yvonne in bed "vague images of grief and tragedy flickered in his mind. Somewhere a butterfly was flying out to sea: lost" (p.92). Later a response to the volcanoes as a dual image of a perfect marriage is blown apart by the presence of vultures "enormously high ... waiting ... that hovered there like burnt papers floating from a fire".62 Black vultures appear again, like a premonition, after the Consul suggests going to the bull-fight (p.15),63 vultures which Hugh is moved to term later on, as "-xopilotes, who want only for the ratification of death" (p.254).

The picture on Laruelle’s wall called Los Borrochones, which the Consul recalls in his final alcoholic state (p.361), tells the tale of those that soar upwards and those destined to darker depths. The drunkards are seen to plunge below, while happier couples soar towards heaven. There are some lone females "casting half-jealous glances downward after their plummeting husbands" (p.203). In this moment the Consul accepts that he is in hell and he experiences a "curious calm". When the Consul entertains the idea that he will leave with Yvonne it is associated with soaring: "... Let’s for Jesus Christ’s sweet sake get away ... - into a wild sky full of stars at rising, and Venus and the golden moon at sunrise, and at noon blue mountains with snow and blue cold rough water - " (p.278).64 The truth, nevertheless, lies with that moment of calm experienced in Hell. The Consul is more like the scorpion who "cares not for priest nor for poor peon" (p.191), whose sting will only be for himself. In the bar-room of the Farolito the dead scorpion, the Consul’s notion of a beautiful bird, represents again the Consul, who not wanting to be saved, "had stung itself to death" (p.339). Yvonne, the Consul realizes, offered him a way out of his abyss; he knows that to go with her meant

62. This image carries in it the imaginary house of dreams that goes up in flames (p.337) and also Lowry’s loss of a manuscript that was victim to a fire.
63. See also pp.155, 255, 318, 324.
64. The Consul’s romantic wish parodies Hugh’s memory of freeing the seagull in his childhood. This seagull is called “hunter of edible stars” and in its flight to freedom it "soared away on angelic wings over the freezing estuary" (p.155).
to accept life (p.361). Before he dies, the Consul reads letters Yvonne had written that he had lost and was now reading for the first time. These letters tell him that he could find the light: "You are one born to walk in the light ... for the spirits of light will help you and bear you up in spite of yourself and beyond all opposition you may offer" (p.365).

In the end it is Yvonne who soars up alone like the allegory in Laruelle's picture. Her pursuit of happiness has been like Hugh's seagull: "hunter of edible stars". Her fantasies always include birds and, in her pursuit of the Consul through the forest, there are "eddies of green and orange birds everywhere" (p.317) and vultures (p.318). The freeing of the eagle contains within it her hope and her despair:

... - she was right, it knew it was free - up soaring, with a sudden cleaving of pinions into the deep dark blue pure sky above, in which at that moment appeared one star. No compunction touched Yvonne. She felt only an inexplicable secret triumph and relief: no one would ever know she had done this; and then, stealing over her, the sense of utter heartbreak and loss (UTV, p.321).

Yvonne's final visions enclose the agony of the day, of her life and the futility of her dreams. She sees again the butterflies that surrounded her on her arrival, the town from the vantage of the ferris wheel; the constellations of stars that belonged to the Consul's "secret knowledge"; and the horse that kills her which is, at once, the horse that held the dead Indian and the one she rode as a film star. She sees also her drunken husband, and their dream house and its demise in flames. The final flicker of vision is one where Yvonne felt herself suddenly gathered upwards and borne towards the stars, through eddies of stars scattering aloft with ever wider circlings like rings on water, among which now appeared, like a flock of diamond birds flying softly and steadily towards Orion, the Pleiades (UTV, p.339).

Whereas Yvonne faces her reality, and then ascends to her heaven, the Consul in his last hours, becomes aware of the extent to which he has rejected all that pertained to the light. It is as if his consciousness of the darker questions of existence can, finally, only be answered from the depths of despair. The barranca that consumes him is one that he has recognized as "his home" (p.340). The two deaths act out Laruelle's picture. Even at the time that the Consul looks at the Los Borrachones, he has a longing for the bar Farolito and Parian, which is where he ends his life. He thinks of this place with longing, and actually plans to go there after the bull-fight. For him, it offers a "healing love", for it was "part of the calm, the greatest longing he had every know. The Farolito" (p.203). So what is the nature of this place for which he longs?

65. See UTV, p.273, where Yvonne imagines their house in Canada a fantasy that includes a heron, kingfishers, seagulls and swallow.
The description of the Farolito describes the Consul's obsessions. It is a place that appears small until one becomes aware that it is composed of "numerous little rooms each smaller and darker than the last, opening one into another, the last and darkest of all being no larger than a cell" (p.204). It suggests a labyrinth of his own mind. The questions the Consul asks of reality, of God, of magic lead perhaps to this tiny cell, the darkest of its kind. He sees these rooms as ones in which diabolical plots must be hatched, atrocious murders planned, "as when Saturn was in Capricorn, life reached bottom". He also sees the ordinary people dreaming at the door while "great wheeling thoughts hovered in the brain". It is in this inn that a horribly ugly and diseased beggar had mistaken him for Christ. It is a place, that has its atmosphere of sorrow and evil. It is the place which he had watched many dawns explode over the Sierra Madre, from which he had seen ordinary life go on, despite the cosmic, emotional and intellectual chaos that fragmented his mind and his world. Finally it is the place that best accommodates his spirit and he knows, whilst understanding Laruelle's picture, that "soon he will embrace" it like one does "a wife". The Consul's final "embrace" with the ravine also contains reference to the political world outside his philosophical obsessions: "... the world itself was bursting, bursting into black spouts of villages ... the inconceivable pandemonium of a million tanks, through the blazing of ten million burning bodies" (p.376).

The Consul dies as a lost human being. The knowledge he finds in the darkest corner of his mind is commensurate with the bottom of the ravine. The world outside that contains political crisis and his love for Hugh and Yvonne becomes secondary compared to those forces of the universe that shatter him. Weather, wind and beauty feature for the Consul as forces that "gallop out of no-where across the fields of the mind", and as they do so the Consul is conscious that, beyond this thinking, there are further calamities being sent to shatter him (p.149). Under the Volcano enacts the discovery of tragic knowledge, but the discoverer, who is not redeemed or enlightened, except by knowing the dimensions of his despair, is not a tragic protagonist. He is modern man for whom "... from above, below, from the sky, and, it might be, from under the earth, came a continual sound of whistling, gnawing, rattling, even trumpeting" (p.144).

Humanism: Hope and Love in Under the Volcano

The night before Yvonne returns to the Consul he has, in a drunken state, visited a church where he has prayed for the capacity to make Yvonne happy, and to be delivered "from this dreadful tyranny of self" (p.291). In this scene the Consul, as in his death, believes that "sinking low" will bring him closer to the truth: "'Teach me to love again, to love life' he asks, but he decides that this is not the point and asks 'Where is
love? Let me truly suffer. Give me back my purity, the knowledge of the mysteries, that I have betrayed and lost - Let me be truly lonely, that I may honestly pray. Let us be happy again somewhere, if it is only together, if its only out of this terrible world. Destroy the World!” (p.291). The Consul’s prayer establishes the framework of his life. He would like to love and to understand life’s questions and his world. He, nevertheless, believes that to know the latter he must be alone and must undergo suffering. His plight means that his life becomes one in which he is unable to love. It is fitting that as Yvonne, the woman he loved, but could not love, dies a violent death he is tossed into the abyss at the foot of the volcano. The love of Yvonne is shown in this novel to be necessary but, at the same time, impossible.

The glacial rock that Yvonne contemplates in a shop window on the morning of her return to the Consul symbolizes their relationship. It is "a photographic enlargement purporting to show the disintegration of a glacial deposit in the Sierra Madra, of a great rock split by forest fires" (p.59). Yvonne becomes preoccupied with this disintegrated rock as they, together, continue their walk away from the centre of the town. She wonders if there is some way of saving the rock "whose immutability so short a time ago no one would have dreamed of doubting" (p.59). Yet she knows that as the halves of the rocks are severed, so is she from the Consul. Each separate being had cancelled the power that might have held them as a unity: "She was one of the rocks and she yearned to save the other, that both might be saved" (p.60). Yvonne from her return that fateful day has a hope for a reintegrated love that she knows from the beginning is hopeless. The Consul has left the ordinary world of things and events; he is locked up in his psyche, obsessed with the mystery behind such things. The glacial rock was split by forest fires; the final severing of Yvonne and the Consul will be at their death. Yvonne will die with her vision of a burning forest destroying their dream house (p.336); the Consul dies with the image of the world torn apart with the "blazing of ten million bodies, falling, into a forest, falling -" (p.376). The sign outside Laruelle’s house that "one cannot live without love" echoes throughout the book, as each character attempts unsuccessfully to love. Finally, the Consul embraces death. It is important to realize, fully, that the Consul is not just murdered, his death is self-willed and self accepted.66 He sought out the fascist stronghold, as he sought out cantinas and drink. Even as his death is imminent one learns "He could have prevented it even now. He would not prevent it". The fascist bar was what he loved; it was "the paradise of his despair" (p.364).

66. See Chet Taylor, "The Other Edge of Existential Awareness: Reading of Malcolm Lowry’s Under the Volcano", Literary Half Yearly, 14, no. 1, 1973, 138-50, where he explores the novel as being mostly about suicide, in fact, the only possible concept of tragedy in the novel is an ironic one.
If the Consul negates the possibility of love by his preference for drink and self-absorption over Yvonne, is *Under the Volcano* without a dramatization of humanism? Though the Consul denigrates himself in every imaginable way, his human significance lingers. What is dramatized is the emptiness of life, and implicit is the wish that it were otherwise. The destiny of the Consul is that he must carry the weight of history. This is not just to be applied to the political situation the world found itself in at the time the novel was written but, also, to the literary one Lowry attempts to work within. The destiny of humanity is the main idea that evolves from this novel. Lowry asks, somewhat bitterly, about the possibilities of a future for modern humankind and for artists attempting to re-negotiate a relationship between the content of art and the form it might take.

Hugh displays an unrealistic and passionate desire for goodness in chapter four, when he talks to Yvonne about his aspirations. One is meant to discern what is absurd about Hugh, but not to discount the fact that he does care about something. The novel does abound in symbols of Hell, but it also has moments of the promises of natural happiness, an example of which is seen in the ride Yvonne and Hugh take together. The description of their ride round the environs of Quauhnahuac, with the foals trotting behind them has a beautiful tranquillity. It is interrupted only when Hugh becomes conscious of himself and his need to justify his existence. Whereas he must act, the Consul must die.

The Consul dies, finally, but it is merely the last logical step away from his alcoholism, which already had brought about a kind of death in life. His drinking, which at different parts of the text is rendered as an escape, an evasion of responsibility, a separation from life, a self-worship, a denial of love, a hatred of living with a faith, is the ideal metaphor in which to set up the possibility of alternatives. Lowry’s images of hope are transitory in the novel. He argues that chapter nine is about hope. In this chapter Yvonne feels momentarily that “she had never left Geoffrey ...” (p.256); Mexico is said to be laughing “away its tragic history”; Yvonne remembers her own personal history from which she doubts she would ever escape (p.269); she dreams, nevertheless, of a house in Canada where she and the Consul might live out their lives; Hugh channels his need to act (for humanity) into his fight with a bull; Yvonne and the Consul almost believe in a future (p.280) only to have it dissipate like a mirage and, finally, it ends with the Indian carrying his father, which Lowry argues “is a restatement and universalizing of the theme of humanity struggling on under the external tragic weight of

the past.”

This chapter which is supposed to be about hope seems also to be arguing that the forces against a struggle towards meaninglessness are inevitably thwarted. The past, at both the historical and the personal level is oppressive; it is ever present and cannot be evaded; finally it brings the Consul down into the abyss.

Tragedy must entail hope; the final impression of an authentic tragedy is a hint of the future and the future's possibility. Before the Consul's final descent he experiences a moment of tranquillity, of hope, of companionship, of love as he hears music from far away:

The chords of a guitar too, half lost, mingled with the distant clamour of a waterfall and what sounded like the cries of love.

He was in Kashmir, he knew, lying in the meadows near running water among violets and trefoil, the Himalayas beyond, which made it all the more remarkable he should suddenly be setting out with Hugh and Yvonne to claim Popocatepetl ... (U4V, p. 374).

This moment he experiences is one that encompasses all of history; it is a moment that captures the mystery always inherent in the unknowable present. Lowry has attempted to give the Consul a vision of an ideal state; for a brief moment a natural perception of the good life is fused with what seems an ideal moral one. The tragic vision can tolerate this "lie" - all great tragedies combine "myth" or the ideal state with an enactment of some reality. Tragic characters, inevitably, have something of the "superman" about them; they, even in death, affirm life and, usually, suggest that humankind is capable of becoming better through its experience of living fully.

The Consul, nevertheless, experiences this hope in a dream. The event that follows it is his dismal death. There is an approximation of tragedy, but not an enactment of it. The final descent gives an image of nihilistic despair, rather than tragic despair. What is dramatized is lost hope. Tragedy cannot manifest itself through what ensues from the contemplation of lost hope, that is, consciousness of nothingness. The Consul’s last positive vision is of living in harmony with Yvonne and Hugh at his side. Within seconds she will die as he hurtles to his own death. This death does not form a contrast to his life. One does not gain a contrasting image of a man when alive devising an escape from baffling maladies. His death is the final step in a life that had given up the struggle against discovering what might have been "god-like" in itself. Finally, in the novel, Love is spent, humanism is rationalized into an abstract concept and hope reveals itself as a state of mind that emerges to remind the protagonists of what might have been but is now impossible.

Tragedy: The Enigmatic Universe

68. Ibid., p. 81.
Laruelle is aware that in this world "tragedy was in the process of becoming unreal" (p.11). Laruelle's view expresses Lowry's artistic concern. Lowry, nevertheless, if he knows he cannot write tragedy is intent on approximating it, and his final step in this approximation is to render the world as an unknowable mysterious place, in which tragedy in its purest sense should be possible. Lowry leads us through Laruelle's perspective into the centre of the story and then back again for further reconsiderations after the novel comes to its end. Part of Lowry's art is this constant re-appraisal. The need for it is connected to his sense of the world as being utterly unknowable. Lowry's mind is one that filters through his creation of all his characters; its characteristic obsession is re-assessment of the past. Consequently, Laruelle, Hugh and Yvonne spend much of the day of the novel attempting to come to terms with their past. Their preoccupations with their personal history form the appropriate image on which Lowry plays out his obsession with where the past has brought humankind. The ferris wheel in the square also revolves backwards at various points in the story. Apart from representing the instrument of eternal recurrence, Lowry explains it as "the form of the book: superficially it can be seen simply in an obvious movie sense of the wheel of time whirling backwards until we have reached the year before ...". The Consul's mind is a consciousness conceived as hell; it constantly looks back on itself in reflection, and it seizes on superstition, mythology, the knowledge of magicians, as if determined to construct an order out of its chaos. The Consul's struggle to make sense of world is dramatized as a modern struggle. The natural elements, whether the landscape or sun, wind and storm, constantly loom over the characters with a metaphorical significance that captures them attempting to find answers in a world which will contain them. The universe is mysterious. Enigma seems to exist at the very core of reality. When Yvonne helplessly asks Hugh if there is anything she can do about the Consul's drinking, he looks down in distraction at the blue wild flowers and muses: "These innocents had their problems too: what is this frightful dark sun that roars and strikes at our eyelids every few minutes?" (p.120).

Laruelle terms the coincidence that he and the Consul, after having known each other as children twenty-five years previously, ending up in Quauhnahuac and living in the same street a "favourite trick of the gods" (p.22). Lowry's world is not one that celebrates an age of faith. There is no unquestioning acceptance of a divine order which would be a state of belief that would preclude tragedy. There is, in this novel, the

70. See Geoffrey Brereton, Principles of Tragedy: a rational examination of the tragic concept in life and literature, pp.274-279, where he argues that Tragedy cannot exist within a social framework in which there is belief in one god, and that the transgression of laws in tragedy are uncodified and not tied to absolute concepts of morality.
mystery of iniquity usually dramatized in the landscape and yet there is not finally a Tragedy. Perhaps the mediaeval age of faith, when Tragedy was not written, has been replaced by a "faith" in reason. This is not to suggest the kind of faith in reason endemic to the Enlightenment period, but one in which phenomenology is dramatized in art-forms. The mind, rationalistically, watches itself in action. The symbolism Lowry employs is not akin so much to Keats' "negative capability" in which apprehension of a finally unknowable reality is practised but, instead, it is a symbolism that dissects humankind's realization that it is bound, through consciousness, to matter. Lowry, via the Consul, attempts with language to plumb the obstinate depths of nature and God. The Consul will learn to love chaos, when his consciousness fails to find order. It is as if he is struggling to identify and categorize the unconscious whilst, at the same time, trying to be aware of the mind reflecting about this aim. Consequently, nature is rendered in the language as a kind of externalized and visible consciousness that has some enigmatic relationship with the inner, intangible mental processes. There is a picture of the world, then there is a sense of the world as being controlled by a power outside of it, and embracing these thoughts is the consciousness of thinking these thoughts and the bearing they have on the unknowable universe:

Yet how interested would the doctor have been in one who felt himself being shattered by the very forces of the universe? What did even the hierophants of science know of the fearful potencies of, for them, unvintageable evil? Yet who would ever have believed that some obscure man, sitting at the centre of the world in a bathroom, say, thinking solitary miserable thoughts, was authoring their doom, that, even while he was thinking, it was as if behind the scenes certain strings were being pulled, and whole continents burst into flame, and calamity moved nearer - just as now, at this moment perhaps, with a sudden jolt and grind, calamity had moved nearer, and without the Consul's knowing it, outside the sky had darkened. Or perhaps it was not a man at all, but a child ... pulling out all the stops at random, ... and abominations dropped from the sky - a child innocent as that infant sleeping in the coffin which had slanted pasted them down the Calle Tierra del Fuego (UTV, pp.149-150).

This passage is representative of how Lowry interprets his world. His consciousness, whether focussing on "bombs threatening", or "ideas stampeding", evil and innocence, being in control or being victimized, is made visible in the descriptions of the natural world. And, yet finally, this consciousness, being unknowable, despite the rigid analytical dissection of its parts, bites into its own tail in much the same way as

71. See M.A. Corrigan, "Phenomenology and Literary Criticism", p.232, who defines phenomenology as "science of the mind"; Corrigan explains that UTV is a book about seeing: "Things, the phenomenology of experience replace people and personal epiphanies, replace creative events".
Nietzsche describes the fate of Socratic thought in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{72} Humankind is left with its enigma once more. Lowry is aware of the problems of becoming over-selfconscious. He writes of such processes, as if it is an inevitable element in living in the world at this time. Not following its dictates would only mean repressing a reality that requires dramatization as art, even though as art it carries, within it, the seeds of its own self-destruction.\textsuperscript{73}

On the more human level of the text Lowry explores the mystery that surrounds the relationship between what one wants and what one does. He questions the disconnection between intention and action. This theme first appears in the movie that is currently showing in town in the opening chapter of the novel. The movie \textit{Las Manos de Orlac} concerns the situation of a pianist, whose grafted hands are those of a murderer, hands that go on killing against the pianist's conscious will. Like the pianist, the Consul is also the artist, who comes to a full awareness of the unbridgeable gap between desire and fulfilment, between will and effect. This refers as much to his failure to love Yvonne, as it does to his failure as a writer and human being.

This theme is set amongst a larger, but related one. It is what Clifford Leech refers to as the book’s insistence that there is "a multiplicity of futures. There is what will happen, regardless. There is also the future we can imagine, and this is as much part of our experience as the thing that must be".\textsuperscript{74} Consequently, Yvonne and the Consul’s dream of living by a lake in Canada, Hugh’s dreams of becoming a marxist hero of the oppressed, and even the Consul’s wish to solve the mystery of the cosmos form part of their daily realities. That their dreams are not realized is a recognition that adds to the character’s realization of life’s mystery. Hopes, desires, intentions are continually blighted by human reaction and action.

Consequently, Hugh can incline his ear to the radio and quickly recognize the paradox of hearing "the pulse of this world beating in that latticed throat, whose voice was now pretending to be horrified at the very thing by which it proposed to be engulfed.

\textsuperscript{72} See F. Nietzsche, \textit{The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals}, trans. Francis Golffing, p.95, where he writes that the enemy to a unity within art is \textit{the} Socratic force which is antagonistic to those who see knowledge by "sheer instinct". If there is hope, it rests in the fact that science has pushed man to the point where logic must collapse "when the inquirer, having pushed to the circumference, realizes how logic in that place curls about itself and bites into its own tail, he is struck with a new kind of perception: a tragic perception, which requires to make it tolerable, the remedy of art".

\textsuperscript{73} See Baxter, p.177, who writes that the effort of language to transcend itself and become just "passionate poetic writing" (which it is), but a monument to its own death entails Lowry naming everything in order to burn it up.

the first moment it could be perfectly certain the engulfing process would last long enough" \cite{UTV, pp.157-158). Yvonne's infidelities, the Consul's drinking, Hugh's running of arms all take place despite intentions or due to confused intentions. This is the arena for tragedy. Tragedy, however, must, finally, entail responsibility for action and some enlightenment from the suffering incurred by human action. The final mystery that Tragedy offers in the hero or heroine is that courage to forgive, to be reconciled. When this occurs, one is challenged with tragedy's final inexplicability. An analysis of the kind of suffering dramatized in *Under the Volcano* shows that the novel is without this final state of mystery despite its general coverage of the ultimately unknowable cosmos.

### Suffering in *Under the Volcano*

There is no doubt that the novel's potential hero undergoes severe suffering. Dorothea Krook characterizes the suffering in tragedy as necessary in that it leads to a final affirmation; it becomes intelligible by the knowledge that it produces. This knowledge, in turn, reconciles us to "the supremacy of the universal moral order".\footnote{Dorothea Krook, *Elements of Tragedy* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1969), p.17.}

It is difficult to see in the Consul's suffering a final affirmation. He may break through to a frontier of consciousness,\footnote{See Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p.139: "Yes, just the final frontier of consciousness ..." states the Consul in an inebriated state as he attempts to explain his quest.} but this is not the kind of triumph that carries with it tragic affirmation. What Lowry expresses is that we live a life in an awareness of the inextricable tangle of guilt, pain, suffering and helpless involvement. Lowry does explore the nature of the modern human condition as being one without illusions, and this is the arena for modern tragedy. It is, however, the awareness and its processes that are acted out, rather than a representation of a human being living in this state. As noted earlier, the Consul begs to be delivered "from this dreadful tyranny of self", but even at the moment of this wish he knows it is impossible, as the truth he seeks is confined and defined by it: "Let me sink lower still, that I may know the truth" (p.319).

Steiner in *The Death of Tragedy* writes that man's dignity in tragedy lies in the very excess of his suffering. He believes that the final moments of great tragedy have a fusion of grief and joy, of lament over the fate of man and rejoicing in the resurrection of his spirit.\footnote{Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*.} In keeping with Steiner's prescription for successful tragedy, Lowry maintains that the last chapter is not depressing. He writes: "I feel you should most definitely get your catharsis, while there is even a hint of redemption, for the poor old Consul at the end, who realizes that he is after all part of humanity: and indeed ... what profundity and final meaning there is in his fate should be seen also in its universal
relationship to the ultimate fate of mankind”. If there is any hint of redemption it is practically negated by the force of the Consul’s final demise. The ultimate fate for humankind seems to be despair. Certainly Lowry has attempted to find in the consciousness of art and its relationship with life the possibilities of this despair leading beyond itself but it appears that it led, finally, to the bottom of an abyss. The Consul is led to this end by his own search for the answers to those questions that plagued him: “Is there any ultimate reality, external conscious, and ever-present ... my equilibrium ... precarious - balancing, teetering over the awful unbridgeable void, the all-but-unretractable path of God’s lightning back to God”; He does not trace the path, or bridge the void, nor does he find the capacity to love.

In a drunken state the Consul parodies these questions by transferring them to the experience of *delirium tremens*:

”... Why do people see rats? These are the sort of questions that ought to concern the world, Jacques .... Why all this biting, all these rodents, in the etymology?” Jacques, who is in this scene imagined as a presence, points out to the Consul ”... you’ve even been insulated from the responsibility of genuine suffering ... Even the suffering you do endure is largely unnecessary. Actually spurious. It lacks the very basis you require of it for its tragic nature. You deceive yourself. For instance that you’re drowning your sorrows ... Because of Yvonne and me ...” (UTV, p.222).

The Consul’s drinking turns his philosophical questions and his need for love into the arenas of his failure. The Consul’s suffering is characterized as “a sickness of the soul”, (p.11); he has a ”sourceless sorrow” (p.80); and he, much to his own anguish, finds in an alcoholic haze, exquisite beauty in sunlight “falling in a single golden line as if in the act of conceiving a God, falling like a lance straight into a block of ice” (p.95). He drinks in order to find where despair leads, to find ultimate answers crystallized beyond his chaos, but this particular quest makes it impossible for him to live and love. In the garden, when he desperately searches for a hidden bottle, his response to its recovery reflects the nature of his condition: ”Bliss, Jesus ... Sanctuary ... Horror!” (p.131).

The worst kind of suffering, the Consul writes to Yvonne, is ”to feel your soul dying” (p.42). He drinks because he imagines that without mescal he would have ”forgotten eternity” (p.289). It is a peculiar spiritual quest that haunts the Consul; in his perspective, man is a ”soul holding up a corpse” (p.289). When he begs of some unnamed metaphysical force to let him ”truly suffer”, he is speaking of the suffering, that affects the soul and mind: ”Give me back my purity, the knowledge of the mysteries” he prays, which he follows with ”Destroy the world!” (p.291).

The Consul’s pleadings are answered with his brief sexual experience with a young

---

prostitute. His response to this is to wonder at the intensity of his suffering " - God is it possible to suffer more than this, out of this suffering something must be born, and what would be born was his own death ..." (p.350). There is no ultimate summit. Instead, there is a falling followed by a horrific scream. The only battle that the Consul concentrates on consistently throughout the text is for the "survival of the human consciousness" (p.221). Any other "truth", whether centred in a love-relationship, or concerning political questions, is never faced. This is expressed in one of his inebriated states: "The Consul looked at the sun. But he had lost the sun: it was not his sun. Like the truth, it was well-nigh impossible to face; he did not want to go anywhere near it, least of all, sit in its light, facing it" (p.208). The Consul spends his life seeking a truth that exists at the end of an unnegotiable labyrinth. There is no final discovery other than a depiction of the many forms despair can take. One learns earlier, in the novel, that the Consul's mother had died when he was a child and that his father had simply disappeared. This had occurred when he lived in Kashmir in India. When the Consul is shot, his dying moments have one experience of affirmation. He hears the chords of a guitar, mingled with the sounds of a waterfall that he heard as "cries of love". His vision takes him back to Kashmir: "He was in Kashmir, he knew, lying in the meadows near running water among violets and trefoil, the Himalayas beyond ..." (p.374). Given that it was believed his father was lost in the Himalayas, and that the Consul had lost his happiness in his disappearance, one wonders whether the source of much of his pain was in his childhood. This is another area of suffering that the Consul as an adult does not face.

A Labyrinth of Walks

The Consul discovers that the Farolito consists of many rooms. The last room he discovers is the smallest, resembling in its size and decor, a cell. This is the corner of the Consul's mind, where he meets its final barrier. The labyrinth of rooms reflects the Consul's mental labyrinth. This theme is complemented by the structure of the book, which is organized around nine walks. Each of these walks has its own labyrinth-quality. The first walk is that taken by Laruelle. It is through his eyes that we are first introduced to the landscape. As his perspective is one brought to the scenery a year after the fateful deaths of the Consul and Yvonne, it is one heavily imbued with sorrow, remorse, pain and incomprehension. As he climbs the embankment, walks through the fields by the row of dead trees, we are made aware of the beauty and diversity of the area. The storms that approach seem endemic to it. His walk is not only overseen by the purple mountains and the volcanoes but, also, seemingly by the presence of those who had died. Certainly his love for Yvonne moves him to realize his difficulty in leaving the country: "Purple mountains emanated a
strange melancholy force that tried to hold him here bodily, which was its weight, the weight of many things, but mostly that of sorrow" (p.19). His walk which is down-hill involves crossing a river, going through the woods, and being aware that everywhere you turned in Quauhnahuac "the abyss was waiting around the corner" (p.21). The incident with the car and the horse on the highway entails, for Laruelle, an emotional re-enactment of Yvonne’s death. Laruelle walks an indirect way to reach the town in order to avoid his home. Finally, he arrives at the cinema where he will read the Consul’s letters to Yvonne. In Laruelle’s walk one is introduced to all the main characters in the story, the main events and the houses, sights and scenery that form an integral part of the day on which the novel is centred. The reader has been taken through a labyrinth filled with signs and symbols that are inexplicable until the novel is finished, and then re-entered.

**Walk number two** occurs in Laruelle’s memory, while he is on walk "one". He is taken back in time to re-experience the walk he and the Consul went on with the Taskersons. In this section we learn the background of both Laruelle and the Consul. Through circumstances, they share holiday times with the Taskersons. The Taskerson boys, six in number, were "portentous walkers" and "portentous drinkers". Laruelle and the Consul would walk with them on their twenty-five mile walks and would stop with them at all the pubs on the way. Ironically, the Consul at this time of his life could not, like them, "drink seven pints in fourteen minutes or walk fifty miles without dropping" (p.26).

This walk with the Taskersons sets up all kinds of ideas through which the rest of the novel is understood. In this section we learn of the Consul’s bereft childhood, his expectations as a poet, his first experience and failure with heavy drinking and his humiliation at being discovered in the "Hell bunker" by Laruelle in a compromising position with a girl he "had picked up". His adult life will show a "success" with heavy drinking, his poetic interests turning into an obsession in which his consciousness is conceived as a hell, and one that excludes a capacity for loving Yvonne who, in fact, has an affair with Laruelle.

*The third walk* is one taken by the Consul and Yvonne in the early hours of the very day in which they will die. The symbols seen on the walk will relate to their mutual pain and even prophesy their dreadful fates. First, there is the rock split by forest fires, which represents their severed marriage, and predicts the nature of their death. The child’s funeral is a reminder of their lost child and the sight of Laruelle’s house the memory of her betrayal. The final element of this walk is the hideous pariah dog that follows them into their house, an awesome image, given the dead one that is thrown after the Consul at his death.
"Walk four" is in fact a ride taken by Hugh and Yvonne. As in the other walks, we are alerted to the fact and the presence of the prison, the purple mountains, the palace, the fields, the ravine, the experimental farm, the woods, the scenery that is compared to English scenery (though, which could not be, given the vultures in the trees), and to a country-side that seems to take its wanderers up and down mysterious tracks that inevitably open up to all kinds of diverse scenery. As mentioned earlier in the chapter there is a tranquillity in the sight of Yvonne and Hugh riding happily together. This is, of course, but one level of its significance. It is on this ride that we learn most about Hugh, his political views, his lack of self-esteem and his eagerness to find some answer in human action. The reader is also given a premonition of the day's events. They watch the bus go by to Tomalin and they note the way to Parian. Hugh is led to comment "There seems to be something sinister about Parian" (p.119) and adds "I wonder what Weber sees in it, ..." at the end of their ride they gaze back at the way they had come and note the storm clouds that are gathering behind the volcanoes. It is the storm that they will walk into in their final walk together to Parian that evening.

Walk five concentrates on the part Yvonne has played in the three men’s lives. We learn on this walk that the Consul is, to say the least, ambivalent towards Jacques, whom he knows to have been Yvonne’s lover. When he tells Hugh that he, Hugh, has something in common with Jacques (p.195), he is referring to Hugh’s relationship with Yvonne. The walk itself physically is experienced, as if walking in a labyrinth of both the natural surroundings and through a complexity of emotions: “They climbed the Calle Nicaragua, always between the parallel swift streams, past the school with the gray tombstones and the swing like a gallows, past high mysterious walls, and hedges interwittined with crimson flowers, among which marmalade-coloured birds were trapezing, crying raucously ...” (p.191). Laruelle persuades every one to come to his home for a drink. It is important to note that when the characters are not walking or riding in this novel that they are drinking. The whole novel is a little like the Taskersons’ walk. Just before the walk comes to an end, the Consul receives from the postman a post-card from Yvonne sent a year ago. It makes the point that communication between them is futile, as even the postal system contributes to its breakdown. The card itself has a picture of a highway leading "over a white fenced bridge between desert and desert. The road turned a little corner in the distance and vanished" (p.197). The question as to where the maze will take its travellers is suspended.

Walk six presents a surreal picture of four people out walking, but walking as if alone. What is emphasized on this walk is the hopelessness of the human condition when fellow human beings are unable to communicate with each other. Laruelle and the
Consul walk together; the Consul recognizes the influence his early friendship has had on this man, whom he suspects he has "tricked into dishonour and misery, willed, even, his betrayal of him" (p.214). They converse about Yvonne somewhat bitterly. This walk emphasizes the symbolic importance of the Indian riding on his horse stamped with the number 7. This will be the Indian that dies, and this will be the horse that will trample Yvonne to death. Two important alternatives to life (and art) are posed here by the Consul. One is a brief affirmative moment for the Consul who on seeing this happy, singing Indian exclaims "Ah, to have a horse, and gallop away, singing, away to someone you loved perhaps, into the heart of all the simplicity and peace in the world: was not that like the opportunity afforded man by life itself?" But this moment passes swiftly and is followed with: "What is it Goethe says about the horse? ... Weary of liberty he suffered himself to be saddled and bridled, and was ridden to death for his pains" (p.216). The human being in this scene is presented in his or her two roles as the happy rider or the unhappy horse. As the happy horseman the Consul can shout for joy at Yvonne's return (p.217). This, however, is just as quickly changed to a mood of hopelessness, and he becomes like the horse with the burden: "But the weight of a great hand seemed to be pressing his head down" (p.218). The carnival revolves around him and takes him into the labyrinth of his own futility:

The merry grinding of the roller skates, the cheerful if ironic music, the cries of the little children on their goose-necked steeds, the procession of queer pictures - all this had suddenly become transcendentally awful and tragic, distant, transmuted, as if it were some final impression on the senses of what the Earth was like, carried over into the obscure region of death, a gathering thunder of immediate sorrow; the Consul needed a drink ... (p.218).

Walk seven is one that Yvonne takes in her mind during the bull-fight. Its enactment explains her closeness to Laruelle, who provided her with two necessary comforts. Jacques Laruelle had known the Consul as a child. Through Jacques, Yvonne "had been mysteriously able to reach, in a sense to avail herself of, what she had never known, the Consul's innocence" (p.266). He was, given his profession as a film director, the only person she could talk to about her brief stardom in Hollywood. Remembering this, Yvonne returns again to New York. She remembers walking aimlessly through the streets, nursing "her guilty divorced dead helplessness" (p.267). She recalls how bereft she was (and still is) at not being able to find some faith in life. It is on this walk that she comes to a little cinema showing foreign films, one of which is a film that Laruelle made. Yvonne remembers how the solitary figure upon the stills was herself "walking down the same dark streets ..." (p.267). She leaves the theatre stalked by a "shadowy horse" and a voice that pursued Yvonne "down the dark streets, and Yvonne herself, too, as if she had walked straight out of that world outside into this dark world on the screen ..." (p.268). Her identification with the protagonist on the screen is with "the one
hunted, the one haunted”. Yvonne knows herself to be a hunter searching and groping for something unreachable. One learns that her only true love was her father, who committed suicide. As Yvonne has entered the cinema halfway through the film her thinking about it during her walk is without the benefits of knowing the beginning of its story. The implication is that Yvonne is unable to comprehend how and why her love of her father contributes to her love of the Consul who, not only will have a suicidal death, but who, like her family, will condemn her to a tragic end. Yvonne is doomed to romanticize her love for the Consul in the way that she is conscious she does with her family and herself. This walk has all the complications of a survival experience. A labyrinth is painted of Yvonne’s inner world, complicated by her needs to deny realities, to live behind an actress’s mask and her desperation to find a faith in life itself (p.269).

"And yet, and yet, it was entirely true, that one had never given up, or ceased to hope, or to try, gropingly, to find a meaning, a pattern, an answer” (p.270).

Walk eight is the Consul’s fantasy conceived in an inebriated state. He imagines that he is in Tlaxcala, a town he has read about on a tourist folder. It is a white beautiful cathedral city toward which the Consul’s soul yearned for most, because it was empty and, therefore, there would be nobody to interfere with the business of drinking. Yvonne is there only in that she is drinking with him. They walk together in consecrated bliss holding "white bottles, twirling walk canes and ash plants” (p.304). This perfect town is full of white cantinas where one could drink all night. Whereas all the walks described up to now have a labyrinthine quality in their intricate patterning with places circled, and hills tramped up and around, this walk is peculiar in its symmetrical nature: "They walked, happy as toads in a thunderstorm, arm-in-arm down the four clean and well arranged lateral avenues” (p.304). The totally inebriated state is the one in which the Consul is most tranquil and at one with himself.

Walk nine. The final walk is Yvonne’s and Hugh’s search for the Consul. It is a walk through a forest during a storm. The path to Parian is the one they take. The walk is complicated and involves passing the falls, entering a jungle, treading on rotting vegetation, and coping with a path that grows steeper as they twist through the trees. Above, the sky is alive with lightning, vultures and stars. Yvonne undergoes the whole gamut of human emotions in this walk from a smouldering fire within her (p.319) to "a wild sea-yearning of youth and love and sorrow” (p.333). She frees a caged bird, tells Hugh about the dinner appointment the Consul doesn’t keep, and then they hear the pistol shot that kills the Consul. The horse with its dual symbolism, freed by the Consul, flees through the forest and tramples Yvonne to death. The last walk brings into its experience most of the natural elements that have appeared throughout the book.
This is a novel about consciousness. It is about a modern consciousness weighed down by its history and by its modernism. *Under the Volcano* takes its readers into a labyrinth of thought. It is true that as the image is negotiated the question of Tragedy is explored. The fact of its absence or presence is part of the subject that Lowry's consciousness dramatizes. The landscape and the consciousness, which is one that combines the thoughts and lives of the four main characters, interact in a way in which cause and effect cannot be identified as being from one more than the other. It is, however, not a Tragedy. The novel, in fact, in dealing with tragic themes shows why modernism excludes these themes finding tragic form. The novel, however, finds the spirit of humanity in the world and not beyond it; it seeks to rise above the limitations that modernism has brought to language by attempting to discover where despair may lead the artist and a potentially tragic protagonist. The despair of the Consul leads him to the bottom of the ravine. The characters are, unlike tragic protagonists, finally, without faith in life. The poetry, however, of Lowry's novel given its reflection of a relationship between the natural elements and human consciousness seeks a solution beyond the failure of modern language. It points to the possibilities of language, as it attempts to reflect a "new Realism".
CHAPTER 7
FROM ALLEGORY TO TRAGEDY REBORN

The Twyborn Affair is a novel about the author's search for a love to be shared with an individual. White, in matters of faith, art and love has, by his own admission, returned to the point where he began. Prior to the appearance of The Twyborn Affair White's novels can be seen to be modernist in the manner in which they are both symbolic and allegoric. In order to appreciate the extent to which TA has moved beyond this expression of modernism, it is necessary to look briefly at these novels to see in what ways their symbolism and allegory are expressed. In exploring the symbolic qualities in White's novels I am concerned with what they represent, on the other hand in identifying the allegoric qualities, I am identifying what the novels, in themselves, are not.

Erich Heller's distinction between the Allegory and the Symbol is a useful one for this analysis. He points out that the terms of an allegory are abstractions, whereas the symbol refers to something specific and concrete. He gives the example of the statue of a blindfolded woman, holding a pair of scales, as an allegory of justice, and bread and wine for the Christian communicant, as symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ. The Allegory, therefore, is the imaginary representation of something abstract, and hence is doubly abstract, whereas the symbol, in being what it represents, possesses a double reality.

Symbolically, White's novels from Happy Valley to The Eye of the Storm

1. Patrick White, Flaws in the Glass: A Self Portrait (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p.74. All further references to this are cited as FG.
2. See Ann McCulloch, A Tragic Vision, where I have dealt with this in depth.
represent the evolutionary development of a symbolist artist in search of a language that might express a "new" perception of the modern world. Structured within this development is an emerging concept of an artist attempting to capture in art, not only the essence of life but, also, the consciousness and self-consciousness of the artist in the process of creativity. In each novel the elected character is made to represent or personify a character capable of experiencing life in such a way that he or she can evolve ultimately as a creative genius, who may merge in the act of creation with the primal architect of the cosmos. The aim is to go beyond the lines that separate the artist from his position as spectator and that as participant, and as one who creates from life, and one who experiences life itself.

White's elected characters in the first five novels exhibit human characteristics that are deemed necessary in the development towards the creation of a Dionysian artist. Oliver's courage to face the centre of pain (HV), Elyot's gradual awakening from artistic confinement and detachment (LD), Theodora's overcoming of self and refusal to accept schism in life (AS), Stan's comprehension of the oneness and Divine immanence of the universe (TM), and Voss's search for the quality of man that could replace God prefigure as the necessary experiences for the elected character, who is to emerge as an artist and as a Nietzschean "Superman".

The thoughts, feelings, and actions of these elected characters symbolically act out the symbolist desires of White the artist. White's elected characters are fragments of himself in his struggle to be and to create a "Platonic soul" capable of realizing in an art the core of truth. Consequently, the first five novels reflect White as both the Classicist artist and the Romantic artist. These novels could be seen to represent the relentless struggle and the acknowledged failure of an artist in a secular world searching for an ultimate language.

Allegorically, White's work expresses the tragic vision of the artist. That is, in representing what, in itself, it is not, it draws attention to the nature of what White is unable to achieve in art; it reflects, as it were, the tension, conflict and struggle entailed in an attempted presentation of a known vision and the impossibility of the expression of that perceived order.

On the allegorical level, White's novels represent in an abstract form:

1. The impossibility of the arrival of Nietzsche's Dionysian artist in the figure of the elected character.
2. The inability of the artist to find an Apollonian form for the Dionysian vision of a new Divine order in a post-Christian world.
3. The irreconcilable nature of a world brought into schism for the artist by the split between Romanticism and Classicism.
4. The impossibility of finding an artistic form that can recast the dualities of soul and body within a new united order.

5. The impossibility of modern man whilst chained to old formulations to experience or create tragedy.

The allegory of White's work is rationally translatable. By representing in abstract images White's attempts to express his vision, which in its impossibility becomes abstract in itself, it finally represents a doubly unreal predicament, that is, a representation of the artist, White, as tragic hero. The allegory represents that which it is not; in failing to equal tragedy it dramatizes the new Tragic vision of the modern artist.

Although the distinction between White's work as a symbol and as an allegory is quite clear in his first five novels, it becomes less readily identifiable in Riders in the Chariot, The Solid Mandala, The Vivisector, and The Eye of the Storm. The reason for this is due to White looking inward at the artistic process itself and beginning to ask of it questions that he hitherto asked of life. The relationships between art and life, and artist and elected hero, are thrown into question. It is at this stage of White's writings that one can readily identify White's interest in the modernist preoccupations with the problematic relationship between art and life. White's symbolist quest for a language that could grasp something beyond the formal inclusions of metaphor merge with his conscious presentation of the artist's tragic vision. Consequently, there is a merging of the activities of the allegorist, that is, a thinking in abstractions with the more complex activities of the symbolist, in whom thought and feeling merge in the act of spiritual comprehension.

This transition is first recognizable in Riders in the Chariot. His elected characters in earlier novels have reflected White's disordering of the senses in the hope of travelling through all kinds of love, suffering, and madness. This "Divine quaternity" represented by Mary Hare, Ruth Godbold, Himmelfarb, and Dubbo, despite the diversity of their experience, fails to equal the "Platonic soul" or the Nietzschean "Superman" capable of reaching and realizing in art form the core of reality. Their final demise, enclosed within the confines of Dubbo's painting, expresses White's struggle and failure to express the new human Divinity he seeks. The fact that they are all finally illuminated within a painting marks White's interest in the "mechanisms" of the artistic process itself as the possible means towards discovering that power that will enable him to express his vision. His next three novels, allegorically and symbolically, explore the possibilities inherent in art.

In The Solid Mandala, White, the symbolist, tests the possibility of casting the ancient sources of Greek art onto a modern, secular stage. Allegorically, SM uncovers
the impossibility of this quest by representing the suffering that modern man cannot confront, the impossibility of a marriage between music and word image, the plight of the magical qualities of myth in the hands of the Socratic artist, the futility of Dionysian love and thus, finally, the impossibility of recasting Apollo and Dionysos in the modern world in order to give birth once more to tragedy.

In *The Vivisector*, White, the symbolist, characterizes himself as both the artist character and as the latter's creator. His query is: what kind of living must the artist experience in order to tap from life the means towards perfect artistic expression? Allegorically, V expresses the failure of the artist, acting as both the puppet and the puppeteer, to realize in symbolic language the arrival of a Dionysian, vivisecting artist who will replace God. This novel expresses the inability of the artist to undergo the suffering necessary as a Nietzschean super being. White's/Hurtle's failure to arrive at this state symbolically expresses the inability of modern, secular man to believe in himself as an ennobled being capable of plummeting to the depths of tragic experience. At most, his experience of failure expresses a modern tragic vision of the artist as tragic "victim". *The Vivisector* involves a structured argument by White the artist as he dramatizes his own inner dialogue concerning the expectations and the limitations of art. Allegorically, V by representing in abstract form what it is not, expresses the failure of White to express his absolute affirmation of life in artistic terms.

In *EOS*, White, the symbolist, creates a finally structured and patterned novel which embodies his acceptance of the disunity in art, reflective of the fragmentation in the modern world. Whereas in *SM* he experimented with the sources of art represented in Waldo and Arthur, and in V he tested the possibilities of the artist-character, in *EOS*, his attention is drawn to the work of art itself. Elizabeth Hunter, although evolving out of previous elected characters, is primarily representative of an imaginative embodiment that has within its potential a united art form. As the poet-seer, the work of art and the source of all human behaviour she represents allegorically what ultimately she cannot be, the Dionysian vision of the created world mastered by Apollonian Form. On the literal level, her failure finally at death to enter into endlessness represents the absence of tragedy in modern art.

*The Eye of the Storm* with its abstract images, like the blindfolded statue of the woman who represents Justice, represents, nevertheless, White's affirmation of a "united" world despite the conflicting presence of life and death, soul and body, imagination and intellect, birth and decay, beauty and ugliness, and the fact that as human beings we are both knowers and participators. The lingering motif in *EOS* is the rose. Mary de Santis plucks a rose from Elizabeth Hunter's garden to give to her next patient; Lotte Lippmann, a character of insight, sings about the roses which can never
perish, which in equalling love will continually recreate hope (p.446). White’s novels, despite the incessant probings into the ugliness of reality and the elusive departure, at times, from life into art, are written with love.

Despite White’s tormenting doubts, it is his purpose to affirm life in all its manifestations. Whether White is describing the agonies of the soul, the decay of the body, or the mandala beauty of the leaf, he does so with love which, as represented in the rose, expresses his hope and faith in life and in Art. White has a tragic knowledge which Jaspers believes enables man "to face each realization of his ultimate limits with a new restlessness that drives him beyond them."^5

In Flaws in the Glass: A Self Portrait,^6 White writes that "the characters of whom I am composed cannot include those not yet revealed to me. At the age of sixty-nine I am still embarking on voyages of exploration which I hope may lead to discovery." In The Twyborn Affair, White’s exploration reveals the character of Eddie Twyborn whose relentless journey towards understanding life and experiencing love evolves as a Tragedy.

White’s immersion in and resurrection from allegory and symbolism have culminated in a new form of tragedy which, for the want of a better term, will be called post-modernist Tragedy. This new Tragedy which can be conceived as a Tragedy of Actualism is a form of "new realism". It is concerned with representing humankind in action, in a value-oriented context. This Tragedy emerges from within an environment in which writers, after decades of self-absorption and reflection in the arts, are coming to look at the world again, as if for the first time. I believe White has reached this point by dramatizing continually, and without loss of faith, his belief that finally "only love redeems"."^7 The Twyborn Affair dramatizes the search for "the love that is shared with an individual". In Flaws in the Glass, White speaks of such a love; he emphasizes that this relationship may not be "necessarily sexual, seductive though sexuality may be .... If it is making do, whatever our age, in a world falling apart" (FG, p.252). Fragmentation of the world is accepted. The uniting principle of a modern secular world, if it is to be apprehended in the phenomenal one, is not to be expressed. Tragedy is reborn because White has discovered the means to express, not allegorically, but actually the potential of, and the grandeur of, existence as it is. Nance in V is aware of Hurtle’s paradoxical position as an artist as he is both in life but necessarily out of it: "'What your sort don’t realize,' she wasn’t saying, she was firing into his brain, 'is that

other people exist. While you’re all gummed up in the great art mystery, they’re alive, and breakun’ their necks for love” (V, p.204). White, via his characters, continues to work within paradoxes, but the phenomenal world gives rise to symbols that explore the question White asks of life rather than of art. There are no longer those dark conceits which lay hidden within realistic pictures; instead, the realistic pictures are equal to life in all its darkness, complexity and mystery.

The literal level in *SM* dramatized Arthur’s attempts to save Waldo through love; the symbolic level explored the possibility of a Dionysiac force awakening the Apollonian image which has become suffocated by theoretial man, i.e., it explored the possibility of creating a perfect work of art in this century, reminiscent of ancient tragedy. *The Solid Mandala* in its final form showed the impossibility of this quest. As White writes in *FG*, "The ultimate spiritual union is probably as impossible to achieve as the perfect work of art or the unflawed human relationship" (p.74). White goes on to say (and it is this statement that expresses a turning point in his work): "In matters of faith, art, and love I have had to reconcile myself to starting again where I began" (*FG*, p.74). Like Nietzsche, he will now convey the modern world as a fragmented thing, unmasking all previous notions of "Being" as mere myths. Eddie Twyborn (and White) will settle for reflections, notes, and informal witnesses of discontinuous "becoming". White’s choice for this present time is for freedom of new beginnings and for clarity of expression. *The Twyborn Affair* is that work of art that Nietzsche sought; it is art without artifice.

In beginning again White conquers the splintered view of reality that had emerged originally in the split between romanticism and classicism. The view that the only conceivable order is a positivist-scientific one had led to anarchy within the artistic field. Modern art whether visual or verbal was in danger of being mere symbolic substances dismissed from the disciplined commitments to reality. White’s own exploration of allegorical language did not dissolve into incoherence in *EOS*; nevertheless, a certain involuntary abstraction persisted as if in testimony to the fact that at bottom the psyche is simply a world, a "naturalistic" commitment to reality that has arisen from a possible abstraction of imaginative art.

Early in the twentieth century Antonio Gramsci writes of a cultural crisis: "The crisis consists [he wrote], precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this *interregnum* a great variety of morbid symptoms appears." For White the crisis is being transcended. Patrick White turns his back on the main tradition of

8. See Ann McCulloch, *A Tragic Vision*, chap. 2, where this is argued and explored more fully.
modern aesthetics which Gerald Graff characterizes as believing that art deals with experience only as myth, psychology, or language, rather than as objective truth.\(^\text{10}\) Man is not to be alienated from the reality of the symbol. White rediscover the realism of the symbol and rejects the symbol which refers to abstractions in the manner of an allegory. White's language in TA describes; and in describing it opens our eyes to what we can see and sense and what we choose to see and sense.

White, instead of attempting to recreate Tragedy along the lines of the past, has discovered a tragic form that evolves out of present reality. It is believed that tragedy is an expression of the pre-rational phase in history; that it is founded on the assumption that there are in nature and in the psyche uncontrollable forces able to madden and to destroy the mind.\(^\text{11}\) But the scientific, rational phase has not dispelled the belief in or the existence of these forces. A cycle is completed. Before Science the poet was by definition a "realist", his imaginings and parables being natural organizations of reality. White becomes a post-modernist "realist". In addition he has the ability to weave into his perceptions all that the history of language and its relation to life and to art has taught him. If it were Elizabeth Hunter's task to combat the original terror of existence, which could not be dispelled by old formulations, it is Eddie Twyborn's task to live that terror. Philosophical exploration of the indefinite fragmentation of the world gives way to the expression of its living reality.

The new method required, to render these perceptions artistically, must unite Pascal's reasons of the heart and Plato's reason of understanding. This is done without the former degenerating into that sheer emotionalism so easily mistaken for spirituality, or the latter being the crudest empiricism which prided itself on its "realistic" outlook. Every glance which White casts at the world is an act of theorizing. White sees his glance as governed by "the omnium gatherum of instinctual colour" and not by "the controlled monochrome of reason" \((FG, \text{p.38})\) and, of course, he is right. Nevertheless, his attentive scrutiny of life is done with consciousness, self-criticism, freedom and irony: "I don't set myself up as an intellectual. What drives me is sensual, emotional, instinctive. At the same time I like to think creative reason reins in as I reach the edge of disaster" \((FG, \text{p.81})\). All the faculties are necessary if abstraction is to be made innocuous and if liveliness is to emerge from the interaction of consciousness and the world.

When Hurtle in V is conscious of the fact that something moves him, not


\(^{11}\) George Steiner, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p.342.
artistically, but humanly and emotionally, he is aware of "the great discrepancy between aesthetic truth and sleazy reality" (V, p.200). Eddie Twyborn accepts and lives the illusion of reality that life presents for him. Fish skeletons and heads dangling from fingers took on a significance above daylight and reality for White on one occasion in his early adulthood (FG, p.20). In TA the diversity, morbidity, power and splendour of lust, sex and their apparent connections with love undergo that "magic change" that makes it art, but remains in itself, a reality. Aesthetic truth and sleazy reality become one in a new symbolic language. It is a language of "true symbols"\textsuperscript{12} which Heller explains as being a language in which the particular represents the universal, not as a dream or shadow, nor the meaningless agony of the will, nor the abstraction of reason, but as the living and instantaneous revelation of the unfathomable.\textsuperscript{13} Erich Heller argues that the unfathomable is beautiful because it can only be comprehended by the unfathomable, and the only truly unfathomable faculty of man is love. If this is so, the realism of the symbol becomes the artistic vindication of the reality of a lovable world. The Twyborn Affair is about the reality of love that is apprehended but not necessarily experienced. Essentially, the work is conceived by an artist who believes "only love will redeem". Nothing about love in words is left unsaid in this novel. That I bother to interpret a work that communicates without ambiguity, its meaning and essence, is an anomaly of an age which has forgotten how to see what is before its eyes. Beliefs of the past are no longer believed; that we may still understand them, despite the lack of belief, explains why the blinkers make us half-blind to our existing world. The words of the past are becoming meaningless; those symbols that gave testimony to a non-secular age and those that gave rise to the existential despair that formed in its wake are now dessicated. Nevertheless, one still needs to be reminded that to understand our present reality, by only exploring the world it grew out of, is to deny the world as it is.

Thus in TA we journey with White on a non-allegorical, unselfconscious search for love. The difficulties and pain associated with this truly physical and human quest are intensified by its spiritual nature. The romantic lover seeks a beloved but, simultaneously, intermixed with his erotic craving, his need for mutual human warmth, inarticulate, diffuse, and yet dominating it, is the desire for spiritual salvation. Love becomes the arena for Tragedy; it is inevitably overwhelmed with unmanageable, and indeed, incomprehensible, spiritual demands. In its purest, its most physical and its most intangible forms, romantic/sexual/sensual love is a 'glorious' disaster of the soul, carrying frustration and agony in its wake. The lonely individual emerging from the

\textsuperscript{12} See Erich Heller, The Disinherited Mind, p.95, for his presentation of Nietzsche's understanding of what a true symbol is.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.96.
ruins of a communal order of the spirit has found its most powerful means of "transcendence". Eros and Thanatos, the twin deities within the post-modernist imagination (inherited from the romantic period) are ordained by the spiritually more autonomous and alienated individual.

Eddie, Eudoxia and Eadith act out White's unselfconscious non-allegorical search for love. It is a naturalistic approach that is not curtailed by dealing with the subject on its literal level. Unlike most naturalism this does not result in merely the presentation of undefined social experience. The structural machinations apparent in SM, V, and EOS when dealing with human relationships are not present in TA. White, an artist of symbolic language, who originallydespaired at the limitations of naturalism,\(^\text{14}\) does not, like Steinbeck, end as an allegorist or, like Kafka, as a symbolist of negative transcendence. White is no longer a victim of a hopeless collision between the minority demand for a realization of the spirit and a spiritualization of reality on the one hand, on the other, the inexorable resistance of a safely established spirit-proof view of life. Whereas Kafka writes of a world which, despite its spiritual emptiness, has not even believed in its own unbelief, White writes beyond this point. If reality has been all but completely sealed off against transcendental intrusion, White writes in the hope that this may not necessarily mean the complete alienation of modern man from the reality of the symbol. He becomes a writer who transcends a possible solipsism of perception and creates a new tragic literature that strangely embodies naturalism in its most pure form. To be symbolically alive in one's reality, is, he seems to be saying, to be spiritually real. The gap that separates the "merely" symbolic from the "really" real is bridged by a fresh appraisal of what is, instead of, what was. This does not mean that White discovers a new sacramental order comparable to ones in the past; what he does dramatize is his view of the truth of present-day fragmentation. The fragments are not put together but they are seen as the basis of the present and the future reality and not as the effects of a lost, past reality. It is a present reality which can be redeemed by love, or at least, by a relentless reaching out for that redemption.

Eddie's desperate desire for the fulfilment of love is seen in diverse situations. His sexual experiences with Marcia are accompanied by a yearning for a deeper commitment: "... he wanted to love, and might still, somewhere in the geography of flesh, come across the wherewithal for kindling the spirit" (TA, p.240). It is this spirit of love that seems to be cut adrift from the physical passion of sexuality. White no longer takes on that struggle of western man to harmonize the conflicting claims of body and spirit. Whereas in V he strove to find the spirit nestling within the sensual without losing what was once

---

seen as its "metaphysical" glory, in TA he accepts a schism. This, however, does not mean that he stops yearning for his experience of the interdependence and unity of the physical self and the spiritual self. This unity is a state of being that he does "perceive" despite the apparent impossibility of its enactment. White's perception of the dichotomy of soul and body becomes less philosophical within his naturalistic look at the human being in his quest for love. The spiritual element sought in sexual love is, to say the least, elusive.

The man who believed in "nothun" (TA, p.419) experiences orgasm, or that moment beyond the idea of orgasm, as exploding, soft, white, cocky wings (p.418). A "transcendance" of a kind is occurring within the phenomenal world and it is emanated from "a frogwoman with greased thighs". In this instance the duality of spirit and matter is broken down, but in one sense only. There is passion and spiritual ascendancy; man is both bird and ant,15 but apart from the situational humour of the event the human element is missing. Joy comes from physical engagement with another person but there is no relationship, no love, and no commitment involved. The spirit of love is absent. It is this spirit that is sought and despaired of in White's novel.

When the spirit is present it is in the absence of sexuality, as in Eddie's day-dream which is centred on his father: "For a moment he and Eddie were again adrift in a moonlit sea, on a honeycomb bedspread .... The dreamer would not have regretted drowning in love with Judge Twyborn" (p.206). When Eddie becomes Eadith in the final section of the novel she does feel love for Gravenor but it is unfulfilled and only expression of its possibility is alluded to.16 Gravenor wishes to "give expression to what he saw as their relationship" (p.412), but Eadith has withdrawn from sexual unity with man and woman. Gravenor's letter to her hints that he knows her true sexual identity and that he believes that they might "have loved each other, completely and humanly, if we had found the courage. Men and women are not the sole members of the human hierarchy to which you and I can also claim to belong" (p.426). Gravenor speaks of love as being an exhausted word and relates its loss to the expulsion of God from the world. The implication is that the existence of one will mean the existence of the other. One is left with the urgency of the desire and the emptiness of its unfulfilment.

The Twyborn Affair is about the longing and the disappointment. The old prostitute's statement to Eadith Trist, "'Love isn't what it's cracked up to be, love - or

15. See Patrick White, The Tree of Man, pp.186, 339, 341, 412 for references that deal with the concept of man being both bird and ant, that is, man as being of the air and of the earth. In these analogies the duality of man's nature, the conflict between the desires of his spirit and those of his body are dramatized in the natural world.
16. See, for example, p.316, "... though she could have loved the latter, [Gravenor] she believed, if she allowed herself to fall from the trapeze into the trampoline of love."
is it?" (p.362), is the major concern of the work. That this woman Maisie epitomizes an extreme embodiment of the distance between the physical ugliness of sexuality and the spiritual apotheosis of love adds to the bitter dose of irony. Maisie lives in a "mouse-hole" where "face power" merged with "spilt flour"; she is old and toothless. She, nevertheless, proclaims that "- I done it for love. Whether it was with some Hindu steward, or Gyppo Stoker, or poxy British corporal" (p.363).

Each one of Eddie’s relationships whether known as Eudoxia, Eddie or Eadith involves the continual discovery of the limitations of human relationships. Eudoxia whilst engaged with Angelos in a musical duet "launched without her husband into deeper seas of music, thrashing out to escape from the weed of human relationships" (p.107). Eadith, towards the end of her life, listens to her mother confess: "I only ever really loved, and was loved by, my little flea-ridden dogs. I could talk to them and they understood" (p.424). As Eddie, there is a moment when "his ‘love’ for Marcia became more credible", his affection for the human creatures with whom he shared this hotel grew. But the moment is short lived and is more or less dismissed as misplaced sentiment.

Coupled with the non-allegorical search for love in TA is the implication that this search acts out the desire for spiritual salvation. Love is seen as the only god capable of breaking down the barriers of individual isolation. Love becomes tragedy; it is infused with uncontrollable spiritual needs and, in its purest form, the desire for romantic love, brings with it a tragic catastrophe of the soul. The reality of love, for Eddie in all his/her manifestations, equals the core of reality itself and, as such, it eludes him (p.336).

Eddie at Bogang suspects that he will remain filled with "unfulfilled longing" (p.190) and, as Eadith, he knows that "Her every attempt at love had been a failure" (p.374). Greg Lushington’s poem is about love: "- that’s where everything seems to lead - in some form or other. Unfulfilled love" (p.232). Monsieur Pelletier, the solitary masturbater, reminiscent of Cutbush in V, experiences a moment of "love" after his act of despair. This is a central focus in the novel and acts as a mirror through which other attempts at love should be reflected. His experience is one of hope, even faith despite the despair that precedes it. It is an exclamation of the potential of the individual who can and will love in a human way; it is the love that will find poetic form and will be reflected in the beauty of the natural world. It is Eddie, swimming golden in the sea that gives rise to the moment:

As the swimmer, as the light, as the colour returned, what could have remained a sordid ejaculation became a triumphant leap into the world of light and colour such as he craved from the landscape he knew, the poetry he had never written, but silently spoke, the love he had not experienced with Simone or
Violette ... a love he knew by heart and instinct, but might never summon up the courage to express, unless perhaps at the point of death (p.76).

It is significant that this inspired moment begins with Pelletier recognizing that the relationship he was experiencing with the swimmer in the distance "presented itself as a tremulous abstraction and which must remain remote from his actual life" (p.76). The fact that a burst of light draws from the experience a profound moment of living dramatizes the exploratory nature of the novel. Eadith Trist’s anguished words to Gravenor at the discovery of her father’s death have the echoes of this scene within them: "Who's to decide - love and hate - not hate, despair - where one ends and the other begins?" (p.391). Love is sought; all its possible forms are questioned and experienced. Eddie embodies the hopes of a formerly desanctified world.

It is part of the tragedy of the work that he/she disappoints all those who see in him/her a means towards fulfilment. Joanie Golson was prepared to destroy herself by a love such as she never hoped to experience (p.128), but is left only with a crack of light to commemorate all that had been desirable. Eddie's mother learns that "children and parents fail one another" (p.424). Gravenor accepts the failure of their love is due to a lack of courage; Marcia ends her contact with Eddie in accusations of cruelty (p.294), and Prowse is left without consolation after the brutal act he inflicts on Eddie (p.298). Angelos is able to mutter on his death-bed to Eddie that "I've had from you, dear boy, the only happiness I've ever known" (p.126), but it is understood with the knowledge that Eudoxia wished to escape from him.

It is at Bogong that Eddie comes closest to sensing the presence of pure love. It is expressed in a brief encounter with one who, sadly, was unable to associate with any form of abnormality. Marcia in the final sense rejects the core of Eddie’s identity but her affinity with and love of her country stirs up the spirit of love (pp.229-230). It is when Eddie and Marcia go together to the pastures where ewes were lambing that Eddie feels that she is "one in whom purity had never been disturbed by lust .... Consequently, Eddie loved her for the moment with a pure, unadulterated joy" (p.255). Earlier in their relationship, Marcia had expressed the wish that their relationship had not begun with the sexual act: "Then we might have learnt to love each other" (p.244).

Love and Sex remain alienated from each other in Eddie's experience. If it is human to desire both, it seems it is also human to feel despair at their ever finding harmony with each other. When Eddie evolves as Eadith in the final section of the novel she "was too disgusted with herself, and human beings in general, ever to want to dabble in sex again, let alone aspire to that great ambivalence, love. She could only contemplate it as an abstraction, an algebra (p.311). And it is as an "abstraction" that Eddie’s final relationship exists. His mother accepts him as a daughter; he, dressed as
her son but wearing the makeup of Eadith, is killed, not as she had predicted, by the wounds of human love, but by an act of God (p.323).

The most central person in Eddie's life is his father. The inadequacy of this relationship greatly contributes to Eddie's failure to love. The signs of monstrosity and hopelessness that Helen, the girl with the harelip, recognizes in him (p.267) Eddie believes his father sees in him: "Eddie glanced at the father he had wanted to impress and comfort, who was looking as though he had a moron for a son, or worse, some kind of pervert ..." (p.159). The unhappiness Eddie experiences due to failure to express his love for and to communicate with his father dramatizes White's own agony concerning his father.17

The images of water used throughout TA express not only Eddie's predicament; White's sense of self, his view of external reality and his relationships with others, in particular his father, are dramatized in Eddie's life and engendered artistically in these images. As a child, White describes himself as fluctuating "in the watery glass; according to the light I retreated into the depths of the aquarium, or trembled in the foreground like a thread of pale-green samphire" (FG, p.1). As an adult he refers to himself as "this black, bubbling pool" (FG, p.183). In both these instances, White is referring to himself as being unknowable and impenetrable. In TA the water motifs strike a similar chord as they touch on the elusive identity of Eddie.

Moments of intense, emotional significance in TA are surrounded by water imagery. Eddie's first meeting with his father after a long absence is in the garden where "underwater shapes [drifted] harmlessly around as they took each other's measure" (TA, p.155). When the Twyborns dine together Eddie acknowledges his reflexion "fluctuating, in the shoals, the water waves of the mottled glass, as well as in his own mind" (p.172). It is a moment of self-knowledge when, yet again, he sees himself as an impersonation of reality.

Unlike White's other novels the symbolism in TA is not complex. It is as if White has deliberately written it in a style that defies deep analysis. He wishes to be in command of his medium to the extent of challenging his readers to find anything in his art that he has not consciously placed there. Consequently, Eadith speaks also for White when she says, perhaps unnecessarily, "As on other painfully personal occasions

---

17. See White, Flaws in the Glass, p.15, where White says of his father, "I might have loved Dick had I dared, had we been able to talk to each other" and, p.60, "My failure to communicate with my actual father", and further, p.14, where White speaks of the anguish he felt when leaving his father on a railway station, "... I would have liked to tear off the rabbitskin glove he was wearing and hold the sunburnt hand to my cheek. I did nothing ... I only throbbed as a windowful of faces slid away through the dark." Eddie's departure by train for Monaro holds within it these same sentiments.
the past began reaching out ... through that shuddering of water which memory becomes visually ...” (p.365).

Shuddering, fluctuating and moving waters at different points of the novel describe Eddie's state of being, his conflict with himself and with his world. Eddie on reaching Bogong sees the brown coursing waters of the river as hostile, as its very movement denies that state of permanence he longs for (p.179). It is the brown waters of the river which freeze him when he is unwise enough to unmask his thoughts on its banks (p.184). Again this is a moment of crisis concerning his identity, in this instant, his dismay at being at Bogong, "or anywhere else for that matter".

The morning after Eadith hears of her father's death, as she makes her way back to London, "Judge Twyborn's features were melting like forgotten butter amongst the undulations of the placid field” (p.392). One is reminded of Eddie’s first impression of the Bogong landscape which "was cold, and huge, undulating in white waves towards distant mountains of ink blue" (p.175). Judge Twyborn, like water, runs into the landscape, immortalized within the immanence of the phenomenal world.

It is only in dreams that Eddie can experience the serenity of motionless water. It is Helen of the harelip, perhaps the only person that recognizes his affliction, who joins him on the brink of a rock pool: "Whether the emotions they shared were joyful, it was difficult if not impossible to tell, only that they were united by an understanding as remote from sexuality as the crystal water in the rock basin below” (p.273). In dreams, a state of wish fulfilment, the water is still and clear and the ultimate relationship of human warmth and mutual understanding is one untainted by sexuality. White's perspective on the duality of soul and body, of man’s need for human warmth and his desire for physical pleasures, is made clear.

The New Form in Post-modernist Tragedy

*The Twyborn Affair* is a tragedy. Its creator has found the courage to tackle new propositions without using abstractions. D.H. Lawrence wrote in the 1930s of the future novel "which must present us with a whole line of new emotion, which will get us out of the emotional rut. Instead of snivelling about what is and has been, or inventing new sensations in the old line, it's got to break away through, like a hole in the wall.”¹⁸

Lawrence was not arguing, as far as I know, for a new tragic form. His cry, for change, nevertheless, and his awareness that the new would involve a new philosophical view of reality, were parts of a perspective that demanded more from the novel. Lawrence asked

---

his contemporaries what feelings they wanted to carry through into the next epoch; he was aware "a new state of things" would emerge. The new world that has evolved has made it possible for philosophy and fiction to rejoin. Lawrence had referred to Plato's Dialogues as "queer little novels" and he had thought it was the greatest pity in the world when "philosophy and fiction got split". Thus the underlying motive in us which provides the motive power for creating anew is our new view of reality which is reflected in the relationship between the writer, his world and his art form. It is one that also occurs in a time in history when tragedy is believed most likely to occur. It is a relationship that has evolved out of both the classical and the romantic experiences. The present artist is neither detached from his work, in the classical sense nor the prime content of his work, in the romantic sense and/or the modernist sense. The form that has emerged is one in which the writer's emotional/sensual/spiritual self is dramatized but, coupled with this enactment, is a rational perspective which views the self in activity with detachment and with the knowledge that it chooses its reality.

The rational perspective I have in mind here is not unlike what Leo Aylen terms "rational poetry", which he likens to the kind of philosophy practised by the ancient Greeks. It is one, Aylen argues, which will no longer attempt to separate knowledge, perception and choice in the manner of the empiricist and rationalist schools of philosophy endemic to the last three hundred years of philosophy. The "rational poetry" will deal with the "facts" of the social world, but also with the awareness that we actively discriminate in the very act of perception.

The result is not a formless tragedy as Murray Krieger believes. Certainly the form is not upheld by a sacramental model of reality provided by religions in the past. But the new form, evident in The Twyborn Affair, goes beyond the point where modern art communicated merely with intensely private symbols. Those private symbols, evident particularly during the period when existential philosophy governed the artistic arena, although intense with artistic experience, lacked representative properties. White in TA does not connect only with fragments of experience. The form in his work is no longer allegoric as well as symbolic. His artistic preoccupations are at one with his philosophical ones which results in a symbolic dramatization of himself, of every man in his pursuit of love and life. White is not speaking merely through his characters. By this I mean that the protagonists are not merely used as a means of communicating the tragic vision, i.e., the psychology of the writer. There is no longer a split between reality

19. Ibid.
20. See Conclusion, where I discuss this further.
and what it signifies. In every-day experience there is the possibility of the merging of thought and feeling in the act of spiritual comprehension. The true symbol is one that reveals the unfathomable in a moment filled with life: Eddie, Eudoxia and Eadith symbolically act out the possibility of revelation within life represented in action.

This new artistic stance, in which philosophy/thought fuses with fiction/poetry, heralds the author as hero/victim, who in being the bearer of the burden of truth, is philosophically engaged, and therefore rationally observant of his activity. The new detachment, different from the classical detachment in that the object for scrutiny for the writer is himself (man) and not a character (a mere representative of man), is central to the new post-modernist tragic form. The emergence of author as the symbolic tragic hero has been evolving slowly throughout the twentieth century as writers sought a new form. Fitzgerald’s Nick Carraway, the narrator in *Gatsby*, does not succeed in preserving his detachment in the presence of “privileged glimpses into the human heart” and Tiresias in Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, who has foreshadowed all enacted in his story, has perceived and foretold, whilst “throbbing between two lives”. But Fitzgerald and Eliot, still caught up in the traditional expectations of art, are wary of this intrusion. Essentially Nick Carraway and Tiresias are their puppets while they remain the detached puppeteers. Patrick White in *The Twyborn Affair* has broken with tradition; his preoccupations, thoughts and feelings are not disguised in allegorical games; they are dramatized in his symbolic reality.

This dramatized detachment is present in the following manifestations:

1. The rational or philosophical presence of the human being is not suppressed; thought and feeling are rejoined. The writer is present in both an Apollonian and Dionysian sense.

2. The writer views humankind without allegory or justification and that there is an active realization of his/her values.

3. The writer writes with a knowledge of historical change; the fact of scientific rationalism is accepted, as is the fact that the human spirit clings to remnants of tradition that accommodated this particular interpretation of the world.

4. The writer embarks on an unselfconscious search for meaning; he or she reacts against abstraction and his/her questioning takes him/her beyond the traditional concept of tragic catharsis.

**The Rational Presence**

---

The dialectic which contained the opposition between vital energy and the rigidities of reason has become threadbare. We have also gone beyond the time when the autonomous imagination reigned supreme in its artistic defiance of received traditions and conventions. Nevertheless, despite these changes, it will take the further soothing of time before humankind recovers from a sense of being oppressed rather than enlightened by rational explanations. The coming together in art of thought and feeling does so in the wake of the general dehumanization of the idea of rational objectivity. Whether the cause of this distrust of the rational perspective is its identification with a soulless technology or its failure to fill the void left by "The Death of God", it is a distrust, which if allowed to fester would lead to the nightmares of the unconscious becoming our wide-awake reality.

The aim in TA is to write art without artifice, to make the world in its own image. Thought is not to be stripped of imaginative feeling, or emotion stripped of imaginative thought. The separation of thought and feeling, endemic to the romantic period, forced on philosophy "The Absurd", and on modern poetry and fiction an excessive degree of intellectual complexity. The myth of nothingness that emanated from this philosophy found its final form in writers like Beckett. Beckett's passion for ultimate meaning became self-conscious, critical and destructive. His characters, in fighting the myth of nothingness, question the sphere of existence yet simultaneously deny whatever provisional hypotheses may appear. In existential art-forms the vision of nothingness hemmed in the life of man or woman who thought the only mark of his or her humanity consisted in the fact that his/her consciousness could at least grasp the emptiness of being. This brought about yet another kind of dehumanization of rational thought. What was forgotten in the intellectual view of a secular world was that the human being remains mysterious and that life is "sacred".

Literature, as early as Euripides's Bacchae, explored the fact of man's two-sided nature, the rational, civilized side on one hand, and the instinctive side, on the other. The Bacchea shows that the attempt to ignore or banish Dionysus will render his nature not merely amoral but bestial, and hostile to the highest human values. Similarly, to reject the creative potential and humane quality of his rationale is to render his nature in a state of mindless anarchy.

The excesses of inwardness perpetuated by the symbolists were not only reflections of the loss of the more universal symbols endemic to a Christian civilization. Literature was also a reaction to the inevitable conflict in the artist's creative self, between what the senses tell him/her and what the mind theorizes about the world around him/her.

The senses bring things to the mind in separation and the mind attempts to bring them together with some comprehension. Inevitably one is left like White is, when
recalling his life at school, with "a synthesis of living sensuality". In White's case his list reads: "the blaze of light, a horse galloped through flickering leaves, callous flesh streaked with mud, tasselled with leeches, and the smells, especially those of crushed ants, smoke rising from twigs and bark kindled in the open, bread and mushrooms frying in biscuit tins on a school room stove ..." (FG, p.27).

The unresolvable conflict between perception and the idea is dramatized in The Twyborn Affair, along with humankind's rational capacity and its emotional and imaginative faculties. Man and woman are alive in all their complexity in this tragedy; White becomes both, in a drama of the body, soul and mind. White, in FG, explains how his sexual ambiguity allowed him a freedom to range through every variation of human mind, "to play so many roles in so many contradictory envelopes of flesh" (p.35). White has a mind that is possessed by the spirit of man and woman. White considers that this state of things may make his writing sound more cerebral than it is. He cannot tolerate the idea that he is seen as an intellectual. The Twyborn Affair is a work that brings the whole range of human faculties into action. Principles of right and wrong, ideologies that systematize a particular view of reality are inevitably at odds with the promises of the senses. White says of himself that "the puritan in me has always wrestled with the sensualist" (FG, p.151). Gravenor perceives this same conflict in Eadith; he sees that her disguises are brought about because of her puritan need to protect herself against darker desires (TA, p.426). Similarly, White as a child, "stuck by the principles that were instilled into him and were related only to his rational self", despite the presence of the darker overtones that pervaded his irrational depths (FG, p.34).

When Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith are confronting the problem of their identity a rational probing exists as prominently as the instinctual and the emotional responses to their predicament. As Eudoxia writes in her diary: "... nothing of me is mine ... not even the body I was given to inhabit, nor the disguises chosen for it .... The real E has not yet been discovered" (p.79). The thoughts that surround this preoccupation take in events of the past, objects of present mundane reality that in retrospect take on a symbolism of her futility, and her present predicament as lover of Angelos. Eudoxia writes of her view of the situation, her sense of self, even her swim, its healing and suicidal effects, her wish to escape, whether into a past or a future and, finally, her recognition of her love for Angelos and her own frailty (pp.80-81). Eddie, like Eudoxia, is philosophically engaged in the fact of his existence. When asked by his father what he intended doing, his answer within himself is "nothing; surely being, is enough; looking, smelling, listening touching" (p.160). But this is a hypothetical answer that later is replaced with a determined attempt to impress strangers with himself. This self, that he
views constantly with an almost objective detachment, was in the process of being born, and which was the reason he had chosen a manner of life on the whole distasteful to him” (p.211). Eadith looks back on her life and reviews how her lovers may have seen her. Generally she believes that people on the whole did not question her bona fides (p.403). The crisis of this retrospective experience centres on her parents, who will always be impossible to fit into the warping puzzle “without committing manslaughter and condemning yourself for the monster you are and aren’t” (p.403).

Eddie does not merely “lust after Marcia’s female form”, he discovered himself, to his amazement and only transitory repugnance, experiencing this desire. Eddie is always both the participator and the rationally engaged spectator. The first section of TA, when seen from Eudoxia’s perspective, is done in the form of her diary. Structurally this accommodates Eudoxia’s spectator view of all her actions. We, nevertheless, experience her telling of the scenes as they are occurring in the present. Consequently, during the scene on the terrace when Eudoxia’s mood moves from immersion in childhood memories concerning her father the night before, to anger, nausea, roused senses, and confusion concerning Angelos, one is taken by surprise with her question: “Isn’t this how our relationship works?” The question is directed to the diary, its appearance persuades the reader to be actively aware of the many-layered perspectives possible within human activity. Eadith thinks quite dispassionately how she would love to experience an impossible love with Gravenor. In a detached way, yet hopelessly involved, she recognizes that in any of its permutations her life had never been simple: “would she have enjoyed it more if it had? She thought she wouldn’t, then that she would. And again, not; ...” (p.328).

Murray Krieger argues that in modern Tragedy there exists the unresolvable tension between the ethical and the insights known by the tragic visionary. The modern tragic vision is the Dionysian one, except that the visionary is now utterly lost, since there is no cosmic order to allow a return to the world for him who has dared stray beyond.24 Belief in and sustenance by the ethical can only be apprehended by making the Kierkegaardian “leap of faith” beyond an experience of despair. In TA, Patrick White dispels the tension between the ethical and the tragic visionary by having no need of the comfort of the accommodating caution of social necessity as institutionalized in the ethical. White, in becoming one with the tragic visionary, in having the courage to discover what is left if the artist does not grasp desperately at known aesthetic form, creates a tragic form that presents man in thought and in action. Consequently, unlike his earlier allegorical excursions into the core of reality and/or art, White is not

transformed from character to parable. It is neither in depersonalization nor in intoxication that White finds his reality, but in that "vision" which sees what is. If the Dionysian vision is allowed to persist without surrender to a known form, its freedom discovers new form. This new form combines a Dickensian realism with the subjectivism of Virginia Woolf but, as well, its consciousness of itself and its tools presented as a living reality and not as a subject for the modernist preoccupied with the problematic relationship between art and life to transform into abstract material. Within this framework, White's novel seeks to enact man's view of values as well as dramatize what values can exist for modern people.

The Realization of Values

Max Scheler maintains that in a universe constructed by mechanical physics there are no tragedies. He bases this primarily on the idea that in tragedy some value must be destroyed whether it be a life, power or faith. The struggle of the tragic person he argues must be one that is occasioned in an object of high positive value, that is, of a high moral nature generally treating the family, marriage or state. It is true that deals with a person who is morally exhausted (p.123) and one who, in a post-existential state, still attempts to find her "doctrine of life" in "the minutiae" of deserted rooms. The core, to her life, nevertheless, deals with values. Perhaps not those deduced from a set of principles but, instead, those that are founded on a relentless search for faith and for an abundant life. The conflicting values are embodied within the forces of the human self: The soul versus the body, perception versus the senses and material substance versus spiritual affinity. The oppositional needs of these forces jostle for a value system; the quest for value becomes the abiding one: As Eadith proclaims, "I've never aspired to virtue. As for purity-truth - I've still to make up my mind what they amount to. But I hope I may. Eventually" (p.381). The object of the yearning in which the conflict might find a harmonizing home, is love. This need of a relationship of mutual understanding, human warmth and sexual joy, emanates from a nature split with its conflicting desires which demand contradictory value systems. It is the continual disappointment of his/her quest that constitutes a tragedy.

The sense of heightened life that goes with the tragic experience is no longer conditioned by the transcending of the ego. F.R. Leavis believed that this transcendence was achieved by an escape from all attitudes of self-assertion and that it involved recognizing a positive value which is in some way defined and vindicated by death.

25. Although this thesis postulates that the Newtonian world view is no longer tenable it does not argue that the world as we live it now is not, despite the discovery of quantum mechanics, still constructed on the mechanical world view.
Furthermore, he believed that in being challenged at the profoundest level with the question, "In what does the significance of life reside?" we find ourselves in a situation where the valued becomes more important than the valuer. Contrary to this position the tragic experience in TA deals with the valuer and the valued. There is no transcendence of the ego in a moment of metaphysical insight; instead, there is the essential humanness of man both in recognition of his ontological situation as well as a dramatization of his human desires and needs. This active realization of certain values in the lives of men and women excludes the once acclaimed position of the willing adhesion of the individual self to something other than itself. The romantics discovered that they could not take on the salvation of humankind. The glorification of the creative imagination led to a recognition of its precariousness and thus in post-romantic times art was considered inept at dealing with the profoundest problems of humanity. That time, however, has passed. Art is no longer attempting to compensate for the downfall of religion or the relativism of science. Its forms and content, in no longer being a reaction to buried traditions, are again able to be a mirror to pursuits of humanity.

The search for Identity acted out in TA is not an obsessive quest for justification but, instead, a quest to know what is. Meaning is not sought outside the human perimeter. The every-day forms of perception are directed at unfathomable delights of human love. As Eddie exclaims, "I never set out to lose myself. Finding myself is more to the point" (p.239). Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith, in searching for intrinsic meaning, become aware that people are more ready "to accept material facade than glimpses of spiritual nakedness" (p.160). Although this is a perception of Eddie's, it is one endemic to the knowledge received by Eadith and Eudoxia as well. It is that spiritual nakedness that White is determined to come to terms with in his characters. Eudoxia, Eddie, and Eadith are aware that others take their existence for granted (pp.85, 212, 354), but Eudoxia's words set the pattern for all three: ("I would like to think myself morally justified in being true to what I am - if I knew what that is. I must discover") (p.63). It is an exploration that involves a conscious recognition of man's (woman's) potentiality for cruelty as well as for caring.

Most post-modernist writers, for example Kafka, Céline and Beckett affirm an objective order of values. Their values cling in spirit to a traditional order, not by

---

26. F.R. Leavis, "Tragedy and the 'Medium': A Note on Mr Santayana's 'Tragic Philosophy'", in Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism, pp.310-323.

27. See TA, p.223, "He withdrew into the outer cold, not through an access of virtue, rather from disgust for his use of Lushington's wife in an attempt to establish his own masculine identity.

28. See p.320 for Eadith Trist’s response to Annabel Stansfield’s death.
acknowledging that such an order actually exists, but by assuming that its loss is a deprivation. The more liberating form of post-modernist art reflects, in its release from binding traditions, a move towards a redefinition of selfhood. This liberation, however, most often manifests itself in humankind being left imprisoned in meaningless isolation. White's art grows out of a recognition of both these strains of post-modernism. They have become historical expressions of tragic knowledge that have provided White with a system of the possible approaches to understanding. In a sense they are "myths" which have become wholly consumed in White's passionate struggle for truth. In TA White has resurrected the belief that many might continue to have the capacity for profound feeling and that he may still be capable of that reasoning power which divines meaning behind and in strangeness and seeming disorder. The quest for transcendence by way of the paradise within, particularly noticeable in SM and V, as a means of transforming outer reality, has given way to some acceptance of empirical reality. The empirical world and the realm of meanings and values are, in TA, no longer to be accepted as irreparably divided.

Beyond Catharsis

Confronting reality within the tragic experience involves pushing oneself beyond that point of cathartic cleansing, enlightenment and knowing. It means to reach out towards the untouchable, to probe the unbearable as well as to question the joyous. The dramatized new detachment of the artist watching himself in action, in emotional turmoil and in thought focusses on man as being both inside and outside himself. Eadith Trist's two dreams experienced in the confined room of benign warmth strike at the very heart of tragic experience. Again these episodes deal with identity. In both cases, Eadith is parent, child and an observer of his/her predicament. During the first dream, Eadith enters a room which, although close, is at first inviting and filled with promise. She sees a young woman who is familiar "but the dreamer could not identify her" (p.352). The woman bathes a beautiful child, newly born. Eadith in the dream drops on her knees by the bath to help bathe the child. "The mother seemed to have invited collaboration." Eadith, however, is warned back and finally "Dishwater, sewage, putrid blood were gushing out of the faceless mother from the level at which her mouth should have been. The intruder was desolated by a rejection she should have expected."

The dream concerns Eadith's relationship not only with his mother, but with himself, with his capacity for knowing the worst before blundering head first into its horror. Locked within the comforting confines of a potentially suffocating environment, Eadith wishes to join his/her mother, and "father" herself, with loving care, into being. However, the ambivalent attitude of her mother has contributed to her unbearable recognition of her possible non-being. This dream echoes an earlier one experienced by
Eddie in which he dreams of Kim, that green skinned boy. In this dream Kim asks him who he is. His answer at first is 'nobody', but then, this is qualified by "... I’m my father and mother’s son and daughter" (p.261). The snap of Kim and his mother which provides the initial content of the dream takes on the identity of his mother merged with his father and himself. The mother figure says "Ed I love you in her father’s voice." The dream becomes more complex in that their "grappling each other in a common desire related to childhood and despair" is interrupted by the disapproving mother. Mother and father, the former always an embodiment of unfulfilled lust, and the latter filled with unexpressed love, join and separate in a puzzle never to be solved.

The second dream extends this experience further. Again the dream occurs in a room though this time it lacks any semblance of normality. It is a padded room with light emanating from within. It represents on one level the value of complete withdrawal from society and a kind of magical comfort gained from total introspection. The room is padded, softened from the blows of external reality and filled with children in an almost embryonic stage of development. They are "a fluttering of the bird voices, moth like hands ..." (p.413). The children, perhaps emblematic of all the possible shapes and people she could become, desperately wish to get out of the womb-like confinement.

As well as being represented by the foetal-children Eadith is also testing her capacity as a parent. Can she father/mother herself into an existence that will fulfil her human needs? While the children hammer on the walls in a bid to escape the sounds of outside reality invade the cocoon "... she could hear, sounds of gathering confusion outside, as of wind rising ... human voices screaming hatred and destruction as some monstrous act, explosive and decisive, was being prepared" (p.414). The act that is about to occur has a multi-layered significance. It is the potential birth of a whole human being, it is the gathering energies of one who wishes to be responsible for the emerging identity and, it is the recognition that in being, one is split between the demands of being true to oneself and being real to those around her. The act climaxes in the monstrosity of her recognition. The child that is captured bites into the unproductive nipple that cannot nurture and laugh[ing]as did all the children, vindictively as their adult counterparts might have, at the blood flowing from the wound opened in the source of their deception, down over belly and thighs, gathering at the crotch in such quantities that it overflowed and hid the penis. The dripping and finally coagulating blood might have gushed from a torn womb" (p.414).

Eadith’s alternatives are clear. If she remains within herself, unrevealed to others

29. The character Kim embodies characteristics that White sees in his childhood self. See FG, pp.1 and 5, where he describes himself to be "like a thread of pale-green samphire" and "I was this green, sickly boy, who saw and knew too much."
she is safe but essentially unborn. If, on the other hand, she comes out of her cocoon and attempts to exist in her fullest capacity she will experience the agony of being a scorned and unacceptable sexual and human anomaly.

From Allegory to Life

Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith, like tragic figures of the past, yearn for a deliverance from the limitations that life imposes on him. The hard fact of his tragedy is facing the inexorable limit. It is in the hope that in acting out his own personality, in realizing his selfhood even unto death, he will find redemption of a kind. Eddie Twyborn's various lives continually test his ability to survive. Although he feels "the complete misfit in Don Prowse's aggressively masculine world" (p.179), he pursues the possibility of finding his true self. He attempts to convince himself of an existence that others seem to take for granted. His partial success with this is seen in his, however fleeting, recognition that nothing in life need be humdrum whether that be "shelling peas, peeling potatoes" if you give yourself to it. Eadith may continue to perceive "the walls of that other prison, herself" (p.424) but she acts with the belief that sometimes she is capable of more than what is expected of her (p.383).

White, in dealing with a truthful representation of man's life, creates a character who will live his life with a full knowledge of his situation and with a desire to discover the highest possibilities of man. Jaspers, when speaking of existential man wrote that modern man, unlike heroic man, craves for liberation of the soul. Heroic man, he argues, is content if he can find strength to endure. He accepts life and death too easily as unproblematic and self-evident. The questions asked by existential man have been answered by the unsustaining void. Post-modernist wo/man, in fusing philosophy and fiction together once more, accepts life and death as self-evident. Like heroic man, he is "content" if he can find strength to endure the world as it is. Unlike heroic man, he is without the ultimate consolation of a Divine cosmic order. His consolation must come in his strength to realize the highest possibilities of man. As Eudoxia writes "Shall my will ever grow strong and free enough for me to face up to myself?" (p.122).

The strength to endure is sustained by an active and thoughtful recognition of the cause and nature of the pain that comes with the experience of pushing oneself to the limits. Eddie is able to understand that his wish to comfort Don Prowse in his agony is really a wish to comfort himself (p.188). Similarly, in his momentary happiness camping in the bush, "he wondered whether he could really exist without the source of his unhappiness" (p.272). The source of his unhappiness, uncovered during his journey

towards knowledge of self, rests in his relationship with his parents. His mother is a
dynamic part of that source. Eddie at Monaro writes to her of their common natures,
their same sensuality, lust and deceits. "It should have brought us closer together, but
never has" Eddie writes in a moment when he feels that words might illuminate
(pp.241-242). Eddie’s mother troubles him intensely throughout his life. But as Mrs
Tyrell asks "What can yer do, ... if its your own mother?" Eddie never finds the answer
to this, although the question haunts him (p.287).

In most ways modern man understands his human life in the same way that
Shakespeare did. The essential difference is that this understanding of life’s
potentialities and perils, its greatness and nothingness, its joy at being alive and its
terror at failure and destruction no longer exist against the background of unshaken
order. Humanity still sees itself as confronted by an unanswerable problem after each
collapse of every effort to realize its promise. There is, however, no return to order after
cathartic experience. Eadith, the clear sighted bawd, was racked by the clear-sighted
view she had of her own failures, her anxieties, her disproportion (p.363). Furthermore,
"She could not believe in heroes, or legendary actors ... for being herself a muddled
human being astray in the general confusion of life." Eadith is without "illusions"
(p.403). The answers that are sought, without the unshaken order as a prevailing
backdrop, are earthbound. Their success depends on the strength of will. Grand
moments of reaching out for love, joy, understanding and the acceptance of pain
constitute the testing ground of humankind’s greatness. Eadith, in recognizing her
mother after years of separation withdraws from possible contact: "Mrs Trist did not
lean over to touch. Once more her will had faltered, the moment had eluded her. She
would never find out. The answers were not for her" (p.405).

The tragic person of the post-modernist age does not make an uncompromising
stand on principles but, instead, shows the possibility of a number of stands. According
to Freud the essential content of a tragedy is in that the person involved is responsible
for his/her suffering. Only in this sense can pain be meaningful. Eudoxia, Eddie and
Eadith are responsible for their pain in that, like Oedipus, it occurs because of their
relentless search for truth and identity. Conrad presents Kurtz in The Heart of
Darkness as someone to despise. Nevertheless, alongside this condemnation there is
continued recognition that his rebellion against decency, however offensive, renders him
in some way as being superior to Marlowe. White accepts the nature of Kurtz as a part
of all men and instead of speaking through an alter ego he "is" his characters. Eudoxia,
Eddie and Edith rebel against precepts of moral behaviour when such axioms form a
barricade against self-knowledge.

White’s aim, endemic to his later novels, is no longer perfect artistic expression.
The aim now is a "perfect" representation of life. White is no longer obsessed with his failure before words. Formerly his anguish at not being able to discover artistic form for his perceptions had become an intellectual preoccupation. As his work became more allegorical, his preoccupations with discovering the words that might paint reality were in danger of being treated in isolation from life itself. Allegory, however, gave way to life and tragedy was reborn. The human quest that interests him now is not how to express one's anguish, perceptions and failures but how to live and experience them. The artist is not the hero; man, mere man, heroic or not, is the central figure. The new tragic form does not require a hero but, instead, the authentic representation of suffering man able to face the nature of his world with love and hope. The personal prison we build to hide our souls becomes as significant as the linguistic prison that, White feels, ensnares his art.

Eudoxia, a young man, disguised as a beautiful woman is committed "by fate and orgasm - never love" to a man she wishes to escape (p.36). She feels the dire need to be drawn back into a past which, although unendurable, she longs for. Only in going back to the source of her unhappiness will she ascend phoenix-like out of the ashes. Eudoxia learns that suicide is not a form of escape that will save her (p.80). Joanie Golson, a ghost from her Australian past reminds her of the fact of her Australian identity. But Eudoxia is tied to Angelos; she knows they are dependent upon each other and that only war or death can tear them apart (p.99). Angelos does die and Eudoxia, equipped with her understanding of human frailty, but eager for new beginnings, goes to war as Eddie.

Eddie Twyborn returns to his parents. His childhood past permeates his present both nurturing and ravaging his sense of self. At Monaro he is most alive. His relationship with Marcia Lushington and Don Prowse expresses his lust, love, anger and vulnerabilities. His affection and admiration for Mrs Tyrell and Greg Lushington reflects his affinity with the ordinary and the poetic. Eddie is sensitive to the agonies of all around him: "The shadow in other people's lives oppressed him as much as the shadow in his own - the unpossessed" (p.168). Final answers are not discovered; the relationships he forms are shattered. Eddie Twyborn leaves the bush, a land that answers to his innermost spirit, and becomes Eadith.

Eadith becomes a brothel-keeper. It is a profession chosen by one who has despairsed at the possibility of love. Nevertheless, there is perhaps a hope that in the bestial and lust driven activities one may find the source of life. Eadith, however, is now only an observer. It is a time, while watching men and women at their most depraved and their most frail, for measuring up the significance of her existence. She rejects a possible relationship with Gravenor which might have been fulfilling. Her dreams express
her anguish at the love that was apprehended but not held and lived out: "Tears were falling for the past the present for all hallowed hell on earth" (p.376). In the end she leaves the brothel: "a world of fragmentation and despair in which even the perversities of vice can offer regeneration of a kind" (p.420). As she returns to her mother as Eddie, still marked with purple makeup, she/he is killed. Sexual ambivalence, war and death come together in a final statement.

Symbolism

Expression of a Living Reality

The three lives of Edward Twyborn are expressed in an art-form that touches the heart of experience. Not only is one attuned, to their thinking through their experiences, one also experiences their moments of sensual pleasure and moments of intense ennui. Eudoxia, the "life-mystic", intent on self-expression yet often flirtatious with suicide, can sit in sublime isolation "on a rock, bare feet enjoying the texture of stone (and childhood)" (pp.97-98). Angelos, when Eudoxia stole away for her private swim, suspects her of defecting. Although she, at the time, only did this in spirit, later Eddie knows he is a deserter at heart: "I am in the street. I am the Resurrection and the Dead, or more simply, the eternal deserter in search of asylum. I did not leave Angelos, but might have done so ..." (p.143). Eddie is happiest when he is absorbed in the pure serenity of a sensual moment: "He was content, with evening, with the scent of frost, his own smell, the stench of death on a sweat-sodden horse" (p.202).

When Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith are philosophically engaged with their existence they are seen as being "the Resurrection and the Dead". Outside Eddie’s "rational" awareness he might find times of completeness ("In his isolation he was free and whole, but only momentarily" (p.251)) but, generally, his sense of self holds the promises of Death and Resurrection with equal force. In using the colour purple at various points in *TA*, White is drawing from ancient and Christian traditions. In ancient times purple was worn by Emperors and to this day is associated with royalty. At Christ’s scourging he was robed in purple and offered to the crowd to scorn. This was their King. A crown of thorns and staff were given to Jesus Christ as his royal symbols. Christ, like the bishops and priests who represent him in present times, wore purple not only with dignity but with the shame and the penitence he bore for his people. In Christian churches purple vestments are worn during the period of Lent which begins with Christ’s fasting in the desert until his resurrection. It is the colour of mourning; it is the colour of an end and a beginning. Eddie Twyborn is in each of his forms an end and a beginning.

In being both the Resurrection and the Dead he embodies the burden, the penitence, the mourning, the shame of Christ who suffers in his journey towards selfhood/Godhood.
Purple appears at crucial moments of TA. In each instance it draws on various nuances from the ancient and Christian traditions. Eudoxia, when remembering her childhood, associates the growing threats it brought with "unruly masses of purple lantana" (p.122). Eudoxia recalls her first meeting with Angelos and asks the question: "How can A., by looking at me from beneath those horny eyelids, convince me that we are wearing the purple, standing on the steps at Blackerj*ae or Nicaea? More - that I am no longer a fiction but a real human being ..." (p.124). In each of these situations purple is associated with the pain of finding and believing in her identity. To be true to herself, given the complexity of her type, she must face the scorn of her fellow human beings. For Eudoxia, wearing the purple, is to be a real human being which is to be as a "King", as a chosen one. It also involves the courage to make each end a beginning, as a means towards rebirth. Eddie’s mother Eadie and Eadith both wear lipsticks that attempt to approximate a purple hue (pp.151, 360). Eadith chooses the colour mauve to dominate her fashion sense (p.310). Her withdrawal from attempting to find a harmony with Love and lust is reflected in this choice of a paler purple. Like a ghost of her former hopes, she wanders in a world with things still undone. It is, however, the "overtones of purple" that rouse her compassion rather than grey surfaces (p.369). Eadith yearns for that "dreaded expiation" associated with making contact with her mother. But a possible reunion is evaded and Eadith’s face is taken over "by the despair of a strong, but curiously violet chin, the mouth in a soggy face sucking after life it seemed" (p.405). To "wear the purple" is to be born into a fulfilled reality. Eadie holds Eadith’s source but, despite attempts at reaching reconciliation and understanding, mother and daughter/son do not live out a possible empathy.

Thought and Action

The tragic experience involves more than mere contemplation of suffering and death, flux and extinction. If these things are to become tragic man or woman must act. In his action man enters an involvement that will destroy him. The perfection man sought will be unknown. The work of art, however, is not merely an imitation of the action. Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith in their actions destroy the people they seek to love and make impossible the values they seek to hold. The contemplation of self and the actions they commit in order to realize themselves are strangers to each other. They are undefined anonymous puzzles that do not meet in common dedication or find a peace

31. See FG, pp.151 and 306: "... the face she had tried to disguise by smearing it with crimson ..." and Eadith at a moment of expressing a deeply felt idea decides to wipe off "... most of the hateful magenta lipstick." Although of a purple hue, crimson and magenta have too much of fire and blood in their essence; desire, Lust and Spirit are expressed but not the dignity associated with purple.
with each other. *The Twyborn Affair* acts out the collision between inwardness and action as they attempt to soar together towards living perfection. The process, however, of this conflict is recognized and explored in this novel.

Eddie arrives in Fremantle and explores the back streets of the town. He notices the "Blank, suetty faces of women" and "an ageing blond" in this suburban misery and he recognizes their symptoms of despair: "Oh, God, but I feel for them, because I know exactly - they are what I am, and I am they - interchangeable". But like them, Eddie in his actions will not be able to correct the mistake he feels himself to be (pp.142, 143). A wrestling match exists between the ideas that determine action and the experience which is the result of it. Eddie is able to see that there would be value in letting people see the "defenceless grub inside what they took to be flawless armour". At Marcia's party he recognizes that such honesty might allow the possibility of "some kind of bumbling relationship" with at least two of the other guests. Instead he withdraws from such a challenge and destroys the chance that the action conceived of might bear fruit.

The complexity of her sexual ambivalence encourages Eadith to consider whether she would have enjoyed life more if it were more simple: "She thought she wouldn't, then that she would. And again not; ..." (p.328). She recognizes that her type precludes the possibility to love without reservation. This acknowledges the rift between aspiration and potentiality of related activity. Each of Eadith's actions in life, although a step towards enlightenment, falls short of her desires and destroys what she perceives as the embodiments of perfection.

**The Unfathomable Revealed in the Phenomenal World**

In placing White in a post-modernist framework, it must be stressed that he does not fall into the category of writers of the new sensibility. If his characters experience visionary moments these exist within the phenomenal world, and do not refer to either an infinite world beyond or the inner space of consciousness. White does not uphold a sensibility that presupposes the superiority of visionary experience, expansion of the perimeters of consciousness, and the release of primal energies over the kind of thinking, which recognizes the "reality principle". Not that these are absent from his language but, instead, they are aspects of a total method that encompasses an acceptance of a real world. He goes beyond the assumption that if one presents life as it is then it is merely a superficial reality of measurable facts with which only objective reason deals. Creative reason, visions that emanate within the world, and an immediate natural response to the smells, textures, sounds and sights of existence constitute his method. It is one that tackles nature not by merely dissecting and particularizing but by showing her at work and alive, manifesting herself in her wholeness. Monsieur Pelletier experiences a "vision
of life" in a sense when he watches Eudoxia swim in the sea. Lust, despair, a moment of joy and a moment of knowledge and poetry are part of his experience. The swimmer is seen as an essential ingredient not only of the scene but of the forces that initiate life’s primal energies: "the swimmer headed for the open sea and the single hair dividing this from sky ... as life from death" (p.74).

In some post-modernist fiction, character, like external reality, is something about which nothing is known, lacking in plausible motive or discoverable depth. Language forfeits its traditional power to render experience significantly and meaning comes to be regarded with a mixture of distrust and boredom. White, in believing that the world is mysterious, and in believing that the unfathomable is revealed in its presence within the phenomenal world, has a trust in language and meaning. White’s characters are truly alive in that they search relentlessly for their meaning, for their true selves. Whereas Hurtle in V discovers that "its tragic that nothing ever comes out perfect" (V, p.594), the characters in TA dramatize this as tragedy.

Eddie arrives at "Fossicker’s Flat" to await someone from Monaro to collect him. The landscape is bare, huge and treeless. It is relieved of monotony by strewn rocks that suggest ancient religious rites in their formal setting (p.175). It is as if Eddie is momentarily suspended in time and in history. The bareness of the landscape is suggestive of his own soul waiting to be discovered. It is a landscape with which he learns to have an affinity, in fact, this affinity at one time replaced "loss of faith in himself" (p.194). After a night using "Lushington’s wife in an attempt to establish his own masculine identity" (p.223), Eddie stumbles out of the house into the country. He is obsessed with memories of his mother, Joanie Golson, Marcia and even Eudoxia, aware, and yet empathetic with feminine deceit:

In his own experience, in whichever sexual role he had been playing, self-searching had never led more than briefly to self-acceptance. He suspected that salvation most likely lay in the natural phenomena surrounding those unable to rise to the spiritual heights of a religious faith: in his present situation the shabby hills, their contours practically breathing as the light embraced them, stars fulfilled by their logical drowsing, the river never so supple as at daybreak, as dappled as the trout it camouflaged, the whole ambience finally united by the harsh but healing epiphany of cockcrow (p.223).

Eddie comes to the end of one particular "life" at Monaro. Although drawn to Greg Lushington’s poetry, Marcia’s voluptuous form, and Don Prowse’s masculine frailty he fails to find a utopia of being. The landscape he loved was "peopled with those the magic-lantern projects without their knowing, like Greg Lushington the Crypto-poet,

Mr Justice Twyborn the Bumbling father, Peggy Tyrell of the Football team. Even, perhaps, Don Prowse the Brute Male" (p.294). He leaves the landscape which has revealed the unfathomable, the "sacred" aspect of humanity. Eddie, however, has "lost" his soul in the brutality of human intercourse. Fossicker Flat is seen from his train window as bereft with its skeleton trees. Night descends on it, and on the unknown he attempted to grasp, as he sleeps the tormented sleep of dreams and nightmares.

Post-modernist Tragedy: A New Order?

The moving forces in the destiny of all tragic characters have always been acted out in a human sphere. This applies to tragedy as conceived in ancient times during the Elizabethan age and within modern times. Similarly, a religious spirit whether it be embodied in the Greek gods, Christianity or human empathy with immanent forces of the natural world, has always been a crucial element of tragic experience. What is essentially different for post-modernist man and woman is the loss of a universally accepted cosmic order. Even within Existential drama/fiction man was still reacting to a "God" in that it was his absence that brought an intolerable void: Sartre's "engagement" with life and Camus's "scorning of fate" and "revolting against one's despair" were advocated in a world that still clung in ideas, if not with belief, to a sense of a known religious order. Kierkegaard saw the impossibility of human existence existing simultaneously in time and eternity. His notion that such an existence caused man to be rushed between two irreconcilable absolutes was essentially based on an understanding of a modern world living with religious concepts that were not as comfortably placed as they had been before the advent of the positivist age. Kierkegaard retains a belief in God, but it is with fear and trembling; an existence in dread and anxiety and, above all, in despair.

The classic image of man is one that places him within a stable architecture of custom, religious and political tradition and social caste. The tragic arena exists precariously between heaven and hell and the protagonists may encounter ministers of grace and damnation. Oedipus and Lear show us how little of the world belongs to man. Post-modernist Tragedy shows us how the world can only be understood in human terms. If there are mysterious and incalculable forces that confound and disturb, they are to be seen as the unfathomable aspects of our human lives and not as mysteries whose origins lie in a world beyond. The action of the tragic character may not be wrestling between an agreed concept of what constitutes good and what constitutes evil. The hierarchy of pleasures and values known to vary from one person to the other in modern times. Consequently, the classic notion that it is right that the hero should fall and sorrowful that he does occurs against a backdrop of diversified views on what constitutes right and wrong. The contest between good and evil in the action cannot
finally find pleasure by an ultimate suggestion of order and law and by the insistence upon the harmony of events. If, however, there is an absence of an imaginative world order, White, through his characters, moves with that relentless spirit to find one. If Eudoxia in T.A is "morally exhausted" (p.123) she, in being "born" again as Eddie, is determined to find new values in these new beginnings.

Tragedies of the past contemplated a universe in which humankind was not the measure of all things. Ultimately, its confrontation of life's mysteries, was done in a world in which all questions could be answered; its questions were not earthbound and they were asked with a sustaining faith in cosmic good. Tragic philosophy dealt with an aura of grandeur; it offered personal fulfilment in the enlightenment that comes with the disaster. In a sense it lifted humankind above the ordinary misery of universal suffering; in its exaltation it was in a sense blind to the terrible realities of all people. Today the tragic character is not the exalted hero whose attributes set him apart from the majority of mankind. Now he or she is an embodiment of the human being who "simply" wants to be, to find his or her meaning, to know himself or herself. Eadith Trist does not aspire to heights: "Experience in her several lives had left her with few illusions ... She was sceptical of history ... She could not believe in heroes ..." (p.403).

Eudoxia, Eddie, and Eadith attempt to find a harmony between the deepest and most conflicting impulses of the human soul. It is an attempt to find an order that offers the fullness of life in its richest unfolding. The aim is not to impose an order onto chaos but, instead, to overreach and surpass it. Eddie weeps not only for a past but also a formless future at the beginning of his new life (p.138). It's this recognition that a new order must evolve that brings closer, if not in harmony, the ancient god of ecstasy and the god of order. This coming together of Dionysus and Apollo is not the same unity as envisaged by Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy. It differs in that Dionysus must face the unbearable knowledge that Apollonian form soothed out of recognition into aesthetic form. In bringing together the heterogeneous complexity of ideas, feelings and impressions we may no longer need to be beguiled by aesthetic satisfactions. Perhaps, as Murray Krieger suggests, the utterly stripped tragic vision may not after all be less illusory than the fullness which shines through Ancient and Shakespearean tragedy.33

Patrick White, in T.A, dramatizes this vision and he does find a new tragic form. The world he works within has a "pure relatedness" about it; life and death are one, separated only by human activity which is not to be seen as an "otherness" but as endemic to it. It is not White's wish merely to know the terror of the monstrous emptiness beyond but, instead, to somehow surpass it by reassessing and, in fact, really knowing his own world.

Beyond the Metaphysical Void

Throughout the twentieth century humankind has attempted to cope with a loss of confidence in the existence of the absolute. This loss was accompanied by doubt as to the reality of the self, at least as traditionally conceived. During the existential phase in literature and philosophy writers explored the nature of one’s self when faced with the absence of that solid and reassuring world outside of self that could be labelled good or evil. Post-existential writing has one positive path to follow and that is the path that Eddie (White) takes when searching for "the self which, he felt sure, was in process of being born ..." (p.211). This search is accompanied by a tragic spirit that is aware of its own limitations. Each experience known is provisional and questioned and tested with a continuing presence of unbelief. Despair is to be known and travelled through.

The healing power of ancient tragedy lay in its aesthetic resolution. Modern literature that dealt with the spiritual life of humankind tended to express a dialectical struggle between affirmation and denial, the absolute and nothingness. Post-modernist fiction must transcend a metaphysics of absurdity and bring forth an imaginative report of the truth of man’s experience. The voices of Beckett’s characters resolve that man must go on though there is no reason and no desire for doing so. The voice of Patrick White in *TA* is humanistic; it affirms the existence of a world that can be rediscovered if humankind continues to have faith in its capacity to love despite failure. White, like Faulkner predicted decades ago, believes that "man will not merely endure: he will prevail". It is this sheer will power that persuades Eddie in *TA* that he was reserving himself for something ahead and that he would emerge at last from the bombardment not only of a past war, but of the past (p.133). Eddie and Eadith will continue to experience the falling apart of human existence, the denial of the simultaneity of life in the spirit and life in the flesh, the denial of the meaningfulness of each for the other, but with each "death" there will be the faith in being reborn. As Lear says on the Heath, "Humanity must perforce prey on itself/Like monsters of the deep" (IV, ii, 46-51). Men by nature tear each other apart. Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith are both the tormenters and the tortured.

Nietzsche admired the Greeks because they possessed the moral strength to look horror in the face and say yes to life. The tragic hero, however, having been plunged in a universe void of meaning does not advance beyond the edge of life. Perhaps his mind wanders there but that Dionysiac insight is swiftly transformed into the tranquility of Apollonian form. Just as the aesthetic comfort offered by the contemplation of the

34. Quoted by Laurence Michel in *The Thing Contained*, p.130.
human tragedy was not sufficient to counteract Nietzsche's personal despair, nor will White be beguiled by its masking qualities. Man will reflect at his moment of despair; he will not be protected and liberated from Knowledge. Nor will he rest with the traditional concept of catharsis. It is in these two senses that White's Tragedy breaks new ground and in doing so creates a tragic form that reflects this particular historical time.

The Absence of Aesthetic Resolution

The distinctive appeal of Tragedy lies in one suffering an ordeal, facing life at its most difficult and ultimately deriving pleasure in the new readiness and power one gains thereby. This appeal exists in post-modernist tragedy. Unlike earlier tragedy, however, man is not to be protected from full knowledge; art is not a remedy. The vital function of tragedy, as traditionally understood, was to protect humankind from the destroying doom that exists outside the cosmic, religious and civil order endemic to its culture. A culture could be sustained when it existed within that narrow boundary where knowledge was manageable. Humankind could gaze momentarily at what threatened life, be filled with tragic apprehension, but for its survival, this apprehension of terrible truths must be transformed into ecstatic slow drama.

Tragedy deals with truth and catastrophe. As conflict deepens between two contradictory forces, tragic knowledge invades and breaks through. It must not leave anything that stifles and destroys the protagonist untouched. Post-modernist Tragedy becomes such because, although it is comprised of demonic, anti-rational and Dionysian elements it does not withdraw from the unendurable experience. One still is ultimately enlightened and purified by its unfolding truth but this does not occur in that classical tranquility of returned order.

Although Eudoxia, according to Angelos Valatzes "is inclined to attempt suicide at all those moments, one doesn’t care to face” (p.101), and Eadith dreams despairingly of the blind room where she might remain unborn, Eddie Twyborn wants to be drawn back into what he "could not endure, but longs for” (p.40). The aesthetic form of past tragedies can no longer mirror truth in a world that is a fragmented thing. The fate of humanity condemned to follow where "hateful" reason takes him cannot find meaningful serenity in a form that could only please those who wished to remain blinded from change and transition. Eddie, unlike Waldo who was afraid of "the blood and the nails” (SM, p.88), is unable to face the inescapable reality. He meets this reality with faith, recognizing it without losing hope and suffering it not without love. In SM, White tested the limits of tragic expression as traditionally conceived. His yearning after old concepts of metaphysical presence was dramatized. In TA, he is a new image of faith
and one can barely hear the echoes from the abyss that divides the "truth" of the past from the "truth" of the present.

The elusiveness of this faith in life is persistently expressed. It is inevitably dependent on the characters' success at penetrating the barriers in order to arrive at some form of truth. Eudoxia, one feels, as Joanie Golson believes, cannot lie but she knows that she lacks the courage "to live the truth" (p.51). Joanie Golson, despite her superficial priorities, is able at times to be moved into the realm of the unfathomable; she nevertheless also knows that one would "never live out the promises" (p.59). Eadith learns in her later life that "Truth is more often ugliness than beauty" (p.344). It is the phenomenal world with its texture, light and smells that gives those who wish to discover essence in their lives their answer, Monsieur Pelletier is enlightened by the light, colour and form of the swimmer and the landscape; Eadith strolls in early mornings and watches the colours returning. It is then that she comes to terms with reality in a similar sense of Pelletier, who momentarily knows of his potential for love.

**Confronting Knowledge**

The classic form of Tragedy was believed to be a higher order which absorbed but did not deny the destructive element. The cathartic principle was that purifying moment of the drama when the form smoothed and overcame the threat of emotions. It is the proof that the turbulence beyond cosmic order had been conquered. The cathartic principle no longer exists as a means of giving aesthetic distance to all that plagues and unbalances humankind. The fearful and demonic revelations of this world can only be endured; a soothing grace may exist in dreams but even here the unconscious reveals deeper threats.

Man must fall back on himself and find within his spirit a different form of harmony and tranquility. Post-modernist tragic catharsis touches the innermost being of man; it triggers off his knowledge of his freedoms and potential in a world that does not give an external and unquestionable order. Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith exercise their freedom of choice and, in a sense, this is liberating in that it helps distil their torments. They, however, do not necessarily feel totally responsible for their fate. Eudoxia is unsure about the significance of fate in her life (p.87); Eddie suspects that decisions had been made for him by some incalculable power (p.266) and Eadith prefers to think that she was chosen to lead her life in the way she does (p.358) although later in her life, she concedes that this was the life she had chosen. The freedom of choice that Eddie Twyborn does exercise in his Oedipal journal towards his sources brings a doom that constitutes his "grandeur", but it is not softened by aesthetic distance. There exists an incalculable power in the lives of the characters that mystifies and taunts but, although known, it is not seen as a cause of their destinies.
The suffering that Eadith undergoes enlightens but it is never followed by a sense of serenity or peace. Her agony exists at the moment of death. Her life as a bawd was chosen perhaps because "lust can become an epiphany" (p.417); she would have liked to believe that even if "it did not purify, lust might burn itself out, and at the same time cauterise that infected part of the self which, from her own experience, persists like the core of a permanent boil" (p.329). Lust, somehow, acts as an explosive dissonance that can burn away other preoccupations. Consequently, after Eadith's reunion with her mother, whom she would long to caress, she suddenly has a passionate urge to ravage Gravenor (p.423). The age Eadith lives in cannot offer consummation; instead there is a lusting to be consumed (p.332). At the end of Eddie's life at Monaro he experiences a bronzed exhausted evening which gave way to night, which had the smell of soot (p.300). Essentially Eadith's life is a burning out of her desires in the hope perhaps that as a mere spectator of life she may find her answers. Her rejection of Gravenor, her fear to live out her faith and love of life within a sexual framework, acknowledges "that phoenix inside her which in the nature of things would never experience rebirth" (p.410). Eadith has that tragic perception, ultimately, that man, rather than art, must remedy the torments of existence. Traditional tragic catharsis provided a therapy for those exposed to the knowledge of their ephemeral state; now the alienated people of the modern age are "free" to turn inward upon themselves and perhaps learn more profound truths.

White’s tragic quest for meaning and justification does not give way to a glorification of energy, conceived as pure immanence and process. In viewing the world as a tragic arena he no longer escapes into a celebration of the infinity of all being within the phenomenal world. Although such a celebration exists in his work, it is celebrated in its living essence rather than as a philosophical notion. Eddie Twyborn embodies this slight change in White’s perceptions as he watches the humbler, yet more elegant hen about her business: "The hen wren’s industry drew him back, out of the abstractions propounded by the hillscape and glazed air, into the everyday embroidery of life ..." (p.175). Eddie’s hopes of fulfilment are higher when they are humbler. When he discovers Marcia is pregnant, he is overwhelmed with the enormity of a situation which would only be human. Again there exists his "symbolic" bird, in this case a hornet, its presence a reminder of the actuality of his situation (p.293). The bird image provides the janus-faced catharsis in TA. Firstly in its metallic form as the silver plane it reaches its unendurable heights and, secondly, as the little bulbul in Eddie’s daydream it appears almost as a parody of the aesthetic resolution found in traditional tragedy.

Eadith intends to return to her mother as Eddie Twyborn. Despite the withdrawal from the possibility of fulfilment in her role as Eadith, she/he returns to the
source with remnants of hope, faith and love. Like Oedipus, he knows the full horror of his identity and the possibilities of tranquillity. There will be no harmonious ending. Eddie is enlightened but, unlike Oedipus, he does not blind himself against the facts of his existence. He dies seeing himself armless. His cry for a bandaid, for a healing power, for just the smallest amount of disguise is denied him. He is less than someone who has nothing on but a bandaid. Despite his many beginnings of painful settings out into the unknown, pushing off from the edges of consciousness into the mystery of what we have not yet become, Eddie is neither redeemed nor damned. He is simply dead. This is to be known with mind and soul. The only serenity that exists is that momentary expression of man-made destruction, beautiful in its form, abstract during the process of its creation but lethal in its nature: "Overhead, the silver plane appeared to have been halted at an intersection of searchlights, its lovely abstraction far above human clangour and despair" (p.431).

The other side of this catharsis is embodied in the living Eadie who waits for her Eadith/Eddie, which she knows as that fragment of her self which she lost and which she thinks is now returned where it belongs (p.432). The book ends with Eadie day-dreaming of life with her "daughter": "Sitting in the garden drying our hair together amongst the bulbuls and drizzle of taps we shall experience harmony at last" (p.432). The harmony she yearns for exists only within the tranquility of a dream. Like Apollonian form Eadie provides the screen or form that protects man from the ultimate horror of Dionysiac insight. White, however, has gone beyond catharsis; Eadie is waiting in vain; she is lost in the unreality of wishful thinking; and as such she is a parody of Apollonian form. Eddie is dead; his doom has not resurrected a new order. If Eadie has hope and faith in her love for her child, her hope is futile. Her bulbul raises his beak toward the sun and in that gesture, equipped with his little velvet jester’s cap, White gives us his final apprehension of truth. When Eadie awakens from her dream the horrible truth may devastate her, but even this, will give testimony to the fact of her existence.

Eddie Twyborn is seen in his highest potential at Monaro. Here he is stripped of role-playing and seen face to face with nature. The landscape responds to those who like the bird can raise themselves to the demands of living completely. The origins of art have been rediscovered. Its structure becomes less important than the life the artist wishes to express. Eddie Twyborn is driven constantly towards the awareness of a

35. Diane Arbus, see epigraph which appears in the foreword to The Twyborn Affair: "Sometimes you’ll see someone with nothing on but a bandaid."
36. David Malouf, see epigraph which appears in the foreword to TA: "What else should our lives be but a series of beginnings, of painful settings out into the unknown, pushing off from the edges of consciousness into the mystery of what we have not yet become."
terrible nihilism. Art does not save man; instead it culminates in its new tragic form which combines consciousness and self-consciousness, i.e., philosophy and poetry. The result is a tragedy which in showing how man is, his struggle to be, his ability to face the knowledge of his futility yet still to strive for wholeness, successfully interprets reality. The Twyborn Affair is a work of art in which human consciousness has transcended its own myths. The new world is not defined in terms of the old. In bringing together philosophy and poetry once more, White has created a new tragic form that finds and accepts the shape and the final unknowability of the external world.
CONCLUSION

The post-Darwinian emphasis on environment, as a shaping force in life, was evident in the drama and fiction of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century realists. The primary concern was with the external factors that operated on the protagonist. Often the story was used to make the audience aware of a social problem rather than to invite a vicarious participation in a personal tragedy that had universal application. Drama and fiction, in taking on a social function, embraced either naturalism or self-conscious problem-writing, neither of which created a form that expressed the human tragedy.

Tragedy questions the human condition; humankind is seen as constantly in the process of becoming shaped by a destiny that is not in a fixed state. Tragedy occurs when one is prepared to look at the world as it is, and fight its enigma and evil. The fight is for personal dignity which is not separated from the fact that it is determined by and responsible for a particular social reality.

This thesis has discussed the way in which some twentieth-century novelists have withdrawn from representing humankind in action and in searching for human dignity in a social world. It argues that the solipsistic phase of fiction is in the process of coming to a close. The question remains: what is it about the present world situation that might explain a re-emergence of the tragic art?

The Contemporary Environment

Modernism and Post-modernism in their many guises seek to overthrow old values, traditions and the forms that held them. In the wake of the rejection of the past is the need for reconstruction. The world that was understood sociologically by modern writers like Michel Foucault showed the extent to which their view of it offered no freedom. Marshall Berman sums up Foucault's assessments of modern life. He writes that this modern view concludes: "There is no point in trying to resist the oppressions and injustices of modern life, since even our dreams of freedom only add more links to our chains; however, once we grasp the total futility of it all, at last we can relax".1

If there has been a time of relaxation, or withdrawal from facing life, because of its

1. Marshall Berman, All That is Solid Melts Into Air, p.35.
apparent absurdities, this time has come to a close. We, now in the eighth decade of the twentieth century, recognize where the scientific age has brought us. Much has been said of how the advent of the scientific age contributed to the death of Tragedy. We are now in an era when "progress", that scientifically orchestrated force that was to fill the void left by "the death of God", is in its own death throes. In the social sciences, technology, the artefact of science, is a term that is now often one of disparagement, and is often identified as the cause of social pathologies of a particular kind.²

The culture which we have built is one in which we have created for the sake of development. It is one in which scientists have offered in the nuclear burner an inexhaustible source of energy. The price to be paid for this energy is horrific. It is dependent upon a vigilance from a modern public which must take responsibility for the way it has chosen to develop. We cannot pretend that it is only the scientists who are out of control. We live in an entropic world in which the availability of useable energy can be seen as a measure of our state of disorder.

The scientific law of Entropy was systematized in the nineteenth century. Einstein believed that it was the only "physical law of universal content ... that within the framework of applicability of its basic concepts" would never be overthrown.³

The second law of Thermodynamics, that is the Entropy Law, states that matter and energy can only be changed in one direction, that is from useable to unuseable, or from available to unavailable, or from the ordered to disordered. Entropy means that everything in the entire universe began with structure and value and is irrevocably moving in the direction of random chaos and waste. The entropy law destroys the notion of history as progress, and that science and technology create a more ordered world.⁴

We have reached a point in history where a qualitative change in the energy source, of the environment itself, is occurring. We exist in a time where the "creator" (i.e. science/technology) of our newest energy source, and the source itself, are under question as to its ultimate value. Energy-wise our culture has reached a critical watershed. It is at a critical transition point and it is evident that the old way of doing things is inoperative. The entropy of the environment is high and so a shift to a new

² See, for example, philosophers such as Ivan Illich, Energy and Equity (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974) and Tools for Conviviality (London: Calder & Boyars, 1973) and Johan Galtung, "Human needs, human rights and the theories of development", UNESCO, Paris, January, 1976. These thinkers have found in technology an explanation for the particular qualities and inequities of advanced industrial states.

³ Quoted in G. Tyler Miller, Jr., Energetics, Kinetics and Life (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth, 1971), p.46.

energy environment is occurring. Alongside it emerges a new mode of technology which is inevitably reflected in the nature of our social, economic and political institutions. We face the recognition that in a few hundred years, western humankind in its zest for development, has exhausted the resource base (i.e. the non-renewable energy source) of the industrial environment.

Is this the historical setting for Tragedy in the Arts? Is this the time when people will as a community seek new value through action against enigmatic evil and man-made evil. Sypher points out that Heidegger and Sartre, in tragic guises, give their sanction to the scientific notion of entropy: existence affirms itself in the face of nothingness, in the consciousness of its ultimate nothingness. But this is not the arena of tragedy. The existentialist phase was in this context one that was based on nihilism. Tragedy must embody hope, humanism and a future. Humankind must become responsible for its actions even within an entropic society. To face the fact of entropy is to face the world in a way that Marx predicted people would move beyond the contradiction of modern life. Berman explains how Marx understood the way in which humankind would live through modernity:

He knew we must start where we are: psychically naked, stripped of all religious, aesthetic, moral haloes and sentimental veils, thrown back on our individual will and energy, forced to exploit each other and ourselves in order to survive; and yet, in spite of all, thrown together by the same forces that pull us apart, dimly aware of all we might be together, ready to stretch ourselves to grasp new human possibilities, to develop identities and mutual bonds that can help us hold together as the fierce modern air blows hot and cold through us.

Raymond Williams believes that the tragic experience, because of its central importance, commonly attracts the fundamental beliefs and tensions of a period. Technology, we have discovered, does not take us to worldly utopia; it becomes imperative to look at our present anew, to come to terms with the meaning of its suffering and the fact of its disorder.

There are varied interpretations of what constitutes the right setting for Tragedy in literature. Williams argues that the common historical setting is the period preceding the substantial breakdown and transformation of an important culture.

Leo Aylen believes that tragedy must emerge now, simply because it is so easy to recognize the need for it: "we cannot but be aware of death; we can hardly fail to see the need to reach a clear idea of right and wrong within the conditions of our society; we

6. Berman, All That is Solid Melts Into Air, p.129.
7. Williams, Modern Tragedy, p.45
can hardly fail to be aware of the limits of our understanding." Aylen’s perspective grows out of his awareness of these “limits of our understanding”. He argues that the last three centuries of philosophy both in the empiricist school and the rationalist school reflected people’s reaction to the laws of Newtonian physics. Logical positivism he notes, assumed wrongly, that we were passive recipients of perceptual sensation, instead of actively discriminating in the very act of perception. Philosophy is no longer practised in order that life might be founded in an intellectual system. It has become, Aylen believes, more akin to “rational poetry” as practised by the ancient Greeks. There will no longer be an attempt to separate knowledge, perception and choice. Like the ancient Greeks our literature will become attuned more to fact than fiction; it will be concerned with making society a better place. The source of poetry in fifth century Athens, Aylen argues, was based on fact and had a social purpose. Aylen believes we need poets who are moral leaders in order for tragedy to occur.

To what extent can Williams’s view of when Tragedy does occur and Aylen’s view that the moral, intellectual and scientific climate for Tragedy is now operative, be assimilated to the view that the high technology, resultant from Newtonian science, has brought us to an acute awareness of an entropic world?

I have outlined in chapter two how Quantum Mechanics determined that we cannot observe the position and velocity of an electron at the same time. Observing an electron means that we must bombard it with a photon and this automatically changes its course. Our world, contemporary physics tell us, is made up of electrons. The indeterminacy principle has given the world back its ultimate inexplicability, its enigma and its wonder.

This does not mean that we cannot see and know something about the objects in our world. It means that only when they are reduced to their smallest particle that we are unable to observe them with an independent consciousness. It means that, finally, science cannot tell us all the facts of our world.

On the other hand, our knowledge and technical expertise, gained from science working within the Newtonian paradigm, have brought us to the edge of disaster, to a world forced perhaps to recognize a probable breakdown and transformation of an important culture.

The scientific law of Entropy is brought closer to us by the awareness of the energy crisis and the destruction Progress has wrought on the natural world. It is a time

9. Ibid., p.178.
10. Ibid., p.186.
of fear, uncertainty and mystery. It is a time no longer suited to allegorical expression but, instead, more suited for showing men and women acting for reasons rather than from causes.

Tragedy shows how people make decisions and consequently it shows them working within a value-oriented framework. It is not one akin to the Idealist school of philosophy which wrote of a supra-sensible reality, and said the "task of philosophy was to lead men to understand the nature of the Absolute by a process of intellectual intuition". Instead the values are connected with how to live in this world.

Brereton identifies the time tragedy occurs as being at the high point in a culture. Tragedy forms in a period of growth "when the main trend is upward, creative and exhilarating". Agreement or disagreement with Brereton would depend on how one viewed technology. Certainly we live in a world in which technology has been liberative. Throughout this century Conservatives, Utopianists and some Marxists have viewed technology as holding the promise for the liberation of humankind from necessity (Marxism) and from toil (Conservatism). These views have been expressed in the writings of Marx and among conservative critics such as Herman Kahn and W.W. Rostow. Technologies are closely allied to the creation of beliefs, ideals and ideologies; they are a formative part of the aspirations of a Society. Technology, in the Marxist view, is seen to generate a range of beliefs. The alternative view argued by Max Weber is that beliefs define the terrain on which technologies can take root and flourish. Consequently Brereton's view, that Tragedy occurs at the peak of a particular culture, can be accommodated within a frame of reference that could include the beliefs of Aylen and Williams. These times have their paradoxes and they are sustained within this present Quotidian existence.

Brereton, however, argues that tragedy will no longer appear in pure form because of the growing size and diversification of societies. He argues that one can no longer "relate tragic ideas to a subject of common interest and convey them more or less pure to the ideologically fragmented societies of today". This I believe is incorrect. At least in the developed western world there is a common awareness that science and

---

11. Ibid., p.171.
technology, despite their liberative functions, have brought to humankind the nuclear bomb, vast ecological problems and an exhausted non-renewable energy source. We may be at the height of the technological age but we are also aware that it cannot be sustained indefinitely in its present form. This common awareness unifies diversified societies. The literary imagination withdraws from literary games, and from philosophic and poetic introspection about art’s problematic relationship with reality. Literature that discusses or dramatizes ennui, nihilism and the wasteland consciousness is curiously outdated in this present world.

The mechanical world view on which western humankind has built its present culture, the view of materialism and progress, the view that claims to explain the world we experience, is beginning to lose its vitality, because the energy environment upon which it was nourished is nearing its own death. The enigma, the unknowable element in the universe is not only what Quantum Mechanics divulged but, also, what becomes evident is the recognition that we cannot indefinitely rely on a knowable source of energy. Our world is unable to be measured, its future unable to be predicted by the hitherto valued progress-paradigm. Our world view and social systems in the developed world are falling victim to the very objects of their creation. A culture that has its origins in the period of enlightenment has reached its zenith and is about to be transformed.

Science and technology attempted to eliminate tragedy. This attempt is now seen to be a tragic one. The age of reason, with its faith in the mechanical view of the universe, followed by the nineteenth century "age of certainty" banished God from society and replaced it with a highly materialistic value system. Reality was reduced to what could be measured, quantified and tested. Now the great questions of Tragedy emerge with new relevancy. What is man and woman? What is the purpose of our existence? In asking these questions in a post-Newtonian world, one becomes aware that humankind is part of nature and not its parasite. Nature is not a tool but, instead, the source of life. It cannot be made to serve indefinitely a man-made vision of technological progress.

Many writers in the twentieth century have characterized the protagonist as the anti-hero and the victim. The protagonist has been shown to lose faith in himself, in relation to nature, and in the purpose and direction of history. This condition of a shattered selfhood has resulted in all kinds of literary expressions. In this work I have attempted to explore the ways in which these preoccupations with the alienated self have brought about a modernist allegory which has formed the content of most modern literature. Although tragic themes or ideas about tragedy are seen to form part of this allegory, it is seen to be incompatible with the making of tragedy in literary form.
Chapter one sets out to explain why the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were times when Tragedy was an elusive art-form. It examines the possible connections between what is generally understood as the romantic and existential stages in literary expression, and explores how symbolism evolves from one literary age to the next, in a manner that makes it possible to characterize it as a modern form of allegory. Within this context, literature is seen to become cerebral, intellectual and philosophical in contrast to the works of the previous one hundred years.

The discipline and methodology of science and its analogical relationship to literature forms a part of this work. When determining why Tragedy did not occur at various points in history, one discovers that science, in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, can be considered to be partly responsible for its disappearance. It is also interesting to see the ways in which the scientific world-view co-relates with artistic, philosophical and literary interpretations. Kuhn's explication of how, in the scientific community, one paradigm is replaced by another, forms a parallel to the history of tragic theory and tragedy. The scientist and the poet are both viewing a world they experience in common; the scientific view is no longer understood to be more objective than those from other disciplines. In fact, as I have argued at various parts of this thesis, contemporary physics views the world as ultimately unknowable, it sees the world as mysterious and finally inexplicable.

Chapter one outlines the problems involved in attempting to define Tragedy. Raymond Williams's explanation of how tragedy has assimilated the historical content into its tradition throughout time, opens the debate in relation to defining Tragedy. Williams's coverage makes one aware that one cannot use the past to serve the present in the sense of justifying any particular form. Recognition of the tragic tradition should not lead to an uncritical absorption of the past, but nor should it lead to a self-conscious destruction of a whole tradition. The concept of Tragedy is seen to have a complicated history. The Aristotelian definition of tragedy is shown to undergo many changes and/or to be subject to diverse interpretation from the time of antiquity to the present time.

In the second chapter, there is an attempt to rescue from the Aristotelian definition of Tragedy that which is applicable to contemporary literature and society. Hand in hand with this rescue mission is the attempt to establish another tragic paradigm. It is in this attempt that one understands the reasons for the absence of tragedy during the modern age. "States of being" have become the content of great literature; their expressed form has taken over from the "representation of an action". This work has attempted to identify the continuous elements of Tragedy that have survived the reinterpretations of the tradition. In identifying them, and analysing the
way in which they are dramatized in modern literature, there has been an attempt to identify the evolution throughout this century of a "new realism", which I have termed "Actualism". This evolution towards "Actualism" is evident in only one stream of modern fiction which holds in tension parts of another two streams. One of these is the social-realist novels which have dealt with tragic events but within a naturalistic framework (e.g. the works of Koestler, Steinbeck, Solzhenitsyn, Fitzgerald). The other is what I have characterized as theoretical literature, and literature where consciousness becomes the protagonist.

Chapter three deals specifically with the genre of the modern and post-modernist novel. It explores the extent to which this literature has become obsessed with "self" and with the incapacity of the artist to refer to reality and to represent experience in words. In discovering the origins of this "obsession with self" in Romanticism, it distinguishes between a literary form that believed in the empirical world, even when it sought visions beyond it, and one that sees the world as a source of images, to be used to express states of being. The most self-evident feature of Post-modernism is the distance between its post-modern concerns and the real world. The brief discussion of Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* demonstrates by example the form taken when the problematic relationship between art and reality became a central concern of the modernists. To do Fowles justice, this novel, if that is what it can be termed, satirizes these literary preoccupations as much as it practices them. Fowles, in his analysis of how Victorian values and conventions were broken down and gave way to individual expressions of existential authenticity, is working within a value-oriented framework. Yet even this framework is made to be symbolic of the evolution of modern literature, with its need to express new ideas, yet its frustration with its legacy of old forms.

The Chapter on Beckett explores the many facets of the modernist and post-modernist preoccupations. Beckett's novel *The Unnamable* is engaged with the task of reflection on the human condition, and on the problematic relationship between the thinking and the objects of thought. In true Post-modernist form it is not concerned directly with what is happening in the external world with its revolutions, famine, war and technology. There is, however, a connection.

The connection is expressed in the way in which has a period of reflection. The world has been examined as the embodiment of an absurd condition; it has been broken into pieces, and symbolism, with a new relation to allegory, has expressed its fragmentation both in itself, and in the way in which the artist draws from the world images to express his or her consciousness. *The Unnamable* does explore tragic themes, or at least, the fact of their absence. It seems to me that Beckett has said in his works all that can be said about our post-modern condition. The "raw necessities of the
human condition as Ihab Hassan characterizes it, are threatening to disrupt this discourse. An art that has dramatized the literary and philosophical preoccupation of the artist begins to lose immediate relevance in a world that has examined the absurd condition too long. The question that this work asks, in the light of this, is whether there has been a movement, however unconscious, towards a new reality that requires a new literary form to express it?

The two novels, *The Man Who Loved Children* by Christina Stead, and *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry were chosen for this study because they embody the two main streams of twentieth-century fiction in tension. In the first instance, neither of these novels succumbs to the full impact of the modernist and post-modernist genre. Although they dramatize the modernist preoccupations of most twentieth-century novelists, they have not abandoned the traditional task of representing characters in action. The characters in each book are recognizable as such, despite the symbolic weight they also carry. Neither of these works embraces as a premise the modernist principle that "Distortion becomes the normal condition of human existence; the proper study, the formative principle, of art and literature". Instead, they can, in some senses, be aligned to a 'realist' school, in which humankind is seen to be a social animal. One can recognize the presence of the Aristotelian dictum, which is applicable to great literature like *Antigone*, *Anna Karenina* and *Oedipus*, in that an ontological being cannot be distinguished from his social and historical environments. There is not a negation of outward reality.

There is, however, a straining forwards, a confrontation with the barriers in modern fiction that inhibit the discovery of new forms to accommodate new insights. This "straining forwards" is one, I believe, that seeks a literary form that enacts a "new realism" or what I term an "actualism".

Consequently, in Stead’s *The Man Who Loved Children*, one can analyse the novel as: (1) a realist rendition of an extraordinary family which, in its individual members, expresses via their behaviour and ideas certain tensions that have socio-economic origins; (2) a symbolic and theoretical work in which the major characters are representative of diametrically opposed aesthetic and social forces; and (3) a modernist work dramatizing the tragic vision, whereby the psychology of the writer becomes the protagonist of the work in the form of Louisa, who is created as a potential artist and tragic protagonist. This thesis argues that each of these perspectives forms a part of this novel but that the latter one entails a new element. Louisa, the potential creator of new values, and the

---

potential new tragic heroine, is born out of two worlds in decay represented by Sam (social pragmatist and Newtonian scientist) and Henny (decadent aristocrat and Dionysian "artist" looking into an abyss of despair). Louisa rejects both world-views as represented in Henny and Sam as if her human identity finally has no ground in either of them. In emerging from both, in encountering them, she learns to create her own being. In her struggle to set herself free and find her own limits, Louisa is seen, in a modernist way, to symbolize the artist-character. She, nevertheless, emerges more, in her representative character, as actual being seeking to create new values than as an emblem of the author’s intellectual and aesthetic preoccupations. The "straining forward" is seen in the creation of this character who is, and will be seen as, acting out her destiny.

Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, like *The Man Who Loved Children*, is written within the modernist framework. It is a highly theoretical novel in which the writer seeks his reality by exploring the frontiers of self-consciousness. Nonetheless the novel does work within a recognizable social, geographical and historical setting. Although *UTV* participates in the Modern and Post-modern renewal of shapes and straining the structures of life, it cannot be categorized neatly with any of the following writers of whom Ihab Hassan writes when attempting to characterize the post-modern spirit:

Sade forces upon us the extreme character of human consciousness. His successors, aristocrats of excess, push their hope or outrage beyond the limit of art. We are asked to discard culture and remake consciousness - Dada, Surrealism; to withstand the exclusive rage of death - Hemingway; to sustain all the ambiguities of the void - Kafka; to struggle with matter, history, and sensation in the name of mortal freedom - Existentialism, Aliterature; to embrace perversely images in a mirror within a mirror - Genet; and to silence language without bringing time or solipsism to a stop - Beckett.

Certainly, Lowry does invoke some of the images related to these writers. He is primarily concerned with the state and future of modern art. There is, however, something new in his fiction that dramatizes a "new reality", that plays its part in discovering "Actualism" in literature.

Both *MLC* and *UTV* have been examined in this work as either approximating tragedy or dealing with tragic themes. Neither of the novels has been seen as a tragedy, mostly because of authorial intrusion, symbolism and theory have been seen to get in the way of the representation of an action. I have argued, however, that both novels apprehend in their content and structure an "Actualism" that heralds the emergence of a new tragic form.

*Under the Volcano* is of a particular interest in this respect in that the novel dramatizes a new interpretation of reality. It shows the consciousness of the characters

affecting the world around them. They are represented as "choosing" their reality which is not contradicted by the finding of modern physics. The processes of consciousness are described as determining the nature of the empirical world. There is no such state as neutrality between the observer and the observed. The world of the Consul’s mind is one of disorder, and of alcoholic "fictions" which serve as appropriate metaphors for an interpretation of the world, that negates the idea that we are mere passive recipients of our perceptual sensations. Lowry presents an alternative to that offered by Robbe-Grillet, which has been termed as "empty formalism", and by those that ape a Balzacian realism. Robbe-Grillet logically withdrew from a form and content that depended on the metaphysical view of the world, that was, in his view, no longer true. He stressed that the communion between the human being and nature that was sustained by this metaphysical view was in a collapsed condition. Lowry in Under the Volcano dramatized a communion between humankind and nature from a new perspective.

What Lowry’s representation of this communion does is to dramatize the final unknowability of this world. And in this sense, at least, Lowry is working within a framework that might accommodate an emergence of tragedy in this century. Potential modern tragedians know that the representation of humankind in action must be seen to occur against the background of an enigmatic cosmos in order to be construed as tragic action. Lowry has stated that he wished to discover a new form of poetry, a new language that would accommodate the world he "perceived".21 To the extent that Under the Volcano dramatizes his intellectual preoccupations with the problematic relationship between language and reality, his novel is prevented from finding tragic form, but, to the extent that his characters are dramatically realized, as perceiving the world in the way they wish to see it, and as having a dynamic relation with it, Lowry is working in an area that has crucial elements for the creation of tragic art. In the latter case, the natural world is not being used to symbolize abstraction, but, instead, to stand for what it is in itself, that is, as far as one can know what this is.

Contrary to nineteenth and twentieth-century realism, this "new realism", or what I have elected to term "Actualism", will concede that the world is unknowable. In this, it will be supported by the findings of modern physics. It will nevertheless retreat from the modernist tendency to focus on its unknowability as its philosophical and aesthetic subject. It will concede that there is a world "out there" and that empirical observation is not to be discounted necessarily. It will take into account that what we think we see or what we choose to see, despite our knowledge that our mind determines it, has as

21. See Lowry, "Selected Letters", pp.330-31, where he writes that "unquestionably what one is after is a new form, a new approach to reality itself".
much validity in understanding its essence as our distrust of it. "Actualism" will attempt to bridge the schism between abstract thought, that concentrates on or is aware of the problematic nature of consciousness, and the recognition that an external world exists, even if its nature is hinged on our perspective of it.

I have argued that Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair* is a tragedy. I have argued that with this novel White has made a new beginning. I believe that he has consciously withdrawn from using symbolism and modern allegory as a means of exploring problems of aesthetics. Instead he has returned to the natural world and described his immediate relationship with it. He is aware that perceptions of reality seem paradoxical, particularly when, as a rational observer, one tends to construct a history of one's perceptions. What I mean by this in White's case, is that, in "beginning again" with *The Twyborn Affair*, he does so with the knowledge of what has been explored in his other novels, which were, to some extent, more focussed on the problems of expression than on the subject of observation.

I have attempted to argue that White has returned to a use of a symbolism that Heller describes as being of a language in which "the particular represents the universal, not as a dream or shadow, nor the meaningless agony of the will, nor the abstraction of reason, but as the living and instantaneous revelation of the unfathomable". It is a language in which "aesthetic truth and sleazy reality" become one in a new form of expression for White.

Consequently, one is faced with two perspectives in *TA*. In the first instance there is the acceptance that reality is paradoxical for rational humankind. When living in the present he or she is also seeing and understanding the experience in terms of past experience. Eudoxia, for example, can experience the moment on the terrace as one that involves childhood memories, a dream of the night before concerning her father a range of emotions, thoughts about her present lover and her own question: "Isn't this how our relationship works?"

In the second instance an instantaneous experience of reality of *Now* will not appear paradoxical at all. White captures many of these experiences. The detachment, nevertheless, in his work suggests to me that as he writes he does so with the contemporary physicist's awareness that "no clear dividing line exists between ourselves and the reality we observe to exist outside ourselves. Instead, reality depends upon our choices of what and how we choose to observe. These choices, in turn, depend upon our minds or, more specifically, the content of our thoughts. And our thoughts, in turn,

---

depend upon our expectations, our desire for continuity". This awareness, however, is not, as it has been in the past the subject of his art. Instead, it becomes an inevitable element in the representation of the actions of his characters. Quantum Mechanics has taught us that we, the observers of reality, are, at the same time, the participants in reality. Patrick White has always been interested in dramatizing this concept, but now, in *The Twyborn Affair*, his characters act it out. Similarly as a writer his previous anguish over the discrepancy between "aesthetic truth and sleazy reality" is replaced with his belief that they form part of the same experience and are dependent on what he wants or chooses to see. It seems to me that the barriers that were see to separate mind and matter have dissolved and thus White’s work is less problematic and more focussed on humankind’s chosen reality.

*The Twyborn Affair* makes human love the arena of its tragedy. The search for love by his protagonist is one that is carried out in a world that is seen by him to be fragmented. It is also one that is done within a value-oriented framework. There is a dramatization of hope and faith even though the protagonist is unable to achieve his goal to love another individual completely. The main theme of the novel is the central importance of knowing one’s identity; this involves a pursuit of what is most precious about being human. Eddie needs to know himself in every human guise whether as lover/friend/son/poet or person of action. He explores the possibility of order in sex, success, God and love.

In all of this *The Twyborn Affair* fulfils the requirement for tragedy; it dramatizes both the optimistic and pessimistic views of life, it is humanistic and value-oriented and it represents "man doing things". The facts of present historical reality have made much of the Aristotelian concept of Tragedy untenable. This is apparent when looking at Catharsis and the supposed requirements for heroic stature. In relation to Catharsis, an analysis of TA has shown that there is a consolation in realizing the highest possibilities of man without aesthetic resolution. One sees that suffering does bring enlightenment but that there is no ultimate serenity. A new order is in the process of being sought and the main thrust of White’s art is to express a search for identity and for new values. Elsewhere, White has spoken for the present need to find one’s identity: "What may be our salvation is the discovery of the identity hidden deep in any one of us, and which may be found in even the most desperate individual, if he cares to search the spiritual womb which contains the embryo of what can be one’s personal contribution to truth and life".

Eddie, Eudoxia and Eadith do not fulfill the Aristotelian requirements of heroic stature. This many-tiered character White has created is, however, the most one can hope for. He is a representative, I believe, of a collective experience. This experience is that known by contemporary humankind in the face of a cosmic threat whether that be measured by the nuclear bomb, today, or war earlier in this century as experienced by Eddie. Eddie is also representative of a people, who confronted by all the false values upheld by materialism, technology and worldly concepts of success, are able to see beyond the material facade to spiritual nakedness.

White's cry is for people of this decade to have the "courage to be", to risk being outsiders, if the prize is to find a personal identity grounded in "charity and the awareness of the spiritual undertones and needs of everyday life". Eddie has the courage to search for self, for new moral strengths, even when confronted with a formless future (TA, p.138). Eddie Twyborn is cut down in his final lunge towards a barely discernible love for his mother. We are, nevertheless, left with the dignity of humankind in search of self. Eddie has faced his world and his self with love and hate; as Eadith, Eddie and Eudoxia; he anguishes at a love that is apprehended but not held and lived out: "Tears were falling for the past the present for all hallowed hell on earth".

Patrick White has always written of how desires for power, for possessions, for winning, can destroy our real spiritual potential. Possessions we own come to own us; we are in danger of becoming so attached to them that our fears are related to their loss. We are defined not, by who we are, but what we own. On the personal level this may simply refer to household effects, or cars but, at a national level, it bespeaks of grotesque economic advantage held over poorer countries, or defining ourselves by the size of our nuclear armaments, or holding industrial strengths that rob the earth of beauty, energy and the chance to live in harmony with it. White's fight in TA, where he has "began again" is to explore the "fact" that love does redeem, that human relationships - inner personal rewards, are more important than increasing production. One must, he argues, break up the big things, become humanized, and appreciate human values more than material ones. All this is implied in the nature of Eddie's search.

Modern Tragedy is about coping with despair, stepping beyond the comprehension of this despair. It is about professing a faith, a kind of religion for the Joy that can, and must, be wrung out of existence. Hope, then, does exist and insists on a complete jump across the gap which separates the fact and the ideal.

The "New realism" or the "Actualism" of White's TA is Aristotelian in one central way. It dramatizes that the human being is a social animal, that his ontological being...
cannot be distinguished from his social and historical environment. Modernist and post-modernist writings have tended to characterize him as solitary, asocial or as an emblem of abstract thought. In TA when Eddie dies one knows instinctively that he is not merely a victim of "the silver plane ... its lovely abstraction far above human clangour and despair" (TA, p.431). He is also responsible.

Ihab Hassan expressed the hope that after self-parody, self-subversion, and self-transcendence, after the pride and revulsion of anti-art will have gone their way, art may move toward a redeemed imagination, commensurate with the full mystery of human consciousness. The Twyborn Affair has found that redeemed imagination and it is, I believe, expressed in a Modern Tragic form.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED

Critical Material on Tragedy and Tragic Theory: Books, Theses and Articles


King, Jeanette. Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of


Romanticism, Realism, Existentialism: Books, Theses and Articles


Modernism and Post-modernism


History of Ideas: Science, Political Theory and Philosophy


**Novels and Theory of the Novel**


Hutton, R.H. "The Return of the Native", *Spectator,* 8 February, 1879.

Lewes, G.H. "The Principles of Success in Literature", *Fortnightly Review,* 1, 1865.


**Works by Christina Stead**


**Works on Stead: Books, Theses and Articles**


**Works by Patrick White**


**Works on Patrick White: Books, Theses and Articles**


**Works by Samuel Beckett**

Works on Samuel Beckett: Books, Theses and Articles


Furbank, P.N. "Beckett's Purgatory", Encounter, XXII (June, 1964).


**Works by Malcolm Lowry**


**Works on Malcolm Lowry: Books, Theses and Articles**


Cross, Richard K. "Moby Dick and Under the Volcano; Poetry from the Abyss", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 20, no. 2 (Summer, 1974).


**Works by John Fowles**


**WORKS CONSULTED: A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Critical Material on Tragedy and Tragic Theory: Books, Theses and Articles


Doering, J. "David Hume and the Theory of Tragedy”, *Modern Language Notes* (Baltimore), LII (December, 1937).


Modernism and Post-modernism: Books, Theses and Articles


History of Ideas: Science, Political Theory and Philosphy, incited


Theory on the Novel


Works on Stead: Books, Theses and Articles, uncited


Works on Patrick White: Books, Theses and Articles, uncited

Works on Samuel Beckett: Books, Theses and Articles
Fletcher, John. "The Private Pain and the Whey of the Words: A Survey of Beckett's


Giraud, Raymond. ”Unrevolt among the Unwriters in France Today”, Yale French Studies, 24 (Fall, 1959).

Hamilton, Carol. ”Portrait in Old Age: The Image of Man in Beckett’s Trilogy”, Western Humanities Review, XVI (Spring, 1962).


Works by Malcolm Lowry, uncited


Works on Malcolm Lowry: Books, Theses and Articles, uncited


