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**"MEMORY'S WIZARD PENCIL":
THE PERPETUATION OF AN ETHOS IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY
REPRESENTATIONS OF RENAISSANCE DRAMA**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses upon the issues involved in the 'rediscovery' of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists in the early nineteenth century. The investigation concentrates particularly upon the critical writings of Hazlitt, Lamb, and Coleridge, and then moves on to consider the contradictions which underwrite imitative nineteenth-century tragedy which recalls seventeenth-century dramatic models. Under this heading I discuss Byron's *Sardanapalus* and *Marino Faliero*, and Shelley's *The Cenci*.

Of particular interest are the works of Joanna Baillie and Thomas Lovell Beddoes, who received much contemporary acclaim, but whose work is not often discussed. Joanna Baillie offers perhaps the most intriguing and problematical association with the revival of interest in Renaissance tragedy. This study discusses Baillie's theories of tragic representation, and the extent to which these doctrinaire statements are addressed within her major work, *A Series of Plays on the Passions*. In these plays, Baillie aims to reconstitute and sanitise issues and themes which run throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy. The particular textual references which Baillie recalls, however, may be seen to resist the moral demands of her own "extensive design". Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Lytton Strachey's "Last Elizabethan", presents a more direct interest in his Renaissance forebears than Joanna Baillie.

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Introduction

Whilst editions of Shakespeare's plays were reissued at frequent intervals throughout the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, the situation regarding the works of his dramatic contemporaries is more distinctly problematical. Charles Lamb's *Specimen's of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the Time of Shakespeare* (first published in 1808) and Sir Walter Scott's series *The Ancient British Drama* (first Vol. 1810) were two seminal texts which heralded a reacquaintance with the works of Marlowe, Middleton, Webster, Tourneur, Marston, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher and Ford.

This study does not propose to identify the conditions of individual performances, and is not concerned, for the most part, with the question of stage-representation itself. Instead, it centres upon the more broadly-based issues involved in the recovery of interest in the Renaissance dramatists in the early nineteenth century. This necessarily involves an investigation of the ideological basis of the process of recovery itself, and instigates a detailed debate into the theoretical framework which the contemporary critics intended should both introduce, and limit, the influence of the writers they wished to re-establish for a modern audience. The first section of this thesis, then, focuses upon critical writers responsible for the recovery of interest in Renaissance texts, and charts the construction and perpetuation of a particular ethos which is represented as indissolubly linked with the process of revival and recovery itself.

The three critics of primary importance in relation to this subject are Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb. I am interested in the question of critical authority,

within which the Renaissance writers are represented, and the construction of reading formations which are involved in the critics' selective censorship of their chosen "dramatic extracts". The critics' ideological position is investigated with reference to Roger Sales' discussion of the "politics of pastoral", and Tony Bennett's definition of the texts as a material entity, whose intertextual future may be subject to a process of controlled, and deliberate mythologisation: an attempt to secure, for the present, the intellectual and moral benefits of a very particular form of hindsight.

The sense of cultural devaluation so bemoaned by Hazlitt, regarding the increasingly impoverished offerings of the contemporary theatre, and the progressively middle-class, market-force economy, require the application of a 'sovereign' remedy. This is sought in the recovery of the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline dramatists, whose plays are censored and de-politicised in an attempt to construct a sense of valuable historical progression and continuity. I am concerned with the ways in which the dramatists in question are presented as a legitimate literary/historical manifestation of the peculiarly English military questing spirit of adventure, subsequently threatened by continental stylistic influence. This critical position underwrites the values upheld in the writings of later contemporaries, and also foregrounds the position of such twentieth-century critics as Allardyce Nicoll, Lytton Strachey and H.W. Donner, who look back and comment upon the nature and success of the process of revival in question.

This thesis is also concerned with the contradictions which underwrite imitative nineteenth-century tragedy which recalls seventeenth-century dramatic models. The first writer discussed under this heading is the dramatist Joanna Baillie, who received much contemporary acclaim (notably from Byron and Sir Walter Scott)

but whose work is not often discussed. Baillie's most famous works *A Series of Plays on the Passions*, appeared between 1798 and 1836, and offer perhaps the most intriguing and problematical association with the revival of interest in Renaissance tragedy on two levels. Firstly, the doctrinaire statements which she makes in the lengthy "Introductory Discourse" which precedes the first volume of the '*Plays on the Passions*' may be seen to re-emerge, in an unacknowledged form, in the work of subsequent writers on the theory of tragic representation. Secondly, and more importantly, the theories which the subsequent dramas are to illustrate and underline reveal a subtle and yet incisive relationship to the writer's otherwise understated inferences to Renaissance tragedy. In her plays, Baillie attempts to reconstitute and sanitise issues and themes which run throughout Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline Tragedy. The particular textual references which the dramatist arguably recalls, however, may be seen to resist the moral demands of her own dramatic "extensive design" set out in the "Introductory Discourse" itself.

One of the issues which particularly interests Baillie, and which is central to Renaissance tragedy, is the question of the female character seeking a voice within what is essentially a patriarchal discourse. Baillie investigates the feminine role in tragic representation with increasing vigour in *The Plays on the Passions*, subject as they are to the theoretical strictures of the "Introductory Discourse", which involves her in a series of provocative contradictions. In the play *Orra*, for example, Baillie addresses the situation of the unmarried wealthy woman as both the property of, and threat to, the patriarchal authority of the play-society. The title of the work indicates the formal issue of the challenge posed by the woman as 'other'.

The third section of this thesis continues to focus on the subject of early

nineteenth-century imitative tragedy, and gives a more broadly based account of the theatrical conditions of the period. I investigate the dramatic contribution of two writers who, in contrast to Joanna Baillie, are firmly entrenched in our contemporary Romantic canon: Byron and Shelley. The debate proceeds to question the nature and issue of their dramatic priority in the eighteen-twenties, by means of an account of the work of a lesser-known contemporary, Thomas Lovell Beddoes.

The argument opens with an examination of the critical sources for our own contemporary view of Beddoes as both Romantic subject and dramatist. It is a debate which necessarily takes place on several levels. Firstly, such an analysis demands a detailed questioning of the most influential writers on Beddoes as dramatist and agitator: H.W. Donner and G. Lytton Strachey. In addition to their contemporary Allardyce Nicoll, these writers are interested in promoting Beddoes primarily in relation to his perceived relationship with English Renaissance tragedy. The nature of the association between Beddoes and his predecessors which the twentieth-century critics choose to represent, is particularly intriguing, and offers a provocative insight into an early twentieth-century position in relating to non-Shakespearean Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline tragedy.

This critical version of Beddoes is offset against an analysis of the playwright's own writings on Renaissance tragedies, and his disruptive and genuine interest in European politics. His play *The Bridge's Tragedy* followed closely upon the publication of both Byron's *Sardanapalus* and Shelley's *The Cenci*, and reveals a powerful reworking of themes and issues raised in Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline dramas. In this chapter, I consider the nature of the appropriation of Renaissance themes in both *Sardanapalus* and *The Cenci*, and then move on to

investigate the inherently paradoxical yet markedly more interrogative form of revival which Beddoes institutes in *The Bride's Tragedy*.

This thesis, then, is not a straightforward study of sources, or a sequential account of influence in general. It is a broadly-based analysis of a series of diffused tragic models, which is an issue which problematises the notion of influence. The study documents the critical attempt to recover and perpetuate a particular ethos, and then proceeds to focus upon the imitative dramatic encounter with these tragic models. The early nineteenth-century dramatists are examined in relation to their reworking of a sense of the underlying values which their dramatic forebears are believed to uphold and represent.

CHAPTER ONE"Approach[ing] the Wide Chasm": Coleridge on Shakespeare's "True Critic".¹

In summing up the gains of structuralism, Terry Eagleton views,

a remorseless demystification in literature ... loosely subjective talk was chastized by a criticism which recognised that the literary work, like any other product of language, is a construct, whose mechanisms would be classified and analysed like the objects of any other science. The Romantic prejudice that the poem harboured a vital essence, a soul which it was discourteous to tamper with, was rudely unmasked as a bit of disguised theology, a superstitious fear of reasoned enquiry which made a fetish of literature and reinforced the authority of the naturally sensitive critical elite.

(*Literary Theory*, pp.106-7)²

This chapter aims to investigate the issues involved in the construction of a theoretical framework for seventeenth-century dramatic criticism in the early nineteenth century, with reference to Eagleton's reading of the "Romantic prejudice". The poet-critics (who in two cases were also dramatists) may be seen to invoke a subtle but recognisable 'demystification' in certain elements of their criticism, in their desire to present a particular point of view.

The presentation of critical authority is something which concerns all three critics under discussion. Coleridge, for example, rails at the sin of setting Shakespeare "out of all human analogy".³ To describe Shakespeare as "a sort of beautiful *lusus naturae*, a delightful monster,—wild, indeed, without taste or judgement" is to commit the crime of a self-imposed critical limitation.⁴ As his argument unfolds, nevertheless, Coleridge reinforces the version of Shakespearean inviolability which he seeks to expose as an anti-intellectual "refuge" for both critic and reader.

If false [Shakespeare as a *lusus naturae*] it is a dangerous falsehood; for it affords a refuge to secret-self-conceit,—enables a vain man at once to escape his reader's indignation by general sworn panegyrics on Shakespeare, merely by his *ipse dixit* to treat what he has not the excellence to comprehend, or soul to feel, as contemptible, without assigning any reason, or referring his opinion to any demonstrated principle; and so has left Shakespeare as a sort of Tartarian Dalai Lama, adored indeed, and his very excrescences prized as relics, but with no authority, no real influence. I grieve that every late voluminous edition of his works would enable me to substantiate the present charge with a variety of facts one tenth of which would themselves exhaust the time allotted to me. Every critic, ... puts on the seven-league boots of self-opinion and strides at once from an illustrator into a supreme judge, and blind and deaf, fills his three-ounce phial at the waters of the Niagra—and determines positively the greatness of the cataract to be neither more nor less than his three-ounce phial has been able to receive.

(Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol. I, pp. 194-5)

The "variety of facts" which Coleridge describes are self-deconstructing "facts" which reflect the critical text's worthlessness. Clearly, the critical persona which delivers these charges must set out the means by which they are nullified, in relation to his own critical methodology.

Not only a multitude of individuals but even whole nations [are] so enslaved to the habits of their education and immediate circumstance to judge disinterestedly even on those subjects, the very pleasure from which consists in their a) disinterestedness ... subjects of taste ... instead of deciding concerning their own modes of customs by any rule of reason, nothing appears natural, becoming, or beautiful but what coincides with the accidents of their education. In this narrow circle individuals may attain exquisite determination, as the French critics have done in their own literature, but a true critic can no man be without placing himself on some central point in which he can command the whole; i.e., some general rule, which founded in reason, or faculties common to all men, must therefore apply to all men.

(Vol. I, p. 195)

This evasion takes the form of a critical 'metalanguage' which is the tool of the "true critic". Disaffection with any apparent contradiction within his socially determined

treatise on criticism is tackled in the immediately following paragraph. Coleridge destabilises his own position within his general remarks on the role of the critic, only to re-stabilise his individual authoritative position as a rational critical persona. This paradoxical version of self-effacement is the product of a supposed 'generic' sacrifice: a willingness to disrupt the almost clandestine "discrimination"³ by which members of a critical elite secure a mutual identification of the theoretical and cultural values, which they then proceed to disseminate within their wider audience. Joanna Baillie employs a similar strategy to great effect in the "Introductory Discourse" to her *Series Of Plays On The Passions* (1798). Baillie breaches the covenant of the literary institutions of "History" and "Romance" only to replace them with a fictional form which is constructed as an illustration of her 'original' response to a contemporary cultural malaise. Less overtly self-congratulatory than Baillie's, Coleridge's criticism does attempt to appropriate the approval of his audience in relation to the practicality of this particular exposure of the essential 'devaluation' which the 'false' critic initiates. Both writers construct a critical persona who purports to uphold the values of anticipation and vigilance. The rewards are those of a particular hindsight reconstituted as a means of resolving a crisis in the present. Wordsworth glances at this possible means of enacting a fictional recovery of our "natural and unalienable inheritance" when he tells us that, "the poet, as Shakespeare said of man, ... looks before and after".⁷

Coleridge's rational critical 'metalanguage', as we have seen, will be, to an extent, determined circumstantially. "Circumstance" for Coleridge, is, nevertheless, a problematical concept. The critic may echo in his own text, the essential "spirit and substance of a work, something true in human nature", yet, this is a process which

appears to be acknowledged, on one level, as theoretically untenable. The threat to a transmission of essential substantive values from an 'innocent' text by means of a receptive, but equally innocent "true critic" is the threat posed by the question of "circumstance". Coleridge addresses this threat, and attempts to relegate its impact by universalising the terms of the contradiction into a polarised debate between essential truth and a specific, transitory, culturally determined falsehood. The "age, place, and existing manners" to which the "imperishable soul has clothed and adapted itself" suggests an oppositional battle of theoretical positions, wherein the essential humanist "imperishable soul" is urged to recognise, and resist, the extent to which these "existing manners" to use Jonathan Dollimore's phrase, "[constitute] ... the grounds of consciousness itself".¹

This will not produce despotism [the critic "command[ing] the whole"] but on the contrary true tolerance. He will indeed require, as the spirit and substance of a work, something true in human nature, and independent of circumstances; but in the mode of applying it, he will estimate genius and judgement according to the felicity with which this imperishable soul has clothed and adapted itself to the age, place, and existing manners.

The error in reversing this by considering the circumstances as perpetual, at the expense of the animating power. ...

Whatever has its root in human nature is *excellens*, and to the source we must go, therefore.

(Vol. I, p. 196)

"The source", however, exists only in an ideal form, something available within a critical imputation of faith. Shakespeare will be 'found' through a form of metaphorical meditation, rather than as the result of the machinations of the necessarily limited critical "three-ounce phial". Coleridge endows his critical persona with a 'modesty' which may be seen as a subliminal refutation of the original critical crime which he rails against: an evasion of analysis through a reliance upon idolatry.

That such a mind evolved itself in the normal bounds of a human form is a problem indeed. Powers tenfold greater than mine would be incommensurate to its solution, which in its nearest and most adventurous approach must still leave a wide chasm which our love and admiration alone can fill up. Feeble will all my words sound to my own ears when I speak of Shakespeare; and superfluous must all praises be of the myriad-minded man whom every English heart feels to be above praise.

(Vol.I,p.216)

I am deeply convinced that to man, however wide his erudition, however potent his antiquarian researches, can possibly understand, or be worthy of understanding, the writing of *Shakespeare*.

(Vol.I,p.226)

The "true critic" on his "central point" is absolved of crimes of intervention and presents himself as a detached and rational "observer". From this position, he is able to isolate and interpret readings of Shakespeare which are the product of a critic's "education and immediate circumstances". This view of criticism as a particular cultural appropriation of Shakespeare comes tantalisingly close to a materialist reading of the "Romantic prejudice" which Terry Eagleton describes.⁹ We are to view such a 'transitory' version of Shakespeare as such readings produce, however, as the domain of 'false criticism'. Such a process of recovery does not threaten the authority of the "true critic", who is not to be distracted from the transhistorical nature of "the source".

Coleridge's criticism has recourse to a Romantic literary tradition which takes Shakespeare as its central point, viewing his legacy in universalist terms, which serve to reinforce a reading of his achievements as inimitable. This 'distance', however, is not the product of a recognition of our inability to reproduce the "education and immediate circumstance"¹⁰ within which Shakespeare produced his works. It is the unfortunate outcome of the cultural influences which limit critical investigation to the

paltry dimensions of the "three-ounce phial". This inaccessibility may be partly breached by the "true critic", whose superior insight gives him a rational overview of Shakespeare's 'legacy', owing to his own "independ[ence] of circumstances". In this way, this "true critic" bridges the "wide chasm which our love and admiration alone can fill up". The direction which our "love and admiration", as readers, will take, is wholly dependent upon the accessibility of the "true critic", whose innocence of cultural contamination is displayed as actually foregrounding the legitimacy of the form which his own version of critical authority assumes. The "true critic" works within the same set of formal relations, in relation to his "blind and deaf"¹² audience, as his vision of the "myriad-minded man".¹³ By acting purely as a 'representative', Coleridge cannot be accused of 'misrepresenting' Shakespeare.

In his essay "On The Discrimination Of Romanticisms", Arthur O. Lovejoy discriminates between a form of English Romanticism which appeared in the mid eighteenth century, and the movement "formulated by Friedrich Schlegel and his fellow Romanticists in Germany after 1796":

the two have plainly certain common elements. Both are forms of revolt against the neo-classical aesthetics; both are partly inspired by an ardent admiration for Shakespeare; both proclaim the creative artist's independence of rules".¹⁴

Lovejoy's English romantic tradition is focused in the writing of Joseph Warton, whose poem "The Enthusiast" typifies "the earliest expression of complete revolt against the classical attitude which had been sovereign in all European literature for nearly a century" (p.10). Warton, Lovejoy explains, describes Shakespeare's "warblings wild" as superior to the "lays of artful Addison" (p.11).

What was original and significant in the poem was that Warton boldly applied the doctrine of superiority of 'nature' over conscious art to the theory of poetry". (p.11)

It is this particular means of reading Shakespeare which Coleridge rejects, and explains as the arena of the anti-intellectual response which relies upon "sworn panegyrics".¹³ Such a critic employs praise as the means of evading a critical review of his/her own text.

The "German movement", Lovejoy continues,

is in its very essence a denial of the older naturalistic presuppositions which Warton's poem had manifested in a special and somewhat novel way. ... [It] received its immediate and decisive impetus from Schiller's essay *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*; and what it derived from that confused work was the conviction that 'harmony with nature', in any sense which implied an opposition to 'culture', to 'art', to a reflection and self-conscious effort, was neither possible or desirable for the modern man or the modern artist. ... [T]he appropriate expression ... so far from aiming at the sort of harmony in art and life which is to be attained by the method of leaving out, should first seek fullness of content, should have for its program the adequate expression of the entire range of human experience and the entire reach of human imagination. For man, the artificial, Friedrich Schlegel observed, is 'natural'. ... The Shakespeare whom he admired was no gifted child of nature addicted to 'warblings wild'. Shakespeare, said A.W. Schlegel, is not 'eine blinde wildlaufendes Genie'; he had 'a system in his artistic practise and an astonishingly profound and deeply mediated one'. ... The greatness of Shakespeare in the eyes of *these* Romantics, lay in his *Universalität*, his sophisticated insight into human nature and the many-sidedness of his portrayal of character. (pp.14-15)

Coleridge, then, follows Schlegel's version of Shakespeare as 'universal', and 'many-sided' ("myriad-minded").¹⁴ There is no solution for the English critic, however, to the problem of what he views as Shakespeare's appearance in "human form"¹⁷ upholding too rigid a reading of his conscious artistry. For Coleridge, the inaccessibility of Shakespeare's genius necessarily conceals as much as it reveals.

What Coleridge presents to his readers is a poetics of critical authority whose modest attempts to divert disapproval of his own "true critic[ism]" cannot wholly

evade the formal re-assertion of the obscurantist falsehood of false criticism; that is, criticism in general. The "central point"¹⁸ which the "true critic" inhabits may be investigated in relation to Wordsworth's demystification, on one level, of fictional representation as a process of selection. This transhistorical vantage-point which the "true critic" lays claim to, invests him with the "spirit" of "real language".

While he [the poet] is only selecting from the real language of men (or what amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection), he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what to expect of him.¹⁹

Coleridge's text, nevertheless, clearly encourages a form of dependence in his audience which Wordsworth's passage appears to reject as a justifiable concern of a universalist poetic language. This dependence, however, is seen by Coleridge as an essential function of critical authority. It is something which would be evidently threatened by an emphasis upon the issue of omitting certain elements of an audience's potential experience of a concept or idea, in order to simplify it for them.

This evasion of the question of selectivity within the function of critical authority may be usefully applied to encompass Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt's diversion from a discussion of the socio-political and anti-establishment representations within the works of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, which they aim to recover for their audience. For Coleridge, the remoteness of the "true" critical position distances his writing from the task of commanding a 'social synthesis', as, when the subject is Shakespeare such a voice inevitably bears false witness. If Coleridge is presenting a "sideways glance at [his] own processes of construction" (*Literary Theory*, p.105) then it is in the hope that we shall look through his critical "window on to the universal mind", (*Literary Theory*, p.112).

Coleridge opens his lectures on Shakespeare with a discussion of *Romeo And*

Juliet, analysing the "three unities" in relation to,

the particular stage for which Shakespeare wrote, as far as he can be said to have written for any stage but that of the universal mind.

(Vol.I,p.4)

The 'Everyman' motif which the critic subscribes to, on one level, is described by John Drakakis in the introduction to *Alternative Shakespeares* as an "a-historical cipher" which effects a domestication of the Shakespearean text.

The eradication of historical pressures, allied with the uncritical acceptance of a non-political, universal 'humanity' is itself, as Barthes rightly indicates, a function of ideology. 'Eternal Man' or 'Everyman' is thus created, and then drained of history. In the case of Shakespeare's plays, the world which they are said to initiate is reduced to a unified a-historical cipher divested of all contradiction.

(*Alternative Shakespeares*, p.4)

In contemplating the "wide chasm" between himself and Shakespeare, Coleridge's "true critic" undermines the supremacy of his critical insight. What he achieves by stressing Shakespeare's inaccessibility at this point, is in actual fact a confirmation of the critical authority inherent in the 'Everyman' motif. This critic evokes, for his readers, a representation of a self-righteous fall from the inherently problematical issue of inviolate critical authority, into a metaphorical arena which condones it. Shakespeare, indeed, is, as we have seen, only accessible at any 'level' through the essentialist interpretations of "true" criticism. The symbolic "chasm" is thus, perhaps, an indication that the text may be seen as "becoming divorced from the historical conditions of its own production", (*Alternative Shakespeares*, p.4).

The "true critic" embodies the "a-historic[ising]" function of the Everyman motif, as it is the means by which he evades the "secret self-conceit" of critics in general.²⁰ The former, then, may be seen to offer a sub-text which recognises the

process of criticism as a de-historicising process. Coleridge 'risks' the 'category' or genre in which he is working in order to confirm that his specific demystification of critical authoritative mystique foregrounds his own rational-interpretative inviolability.

A useful contemporary abstraction of Coleridge's theory of the nature of 'true criticism' may be found in Wordsworth's reflections on the legitimate interpretative authority of the poet who avoids the obscurantist artistry of the "distinction of metre".²¹

The poet thinks and feels in the spirit and the passions of men
 ... the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater
 promptness to think and feel without immediate external
 excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts
 and feelings are produced in him in that manner.

(Introduction to *The Lyrical Ballads*, p.37)

Wordsworth's version of 'selective' poetic experience is a form of synthetic transformation:

If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must
 be carried if admitted at all, our judgements concerning the
 works of the greatest poets both ancient and modern will be far
 different from what they are at present, both when we praise
 and when we censure; and our moral feelings influencing and
 influence by these judgements will, I believe, be corrected and
 purified. (p.30)

The ramifications of a discussion of such a purification as Wordsworth claims for the 'simple' poet, are rendered obsolete as a function of Coleridge's "true" criticism. This specialised reconstructive process is further absolved of intentionalist intervention by the very nature of the object which it aims to present before us.

In his mode of drawing characters there were no pompous
 descriptions of a man by himself; his character was to be
 drawn from the mouths of his enemies and friends.
 Shakespeare never intended to represent [Polonius] as a buffoon
 ... Hamlet's words should not be taken as Shakespeare's
 conception of him. (Vol.II,p.217)

H.C. Robinson's report on the lecture on *Richard II* reflects the extent to which the 'a-historical' Shakespearean intention is reinforced: communication through stage-performance is viewed as both offensive and injurious to the 'outcome' of the critical sensibilities of the "true critic".

One great object of the historic plays, and particularly that to be examined (*Richard II*), was to make his countrymen more patriotic; to make Englishmen proud of being Englishmen. It was a play not much acted. This was not regretted by the lecturer. For he never saw any of Shakespeare's plays performed, but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation. (Vol.II,pp.229-30)

The part which this Drama played in the Essex revolt, which is discussed by Peter Ure in the New Arden Edition is suppressed by Coleridge. This suppression is effected, once again, within a generalisation on the widespread nature of Shakespearean misrepresentation. Misrepresentation, indeed, becomes the very function of performance. The "wide chasm", then, may only be approached on our behalf by the critic, whose authority is contingent upon the construction of the very symbol which will re-align the landscape.²² With reference to *Richard II*, the "true critic" reiterates what he sees as the plays harmonious nationalism and 'essential' patriotism.

Without the extravagance of Beaumont and Fletcher's ultra-royalism, how carefully does Shakespeare acknowledge and reverence the eternal distinction between the mere individual and the symbolic or representative on which all genial law, no less than patriotism, depends.

(Vol.I,p.133)

'This issue of Romantic language as a symbolic elevation of the symbol is discussed by Paul de Man.²³ For Coleridge, de Man explains,

The symbol is the product of the organic growth of form; in the in the world of the symbol, life and form are identical: "such as the life is, such is the form". Its structure is that of

the synecdoche, for the symbol is always a part of the totality which it represents. Consequently, in the symbolic imagination, no disjunction of the constitutive faculties takes place, since the material perception and the symbolical imagination are continuous as the part is continuous with the whole.

(*Blindness and Insight*, p.191)

It is at this point in de Man's analysis that we may isolate the conceptual arena which the "true critic" constructs for his readers, in relation to their understanding of Shakespeare. De Man quotes from *The Statesman's Manual*:

'The symbol is characterised by the translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal'. ... The reference, in both cases, to a transcendental source, is now more important than the kind of relationship that exists between the reflection and its source.

(*Blindness And Insight*, p.192)

In conclusion, then, the "true critic" 'avoids' a misreading of Shakespeare, by the very nature of the fluidity of their symbolic interdependence ("the general in the special, or the universal in the general"). The "true critic" is, unashamedly, Shakespeare. In this way, he may by-pass the disruptively overt intentionalist recovery which Charles Lamb institutes, when he tells us that he will "expunge all that the [Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatists] had better never have written" in his *Specimens Of English Dramatic Poets*.²⁴ The seductive language of the "true critic" measures its success by the infallible insight which his intimacy with Shakespeare allows:

Now *Titus Andronicus* is admitted not to have been Shakespeare's, dare, with the one exception of the trampling out of Gloster's eyes in *Lear*, answer boldly in the name of Shakespeare, not guilty.

(Vol.1.p.70)

Lamb on Hazlitt: the 'Ethics' Of "Critical Verisimilitude".

In his book, *English Literature In History 1780-1830*, Roger Sales discusses the activity of 'pastoralisation'; encompassing the issue of the critic as elitist interpreter.²³

Values are rescued for purely personal reasons, but there are usually attempts at social rescue and restoration as well. The posture of contemplating society as a whole might be reformed if enough simple, solid oak furniture was imported from this other country.

The problem with social rescue is that values only tend to be defined as such because of their exclusive, limited appreciation ... We are more likely however, to encounter the suggestion, made through the strategic devices of reflection and rescue, that though times unfortunately change, values do not. Pastoral may attempt to evade and elude mortality in this way, but it is also a celebration of death. This is the pastoral paradox. The values may only be values for the connoisseur, yet, at a much deeper level, they only become values when they are quite literally still or dead. (p.16)

Roger Sales' "pastoralism" is a term replaceable by nostalgia "pastoralism is nostalgia for the good old days" (p.15), a means of processing the past through the creation of a mythology of the past, a representation formed in relation to the writer/speaker's conception of the present. The construction of reading-formations by critics such as Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt will be discussed in this section as being involved in such a nostalgic retrieval. A 'tension' or awareness of the destabilising effect upon the framework of critical authority is arguably encountered in their careful philosophical representation of the critical persona.

Lamb's essays and short discussions on the Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatists were self-consciously designed for readers, and not created as lectures to be given before an audience. The idea of "sound[ing] like a lecture" is something which Lamb criticised in Wordsworth's "The Old Cumberland Beggar, Roy Park tells

us in *Lamb As Critic* (p.28).²⁶ Lamb, instead, "defen[ded] "The Ancient Mariner" in terms of the internal psychological and spiritual drama" (ibid.p.28). Lamb's lack of 'informative digression' in his writing is in complete contrast to the writing of Coleridge, however, and also distances itself from the forceful metaphorical persona which Hazlitt employs. Lamb presents us with a seriousness in sobriety, an understated persona with a finely honed conscience.

With us all [in contrast to the 'Old Dramatists'] all is hypocritical meekness. A reconciliation scene ... is always sure of applause. Our audiences come to the theatre to be complimented on their goodness.

(*Lamb As Critic*, p.27)

It is in his review of Hazlitt's *Table Talk* (1821), however, that Lamb offers a curious and paradoxical demystification of his colleague's critical persona. The viability of Hazlitt's criticism is clearly mapped out for his audience as a problematical issue.

Without professing egotism, his work is as essentially egotistical as theirs. [Montaigne and Plutarch]. He deals out opinion, which he would have you take for argument, and is perpetually obtruding his own particular views of life for universal truths. This is the charm which binds us to his writings, and not any steady conviction we have of the solidity of his thinking.

(*Lamb As Critic*, p.300)

Lamb's review turns upon itself at this latter point, as he is prepared to acknowledge the success of this somewhat irrational "bind", whilst confirming its status as partiality. Lamb presents his readers with a sincere, and severe appraisal of his contemporary's critical armoury, indicating the effectiveness of the buoyant self-displaying "charm". Lamb gives us a contradictory 'dual' presentation of a 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' metonymy:

in fact, he all along acts as his own interpreter, and is continually translating his thoughts out of their original metaphysical obscurity into the language of the senses and the common observation. ...

The thought and the observation do not always hang well together; the one puzzles, and the other startles ... he may be said to paint caricatures on cobwebs; to explain the mysteries of the Cabbala by Egyptian hieroglyphics.

(Lamb As Critic, p.307)

It is such a formal stance, we recall, which elevates the "true critic" in his relationship to the essential Shakespeare. To borrow a phrase from his essay on Shakespeare, Lamb clearly views, in Hazlitt's text, a "controversy of elocution".²⁷ This controversy is revealed as the discontinuous outcome of a critical text which does not comply with what Lamb views as the unwritten rules which constitute genre. If Hazlitt "paints caricatures on cobwebs", 'meaning', the original mutual quest of critic and reader, becomes focused as a problematical concept in itself. Lamb presents Hazlitt's critical language as distancing itself from accessible meaning altogether.

Roland Barthes' concept of the "healthy sign" may be employed, at this point, in order to elucidate the terms in which Lamb's unrest constitutes itself.

The 'healthy' sign, for Barthes, is one which draws attention to its own arbitrariness—which does not try to palm itself off as 'natural' but which, in the very moment of conveying a meaning, communicates something of its own relative, artificial status as well.

(Literary Theory, p.135)

This defamiliarising quality in Hazlitt's critical writing (his "estranging devices?")²⁸ are enough to provoke Lamb into drawing up a boundary of demarcation. Hazlitt's self-perpetuating obscurity is contrasted against the legitimate 'intertextual' creativity of defamiliarising artists such as Shakespeare and Hogarth.²⁹ Their access to an 'essential truth about ourselves' in Lamb's opinion, is never in question. The

nature of the problem which Lamb encounters in Hazlitt's prose, then, is a recognition that critical writing in general is inherently reconstructive. Rather than offering a bold advertisement of this predatory illegitimacy, the critic ought to be required to project a stylistic recognition that he bears the responsibility for the reception of his subject. This being achieved, the critic enacts within his own text, a form of decorous absolution for the act of criticism itself.

Whilst Coleridge attains a critical/theoretical security as Shakespeare's interpreter, for Lamb, Hazlitt, as "his own interpreter", is at once able to encompass "the language of the senses of common observation" whilst illustrating "cobwebs" with "caricatures". Such a contradiction is reinforced in a paragraph which appears to negate the idea of a critical persona; and this in turn, initiates a destabilisation of his own position: serving to undermine the attempt to construct an even partly honest one for Hazlitt.

Lamb appears to move away from the closet idealism of Coleridge's "true critic" and glances towards what Barthes defines as Aristotelian "critical verisimilitude".

Verisimilitude does not necessarily correspond to what was once the case (that is a matter for history) nor to what must be (that is a matter for science) but simply to what the public thinks possible.

*(Criticism and Truth, p.34)*³⁰

The antithetical appraisal of Hazlitt's critical prose can be explained as the former's disapproval of the latter's 'unwillingness' to fulfil, on a regular basis, what is obviously his theoretical 'potential'.

the author before us is in this respect no visionary. He talks to you in broad day-light. He comes in no imaginary character. He attracts, or repels, by strong realities of individual observation, humour, and feeling.

(Lamb As Critic, p.302)

It is Hazlitt's lack of authoritative 'modesty' which Lamb appears to view as ultimately responsible for the breach of 'verisimilitude' represented in the former's critical writing. Hazlitt's pugilistic critical persona somehow interferes with, 'gets-in-between' the 'subject' of criticism, and the socially acceptable task of explicating it. Critical decorum, for Lamb, is a form of analysis which may be seen to "correspond" (to use Barthes' term) to what 'public opinion' considers to be the legitimate bounds of interpretative possibility. What Hazlitt 'risks', then, is the socio-cultural basis for the nature of the generic and formal regulations upon which his own critical authority is necessarily founded.

He never refers to the opinion of other authors (ancient or modern) ... neither does he consider a subject in all its possible or most prominent bearings, but merely in those points ... in which it happens to have pressed close on his own mind or to have suggested some ingenious solution. He follows out his own view of a question, however, fearlessly and patiently ... There is no writer who has consequently given greater offence to the bigoted, the self-sufficient, and the dull. We have nothing to do with Mr Hazlitt as a controversial writer; and even as a critic, he is too much of a partisan, he is too eager and exclusive in his panegyrics or invectives.

(Lamb As Critic, p.307)

If "metaphysical obscurity"³¹ constitutes the 'original thought' behind the "common observation" of an author "talk[ing] in broad daylight", then any "egotistical"³² intention must be the representation of critical insubstantiality. Lamb's review results in a contradictory quest after the 'essence of meaning' within what appears to be an understanding of the impossibility of its presentation. If Hazlitt is other than "too much a partisan", the review is in danger of returning him to the "controversy of elocution" which renders Hazlitt's critical position untenable.³³ The paradoxical 'alternative' which Lamb ultimately settles upon (in terms of a 'solution') is that the instability of Hazlitt's authoritative tract is 'formal', rather than 'essential'.

What Lamb sees us privy to in approaching Hazlitt's criticism is a critic 'misrepresenting his own ideas'.

Critical Authority and the Issue of 'Recovery'.

Tony Bennett in his article on Marxist post-structuralism in *Post-Structuralism And The Question Of History* offers the sub-heading:

"FIXING TEXTS IN THE PRESENT BY MEANS OF THE FUTURE DETERMINATION OF THEIR PASTS" (p.75).³⁴

He continues,

in effect, what is constructed as the 'text' itself is the product of a particular bid for the terms of inter-textual ideological and cultural reference which are to prevail in organising reading practices, and therefore cannot supply the means of arbitrating between readings. (p.75)

It is, arguably, such a "future determination" which Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Lamb, in different ways, and from sometimes diverse points of view, seek to 'impose' upon their audiences and readers. In "making their bid for the terms of reference to prevail in organising reading practices", the critics are arguably aware of the means of arbitrating between readings: willing, at certain points in their criticism to 'destabilise' their critical authority, pointedly referring to the arbitrariness of interpretation³⁵ to reinforce their image of integrity, and particular point of view. The "theology" is frequently "[un]disguised!"³⁶

This 'self-contradiction', or destabilisation of a discussed viewpoint through the invocation of an alternative critical interpretation is invoked by all three critics. The strategy is perhaps most obvious in relation to Coleridge's criticism, as evidenced in the extent to which the authoritative critic confesses himself to be unworthy of his

task of elucidating Shakespeare. The critics 'determine' the 'future' of their readings of Renaissance Drama by means of recalling the lost pride in national achievement which they view as central to this earlier period. What they have recourse to, is a version of the issue of pastoral reconstruction, so succinctly described by Roger Sales. For Sales, "reflection breeds selection".²⁷

Refuge, reflection, rescue and requiem all sustain the illusion that the pastoral deals with universally acknowledged truths. It is, however, deceptive and prescriptive. It offers a political interpretation of both past and present. It is a propagandist reconstruction of history.²⁸

An example of this 'self-contradiction' which is employed, by all three critics under discussion, to promote a sense of modesty and critical honesty, is to be found in Hazlitt's comments on Beaumont and Fletcher. In the following quotation (taken from his series of lectures given in 1820) "Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth, &c", Hazlitt offers a recognition of an alternative reading which is 'not his own', but which would illustrate the discovery within the text of grounds for true moral appreciation. Such a reading may be presently outwith the critic's conception of what he views as the text's intention, but the possibility for a truly essentialist reading is firmly stressed.²⁹

In his opening lecture, ('General View Of The Subject') Hazlitt includes Beaumont and Fletcher within the list of writers "eternised in [fame's] long and lasting scroll, and who, by their words and acts, were benefactors of their country ... what they did had the mark of their age and their country upon it" (p.1). This reading clearly upholds the validity of Beaumont and Fletcher's 'place' in the literary/historical canon, but it does not encompass the anxiety which Hazlitt voices in relation to the disruptive potential of the plays themselves. In his comments on

Beaumont and Fletcher, Hazlitt portrays the playwrights as performing an artistic injustice against the act of critical recovery, which he is painstakingly attempting to institute on their behalf. In order to maintain the impression of critical objectivity, whilst voicing this unrest, Hazlitt differentiates between what he sees as the "men" as literary/historical subjects, and the transient "character of their minds".

The dramatic paradoxes of Beaumont and Fletcher are to all appearances tinctured with an infusion of personal vanity and laxity of principle. I do not say that this was the character of the men; but it strikes me as the character of their minds. The two things are very distinct. The greatest purists (hypocrisy apart) are often free livers; and some of the most unguarded professors of a general license of behaviour have been the last persons to take benefit of their own doctrine. There is a division of labour even in vice ...

Beaumont and Fletcher were the first also who laid the foundation of the artificial diction and tinselled pomp of the next generation of poets ... and by translating the commonest circumstances into the language of metaphor and passion ... it is this misplaced and inordinate craving after striking effect and continual excitement that had at one time rendered our poetry the most vapid of all things, by not leaving the moulds of poetic diction to be filled up by the overflowings of nature and passion, but by swelling out of the ordinary and unmeaning topics to certain pre-conceived and indispensable standards of poetical elevation and grandeur. I shall endeavour to confirm this praise, fixed with unwilling blame, by remarking on a few of their principal tragedies. If I have done them injustice, the resplendent passages I have to quote will set everything to rights. (pp.110-111)

The Dramatists are perceived as being aware of the disruptive possibilities open to them in the act of dramatic representation, yet they have not chosen to transgress against the established values of their 'given' culture. In Hazlitt's criticism, Beaumont and Fletcher have practised restraint: in the form of a self-denial which is praised for its almost Presbyterian practicality. In "not tak[ing] benefit of their own doctrine", they have systematically domesticated any anti-establishment readings of their texts, presenting such a reading as a fruitless recovery of a stylistic

experiment which was found to have no lasting essential value for its contemporary audience. By telling us that the dramatists will 'speak for themselves', Hazlitt intends that the plays will redeem themselves from the restricting bonds of negative criticism and resume their rightful place in a literary tradition of essential worth, in which we may, as a nation, participate.

This denial of authorial 'culpability' as regards the dramatisation of something which the critic would rather evade: that which might seem to challenge his ideological "determinations", is reminiscent, once again, of Lamb's review of Hazlitt's *Table Talk*. Hazlitt, Lamb tells us, does not hide behind a pseudonym, yet his language confuses any confrontation with what Lamb sees as his 'original thought'. A division of 'language' and the 'truths' which it might propose to represent is given similar weight by Coleridge, in his fragment, 'On Genius And Public Taste'. Firstly, however, Coleridge stresses the extent to which 'experience' of that which is other than mundane is "so seldom" part of existence, that our reaction to such a diversion is conceived within a pre-determined 'authoritarian' metaphor.

Men are so seldom thrown into wild circumstances and violences of excitement, that the language of such states, the laws of association of feeling with thought, the starts and strange far-flights of the assimilative power on the slightest and least obvious likenesses presented by thoughts, words, and objects, and even, by this very power the after as strange but always a certain return to the dominant idea—these are judged by authority, not by actual experience—what they have been accustomed to regard as symbols, i. e., the self-manifestations of it.

(Vol. I, p. 185)

The metaphor, then, pre-empt the reader, but the "natural symbol" exists in a philosophical vacuum of its own: Shakespeare is 'fixed in the present' for us

through his universal harmonious integration of the 'arbitrary' with the 'essential-natural': a re-centring of man in the biblical-metaphorical authority of the critic's chosen language. The fragment continues;

Even so [it is] in the language of man, and that of nature. The sound, or the figures S,U,N, are pure arbitrary modes of recalling the object, and for visual mere objects not only sufficient, but have infinite advantages for their vefry no] thingness *per se*. But the language of nature is a subordinate *Logos*, that was in the beginning, and was with the thing it represented, and was the thing it represented. Now the language of Shakespeare (in his *Lear* for instance), is something intermediate, or rather it is the former blended with the latter, the arbitrary not merely recalling the cold notion of the thing, but expressing the reality of it, and, as arbitrary language is the heirloom of the human race, being itself a part of that which it manifests.

(Vol.I,pp.185)

Shakespeare's language conjoins both 'sign' and 'referent'; it is Shakespeare who has redeemed our "future determination".⁴⁰ He leaves us the "heirloom" of a pastoral pathway leading us back to the "language of nature ... in the beginning". Any criticism of the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries, which Lamb and Hazlitt attempt to 'recover' for their audience/readers, assumes a righteous authority, in that it purports to uphold the defence which Coleridge articulates in this passage: the defence of the 'truly Shakespearean'.

Coleridge's fragment appears to anticipate the ideas of E.D. Hirsch, discussed by Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory*.

There may be a number of different valid interpretations [of a work] but all of them must move within the 'system of expectations and probabilities' which the author's meaning permits.⁴¹

For Hirsch an author's meaning is all his own, and should not be trespassed upon by the reader. The meaning of the text is not to be socialised, made the public property of its various readers it belongs solely to the author, who should have the exclusive rights over its disposal long after he or she is dead.⁴²

As a "true critic", Coleridge acts as a medium between these authorial 'validities and possibilities', and how he sees them as circumscribed within the function of true criticism. This, it may be argued, is viewed by Coleridge as constructing, in Barthes' terms, "an aesthetics of readership" which

if ... applied ... to works aimed at a mass audience ... might perhaps be able to construct what is the verisimilitude of our time; for such works never contradict what the audience thinks is possible, however historically or scientifically impossible that might be.

(Criticism and Truth, p.34)

The nineteenth-century critic then, may be seen to be concerned with the extent to which it is productive, or otherwise, to emphasise their writing's 'status as interpretation'.⁴³ This is an especially pertinent issue, when the object of this criticism is, in Hazlitt's words, to "recover ... the scattered fragments and broken images [which is the present critical status allotted to Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays] to erect a temple to true fame. How long before it will be completed?"⁴⁴ Hazlitt aims, he tells us, to "rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity", which, he acknowledges, involves a clear indication that he intends, as a critic, to "do them right". A poetics of critical authority thus manifests itself as foregrounding the representation of seventeenth-century culture which all three critics disseminate within their audience/readers.

In his discussion of Johnson's criticism of Act One of *Othello*, Coleridge gives us a critical statement which offers itself as an intriguing comment upon the contingent nature of generic and formal regulations. The critic stresses the provocative issue of 'hindsight' as an active constituent in the process of critical reconstruction. What we are privy to, on one level, is an awareness of Tony Bennett's observation, that criticism necessarily involves, "fixing texts in the present

by means of the future determination of their pasts".⁴⁵

For in all acts of judgement it [can] never be too often recollected and scarcely too often repeated, that rules are means to ends,—consequently, that the end must be determined and understood before it can be known what the rules are, or ought to be.

(Vol. I, p. 45)

In their reappraisal of the Renaissance playwrights, the mythologisation of Shakespeare is the "means" by which our reawakening to an appreciation of seventeenth-century achievement is both sustained, and tempered. Close scrutiny of the specific critical readings of the Jacobean and Caroline Dramas reveals a de-politicisation of the plays' more radical concerns. If these texts appear to resist the critical overview of the 'spirit of the age', then this resistance is itself outside of nature: 'unshakespearcan'.

The 'Naturalisation' of Interpretation

In his discussion of Coleridge's appropriation of a poetic language founded upon 'symbolic' linguistic structures, Paul de Man observes that, within such constructs;

the material perception and the symbolical imagination are continuous, as the part is continuous with the whole.⁴⁶

In his Shakespearean criticism, Coleridge represents what he views as the conceptual distance between Shakespeare and our interpretation of him, by means of such analogous symbolism as de Man describes.

Such, honoured Sir! Were the thoughts and feelings inspired by the general view of the subject. Yonder in the distance see that rich and varied country and the splendid palace or temple which commands it, and nothing insurmountable in the interspace to stop us in our road towards it. We descend from the mountain (pity that we cannot make a crow's flight towards

it), and then we discover the Stygian pools or morasses, or even park walls and gates with reformer-traps and spring-guns threatened to trespassers, thickest hedges ... and so at length tread back our road, tired ... sick at heart ... with a thorn.

(Vol.1,p.187)

The digressive obscurantism of Coleridge's "varied country" is a stylistic construct which may be seen to assume a position of importance within the writing of the three critics under discussion, as they attempt to set out a place in literary tradition for Shakespeare's contemporaries. The critics may arguably evince an awareness, in their overtly persuasive texts, of the concept described by Yuri Lotman as a 'diminished redundancy' in (poetic) language which increases the text's ability to communicate certain themes and ideas: a direct consequence of the deployment of recognised 'poetic' structures.⁴⁷

To understand this problem, to understand wherein lies the source of the cultural significance of poetry, means to answer basic questions in the theory of the poetic text. In what way does the imposition on the text of certain poetic restrictions lead not to a reduction, but to a sharp increase in the potential for new meaningful combinations of elements within the text? (p.33)

"Supplementary meanings" (p.33) may be achieved in the process of poetic construction, which may be denied to us in the progressively "redundant" practices of "belletristic prose".⁴⁸ The early nineteenth-century English 'poet-critics', most especially Coleridge, appear to subscribe to such an intentionalist quest after 'essential' and potentially irrecoverable 'meaning'. Coleridge's version of the distant Shakespeare clearly 'supplements' itself by means of an importation of nature imagery loaded with the implication of disillusion at our own man-made forms of material restraint, which have conditioned our maladaptive responses to the 'essential' Shakespeare.

Lotman's analysis of "simplicity as an aesthetic value", (p.26) nevertheless, appears to glance towards the ideological implications of the 'conscription' of 'simplistic' as opposed to scientific, or "complex" structures.

(This "non-materialised" aspect, which is completely real in the philosophical but not in the everyday sense of the word, is entirely material, and enters into the stuff of the work's structure.) (p.26)

The "concept of simplicity", Lotman argues, is necessarily located "within fixed, measurable limits":

If, in the light of what has been said, simplicity is "non-complexity, a *rejection* of the implementation of certain principles ... then at the same time, the creation of a "simple work" (like any other) is simultaneously a striving toward the *implementation of certain principles*. (p.26)

By importing what may be viewed by their audience as the elements of 'poetic' language (the preponderance of 'natural' metaphor) the critics begin to distance themselves from the charge of critical 'imposition', the crime, we may recall, which Coleridge lays firmly outwith the concerns of the "true critic". What they aim to represent, for their audience/readers, is a form of the metaphorical 'innocence' which Lotman ascribes to the "materiél" used in painting or sculpture.

They stand outside of any cognition of reality. Each of these materiéls has its own structure but it is given by nature and is not correlated with social (ideological) processes. Language (however) constitutes a special materiél characterized by its high degree of social activeness even before the hand of the artist touches it. (p.17)

Coleridge's Shakespeare is presented as "outside of any [critical] cognition of reality". His 'essence' or "structure" is, to employ Lotman's terminology once again, "given by nature" and therefore "not correlated with social (ideological) processes".

Least of all poets coloured in any particulars by the spirit of customs of his age, [so] that the spirit of all that it had

pronounced intrinsically and permanently good concentrated and perfected in his mind ... in an age of religious and political heat nothing sectarian in religion or politics.

(Vol.I.p.216)

Coleridge's 'natural' symbolism becomes the means by which Shakespeare is systematically de-politicised and de-historicised: a wholly innocent 'by-product' of the emphatic innocence of the "true critic". "To make texts mean differently by re-writing their relations to history", observes Tony Bennett, "texts are thus kept active only at the price of being other than just themselves".⁴⁹

Hazlitt's metaphorical critical boundaries, within which he constructs his recovery of Renaissance Drama, illustrates, perhaps, the "strategy" discussed by Roger Sales in his passage on 'pastoralism' and the presentation of "distance". The critic decides upon boundaries beyond which the text shall or shall not pass, "shutting out the material world in order better to illuminate our consciousness of it".⁵⁰

Pastoralism is about distance as well as ultimate destinations. Distance can be used just to lend enchantment to the view, but it may also be used more strategically to reflect upon the relative merits of past and present. There may be critically arranged freeze-frames of this other country, but they are usually accompanied by a voice-over narration that inevitably casts shadows over the picture. These shadows come from the knowledge that the other country can only be seen from a distance in the distance. Thus reflection may not just take the form of thoughts on emotional, geographical, and temporal distances. Pastoral may merely reflect the present in the past.⁵¹

Hazlitt's criticism acknowledges, but abstracts, the 'distance' by means of the "post-historical signifiers"⁵² Christ and Shakespeare.

Hazlitt's relationship to the concept of "disguised theology" is carefully presented as the philosophical keystone for the nineteenth-century reader's inception, and reception, of Shakespeare as "Everyman".⁵³ Hazlitt promotes the "character of Christ" as the catalyst in the liberation of a national spiritual and intellectual striving

after perfection. In this way, he proposes a form of self-recognition in his contemporary audience in relation to the writers he aims to reappraise. This issue of 'recognition' subscribes to Coleridge's concept of the "subordinate logos" which the "language of nature" encompasses. What Hazlitt represents the seventeenth-century writers as recognising in the figure of Biblical Christ, is the validity of the symbolic essentialist continuity which de-historicises and thus stands to 'elevate' the status of their writing to the level of 'myth'. The inception of Christ's qualities ensures, for the Renaissance playwrights, in Hazlitt's criticism, a "future determination"⁵⁴ whose success may be measured by the mythological status of both Christ and his most familiar disciple, Shakespeare.

There is something in the character of Christ too (leaving aside religious faith quite out of the question) of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. This character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth before or since.⁵⁵

Joanna Baillie invokes Christ under similar conditions in the "Introductory Discourse" to her *Series Of Plays On The Passions*.⁵⁶ In Baillie's text, Christ is employed to illustrate essential humanist principles as the foundation of a prescriptive blueprint for the correct moral function of tragedy. The dramatist represents Christ and Shakespeare as sharing a common mythology in transcribing a flawless portrait of human imperfection: one which we may both recognise, and aspire to. Baillie's 'character of Christ' bears an ideological resemblance to Hazlitt's manifestation of the Saviour, as both versions of Christ become the medium through which the decorous directives for social stability become infused within the national consciousness of a 'past' and 'present' audience.

The translation of the Bible offers Hazlitt a framework of 'historical reference'. The critic designs the conceptual boundaries beyond which the text 'shall, or shall not pass'. Why should we stray from the central significance, when accidental particularities and irretrievable historical influences are now completely inaccessible? If we initially shrink from such a critical "despotism",⁵⁷ a sense of a Coleridgean "true tolerance"⁵⁸ is aimed at in his advice that we should turn, or return, to the 'texts themselves'. Warning his listeners/readers as to the necessity of viewing a text within its own time, Christ becomes the universal historical foundation upon which we may base our faith in ourselves, and in the critic.

[The English translation of the Bible] threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality which had been locked up as in a shrine ... it gave them a common interest and a common cause ... it gave a *mind* to the people, by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment, it created endless diversity and collision of opinion. They found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive ... to exert the utmost eagerness in pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it.⁵⁹

What Biblical authority is viewed by Hazlitt as offering its seventeenth-century audience, is a given set of cultural values which project the 'essential' national gains of working for, and towards, an idea of nationhood. This is an issue which Joanna Baillie articulates in her discussion of the merits of public capital punishment. Owing to its cohesive effects on the audience, the original punishment becomes a worthwhile sacrifice. This idea of the "common subject of thought and feeling" which Hazlitt's Bible engenders in its seventeenth-century audience, is ideologically akin to Baillie's discussion of the spectator at the "roadside hanging", as both illustrations imply an initially blind approach towards an essentially harmonious goal.⁶⁰ What Hazlitt sees as previously 'enshrined' has now been rendered accessible, and, in the process of

recognising this fact, we recognise the portent in the issue that what we previously lauded, is, in part, a mirror-image of our own potential as a nation, to reject "foreign frippery" (p.2) and further our 'common goals'. Although 'pre-translation' English society is offered a safety-clause within this issue of enshrining biblical values, Hazlitt firmly states that, outwith the formal regulations which the Bible abstracted within seventeenth-century socio-political institutions, the clear threat was one of anarchic fragmentation and sub-division. The Bible, Hazlitt tells us, "gave a mind to the people". Biblical Christ then, becomes, for Hazlitt, Terry Eagleton's "transcendental signifier".

Since literature, as we know, deals in universal human values rather than in such historical trivia as civil wars, the oppression of women or the dispossession of the English peasantry, it could serve ... to render them oblivious of such issues in their high-minded contemplation of eternal truths and beauties.

(Literary Theory, p.25)

Hazlitt's accessible Christ shapes the national character of seventeenth-century England, an artistic 'critical' rediscovery which ensures a pastoral obscurantism, and thus upholds the writer's vision of an unbesmirched 'golden-age'.

Our writers and great men had something in them that savoured of the soil in which they grew: they were not French; they were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin; they were truly English. They did not look out of themselves to see what they should be; they sought for truth and nature, and found it in themselves. There was no tinsel and but little art; they were not the spoilt children of affectation and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but natural grace and heartfelt, unobtrusive delicacy. They were not at all sophisticated. The mind of their country was in them, and it prevailed. With their learning and unexampled acquirement, they did not forget that they were men: with all their endeavours and excellence, they did not lay aside the strong original bent and character of their minds. What they performed was chiefly nature's handiwork, and Time has claimed it for his own. (p.1)

Hazlitt fulfils the condition of Roger Sales' "rescue", setting the Renaissance dramatists outwith any contemporary cultural frame of reference. The critic aims at a justifiable rescue of writers who have "sunk into 'mere oblivion'" owing to the rigours of Puritanism (p.2). These writers are reviewed in terms of Sales' "antique values",⁴¹ admired, paradoxically, only in relation to the critic's success in sustaining the legendary quality of the 'ordering symbol' which promotes them for us: the "temple to true fame".

The headlong torrent of puritanical zeal ... swept away everything in its course throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gewgaws and foreign frippery of Charles II, and from which we are only now recovering the scattered fragments and broken images to erect a temple to true fame. (p.3)

The faults of the contemporary theatre in terms of structural unsuitability, and the poor content of modern dramatic texts, are redeemable, in relation to the newly discovered Renaissance playwright, only in a very particular and limited sense.⁴² What we are to recognise is our essential kinship with them, which de-historicises the Jacobean texts in favour of a version of history which does not preclude our awareness of a passive involvement in its construction. This is clearly not an issue of 'history' presented as an overtly reconstructive process, ideologically based, but a reading which suggests a recoverable 'vitality' through an essential awareness 'in ourselves' of the potential for recovery. For example in his comments on Dekker and Webster he notes:

We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise, revive, and give new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value, if we had not known them always: they are old, very old acquaintance, or we should not recognise them at first sight. We find in books what is already written within the red-leaved tables of our hearts. (p.88)

The Renaissance Playwrights are not, then the 'long dead authors of ancient plays'. Their greatness reflects upon, and reveals, the attempted denial of a 'Salesian' "requiem", in the presentation of a merely literary/critical "rescue". Hazlitt stresses, on "reflection", that the dramatists have never left us.⁴³

For such an extraordinary combination and development of fancy and genius many causes may be assigned; and we may seek for the chief of them in religion, in politics, in the circumstances of the time, the recent diffusion of letters, in local situation, and in the character of the men who adorned that period, and availed themselves so nobly of the advantages within their reach. (p.11)

This attempt to 'historicise' the achievements of the dramatists is clearly a dismissive gesture. Socio-economic and political history may be "chief causes", but this brief paragraph sets them very firmly within the peripheral vision of both critic and audience. What Hazlitt is arguably aiming to set out for us is the foundation of a version of the past which subsisted upon the issue of 'faith': something which Hazlitt will recreate for us through a faithful rendition of the merits of such a system of belief. History, then, is to be a 'product': in Coleridgean terms, a 'judgement' of the means to an end. In advance of his panegyric on the Reformation, Hazlitt tells us he will give,

a general sketch ... of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the period ... independent of incidental or fortuitous causes, for which there is no accounting, but which, after all, have often the greatest share in demanding the most important results. (p.11)

This passage may be seen as a critical self-justification for a "reconstruction"⁴⁴ of such "fortuitous causes".

For to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of riveting sympathy. (p.13)

These passages on the English translation of the Bible offer a finite boundary within which the morality of 'the Age' may be firmly conceptualised by Hazlitt's listeners and readers. It is the "romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity" (p.13) which characterises the value of our Biblical-textual inheritance. Nevertheless, Hazlitt moves on to offer a curious pastoral 'reinforcement' in order to underline the primal importance of the mythological version of order which his recovery intends to pursue. At this point, then, he may be clearly seen to glance towards an awareness of the ideological implications of the 'pastoral' as genre, which Roger Sales describes. Hazlitt seeks his example of the essentialist symbolic order, which pastoralism projects, in the motif of Burns' poem "The Cotter's Saturday Night".

But the Bible was thrown open to all ranks and conditions
 ... Every village in England would present the scene so well
 described in Burns' *Cotter's Saturday Night*. (p.13)

Burns' poem is employed in order to illustrate what Hazlitt views as the refining qualities of a Biblical liberation of the spirit which took place in seventeenth-century England. The critic invokes what he sees as a contemporary literary representation of rural simplistic morality in order to re-affirm his discussion that the Jacobean dramatists reflect a universal essence pertinent to the improvement of the literature currently available to his nineteenth-century audience. The appropriation of Burns' poem suggests the extent of Hazlitt's approval of 'pastoral' idiom as the "subordinate logos" which Coleridge describes.

Hazlitt's reference to this particular poem is worth further investigation, as, on the surface, it appears a paradoxical work to choose in order to uphold a sense of native 'English-ness'. "The Cotter's Saturday Night", however, is generally considered to be one of Burns' more problematical texts, in that it employs a version

of Augustan rhetoric in order to promote a sense of the essential virtues indigenous to the Scottish moral and social landscape. John D. Baird discusses the outcome of any revolutionary impulse in the poem as the defence of "true virtue ... manifested in the life of the husbandman; the rural *Paterfamilias* stand[ing] forth as a pattern of moral excellence".⁶⁵ Although Hazlitt baulks over overt Scottish nationalism in other contexts,⁶⁶ he appears to applaud the spirit of "patriotism" as it is infused within the pastoral "subordinate logos" which supports his vision of communion with the Elizabethan 'golden age'.

XX

O SCOTIA! my dear, my native soil!
 For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
 Long may thy hardy sons of *rustic toil*
 Be blest with health and peace and sweet content!
 And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent
 From *Luxury's* contagion, weak and vile!
 Then howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
 A *virtuous Populace* may rise the while,
 And stand a wall of fire, around their much-lov'd ISLE.

XXI

O Thou! who pour'd the *patriotic tide*,
 That stream'd thro' great, unhappy WALLACE'S heart' ...
 (The Patriot's GOD, peculiarly thou art,
 His *friend*, *inspirer*, *guardian* and *reward!*)
 O never, never, SCOTIA'S realm desert,
 But still the *Patriot* and the *Patriot-bard*,
 In bright succession raise, her *Ornament* and *Guard!*

Hazlitt's invocation of Burns' poem clearly de-contextualises and displaces its more radical concerns; but this issue may be equally viewed as something which is tendered in the form of the poem itself, which employs Augustan rhetoric in order to resist a charge of moral and intellectual insularity. The stanza which might arguably have appealed most to Hazlitt, in the context of the particular 'recovery' which he is himself involved in, is stanza XIII.

XIII

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
 Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
 Or noble *Elgin* beats the heaven-ward flame,
 The sweetest far of SCOTIA'S holy lays:
 Compar'd with these, *Italian trills* are tame;
 The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise.
 Nae unison hae they, with our CREATOR'S praise.

This stanza articulates a similar dismay to Hazlitt's own, in relation to the invasion of continental stylistic influence within a storehouse of traditional literary forms which symbolise our national cultural heritage. In Burns' case, nevertheless, this heritage is clearly represented with recourse to a sub-text of 'anti-Englishness': a rejection of the outcome, to use Hazlitt's phrase, of the "advantages within their [his English neighbours'] reach" (p.11).

Hazlitt appropriates Burns' defensive stance, and produces a view of Shakespeare's England which offers an ideological celebration of 'empire':

Perhaps the genius of Great Britain (if I may speak without
 offence or flattery) never shone out fuller or brighter, or
 looked more like itself than at this period. (p.1)

Set only fifteen lines into his opening lecture, we have 'in macrocosm' what Hazlitt's invocation of Burns' poem offers in microcosm: an evocation of an assumed shared preconception of what it is to be part of "this England". Once again, we are presented with an underwritten code of standards represented by the Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatists;

every breath that blew ... every wave that rolled to our shores
 brought with it some accession to our knowledge, which was
 engrafted onto the national genius ... To this every inducement
 prompted ... above all the insatiable desire of the mind to beget
 its own image, and to construct out of itself, and for the delight
 and admiration of the world and posterity that excellence of
 which the idea exists hitherto only in its own breast, and the

impression of which it would make as universal as the eye of heaven, the benefit as common as the air we breathe. (p.19)

This passage bears a strong resemblance to the "pastoralism of the tract-mongers" which Roger Sales discusses in his first chapter of, *English Literature in History, 1780-1830*. It is reminiscent too, perhaps, of the "church-homily" sermons and emblematic truisms which Jonathan Dollimore observes as employed by the Jacobean Dramatists in subverting, whilst structurally satisfying, the rules of the censor.⁶⁸ The critic must sustain his construction of a collective consciousness: the "character of Christ" and Biblical morality allow for the critical insinuation of a general atmosphere of self-censorship in the playwrights, an evocation of a collective conscience. Hazlitt and Lamb may be seen to present the Renaissance Dramatists within the confines of Jonathan Dollimore's "idealist mimesis", a moral teaching through the presentation of an 'ideal'.⁶⁹ Hazlitt's unwillingness to give any extracts from *Sejanus* illustrate, perhaps, the extent to which the text's radical diatribe against corrupt, and thereby easily accessible structures of authority, by one who merely offers compliance: 'plays the game', will serve to undermine Hazlitt's own critical invocation of 'myths working through people'.

I am half afraid to give any extracts, lest they should be tortured into an application of other times and characters than those referred to by the poet. Some of the sounds indeed may bear ... an awkward construction; some of the object may look double to squint-eyed suspicion. But that is not my fault. It only proves, that the characters of prophet and poet are implied in each other; that he who describes human nature well once, describes it for good and all, as it was, is, and ever will be. Truth always was, must always remain a libel to the tyrant and the slave. (p.128)

The resistance to offering illustrations, nevertheless, opens out to invest the playwright with an essentialist wisdom; a reversal of the opening lines wherein he

offers a strong sense of objectivised dislike for Jonson.

What he does, is the result of painful industry ... "His plays were works", as some once said of them, "while other's works were plays". The observation had less of a compliment than truth in it. (p.127)

The extract which Hazlitt does quote, an exchange between Arruntius and Lepidus (IV.5) is placed as a confirmation of a dramatic artistic misanthropy: a tract against the world, almost, which distances the confrontation in *Sejanus* with the power of the orthodox state. *Sejanus*' 'Fall' becomes a deterministic reinforcement, for Hazlitt, of a providentialist vision of harmonious restitution. The 'fall', too, is the product of a metaphorical 'symbol' engineered by the critic.

His tragedy of the Fall of *Sejanus*, in particular, is an admirable piece of ancient mosaic. The principal character gives one the idea of a lofty column of granite, nodding to its base from its pernicious height, and dashed to pieces by a breath of air, a word of its creator—feared, not pitied, scorned, unwept, and forgotten. (p.127)

Charles Lamb and the Responsibility of "Rescue".

In the preface to his *Specimens Of English Dramatic Poets, Who Lived About The Time Of Shakespeare* (1808) Lamb implies that the "future determination"⁷⁰ which he wishes to construct in relation to the Renaissance Dramatists, requires a specific 'interventionist' critical approach.

I have expunged without ceremony all which the writers had better never have written, that forms the objection so often repeated to the promiscuous reading of Fletcher, Massinger, and some others.⁷¹

The dubious nature of such a boldly stated aim is deflected in relation to the seriousness of moral purpose which the levelling process of selecting the 'Specimens' is designed to enact. The process will, "show what we have slighted, while beyond

all proportion, we have cried up one or two favourite names".⁷² The short preface to the 'Specimens' gives, nevertheless, very little detail regarding Lamb's attitudes to the role of critical authority in general, especially in relation to the process of selection which he employs in the aforementioned work. Before embarking on an analysis of the *Specimens Of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About The Time Of Shakespeare*, it may prove useful to offer an outline of the critical positions which he isolates and comments upon elsewhere in his writings.

In his essay, *Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and Other Imperfect Sympathies*⁷³ Lamb sets out his concept of the "imperfect intellect". Lamb may be seen to 'invest' his "future determination" of the Renaissance Dramatists within the limitations of such a positively disordered view of the world as the "imperfect intellect" provides. In this text, the critic lays no claim to the 'essential artistry' of the "true critic", whom he dismisses as blinkered and dictatorial: "Caledonian". Lamb's claim to a 'true' reading of a particular text is based upon the experience of realistically unpredictable, and therefore 'honest' flashes of insight into his subject. This description of an intellectual fragmentation is a form of 'self-deconstruction' which purports to stress the writer's concern over the question of conveying his opinion as the reader's experience of the text under review. The responsibility of the recovery of interest in Renaissance Drama, then, in the preface to the *Specimens*, appears to be shouldered with as similar a tone of self-effacing authority as Lamb was to anatomise and uphold in the later "Essay". This work offers itself as a representation of the 'ethics' of selection.

There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to,

have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. ... Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. ... They will throw out a random word in or out of season ... They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development.

(*Lamb As Critic*, p.158)

Once we have experienced Lamb's idea of the ramifications of the alternative intellectual 'perfection', however, the necessity of his own painful 'self-disclosure' becomes clearly apparent. This perfection in imperfection offers a sub-text of a self-congratulatory 'Englishness', offset against the rigours of the "Caledonian" constitution, whose discriminatory powers are inclined to preach rather than enlighten.

The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. ... You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth—if, indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clockwork. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests any thing, but unloads his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. ... His understanding is always at its meridian—you never see the first dawn, the early streaks. —He has no falterings of self-suspicion. ... The twilight of dubiety never falls on him. ... You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. ... His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. ... He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country ... Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. ... Persons of this nation are particularly fond of affirming the truth—which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm, as annunciate it.

(*Lamb as Critic*, p.159)

Lamb discusses the narrative persona in terms of a "dramatic character", in his praise of *The Complete Angler* (*Lamb as Critic*, Introduction, p.25.) In the

opening lines to his review of Hazlitt's *Table Talk* (1821), the critical narrative voice is presented as a guardian against the fragmentation of the reader's interest: even his conception of a 'unity of meaning'. Without such a guide, the danger exists that we may experience a confrontation of the "controversy of elocution"²⁴ which is the potential outcome of stage representation.

A series of miscellaneous Essays, however well executed in the parts, if it have not some pervading character to give a unity to it, is ordinarily as tormenting to get through as a set of aphorisms, or a jest book.

(*Lamb as Critic*, p.300)

The "imperfect intellect", if read in relation to Lamb's critical role in selecting the extracts for his *Specimens*, may be seen to assume the role of guardian of morality for both dramatist and his own contemporary audience. After all, he tells us in his preface to the *Specimens* that he intends to "illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors". If this instinctive moral sense is a product, for the critic, of an intellectual fragmentation, as opposed to the "clockwork" Caledonian intellect, then the representation of such productively unstable mental processes may be seen to impose a 'legal' boundary around the texts. This boundary prevents the reader's approach to the works other than by firmly signposted routes, and the texts from 'resisting arrest'.

To every extract is prefixed an explanatory head, sufficient to make it intelligible with the help of some trifling omissions. Where a line or more was obscure ... I have had no hesitation in leaving the line or passage out. Sometimes where I have met with a superfluous character, which seemed to burthen without throwing any light upon the scene. I have expunged without ceremony, all that which the writers had better never have written, that forms the objection so often repeated to the promiscuous reading of Fletcher, Massinger, and some others.

The kind of extracts which I have sought after have been ... scenes of passion, sometimes of the deepest quality,

interesting situations, serious descriptions, that which is more nearly allied to poetry than to wit, and to tragic rather than to comic poetry. The plays which I have made choice of have been, with few exceptions, those which treat of human life and manners, rather than masques and Arcadian pastorals ... My leading design has been, to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors. To show in what manner they felt, when they placed themselves by the power of imagination in trying situations, in the conflicts of duty and passion, or the strife of contending duties; what sort of loves and enmities theirs were; how their griefs were tempered, and their full-swoln joys abated: how much of Shakespeare shines in the great men his contemporaries, and how far in his divine mind and manners he surpassed them and all mankind.

(preface, p. xii)

It is worth noting, at this point, the striking similarity between this de-historicising text, and Joanna Baillie's discussion of the moral function of tragedy discussed in detail in the following chapter. Baillie's text analyses and redresses the issues which Lamb refers to as the finite and still-born "Caledonian" representations. Baillie clearly precedes Lamb in the representation of 'essential' human qualities reflected in the portrayal of universal "passions". Lamb's outline of the Renaissance Dramatists placing themselves "by the power of imagination in trying situations, in the conflicts of duty and passion" is again very close, in terms of concept and expression, to Baillie's observations upon tragedy fulfilling the function of a moral lesson by "lead[ing] "heroes and great men"] forward to our nearer regard, in all the distinguishing varieties which nearer inspection discover: with the passions, humours, the weaknesses, the prejudices of men."⁷⁵ "Tragedy", Baillie continues, "brings to our view men placed in those elevated situations, exposed to those great trials, and engaged in those extraordinary transactions, in which few of us are called upon to act".⁷⁶

Lamb, then, may be justifiably viewed as echoing Baillie's text. This, in turn,

supports the hypothesis that the earlier work, which evades a direct discussion of Renaissance Drama, but which rejects the stage representation of "villainy" and "vice" as anti-tragic, is indeed attempting to domesticate and de-politicise anti-establishment elements clearly expressed within these plays.⁷⁷ Lamb's "intention" in "expung[ing]" has been to chart a version of the Renaissance Playwrights (excluding Shakespeare) which appears to comply with, and reinforce, the theoretical impulse of Joanna Baillie's "Discourse", which attempts to explore the tragic outcome of a challenge to a nationally co-hesive 'moderation in all things'. Lamb's concern with revealing the extent to which "their griefs were tempered and their full-sworn joys abated" accords with Baillie's aim to divert her audience from the disruptive conclusion which follows a display of the "unamiable passions".⁷⁸

Lamb's avowed diversion from the stultifying familiarity of "Arcadian pastorals" obscures the sense in which his critical representations of the "Dramatic Poets" are the result of a nostalgic "retrieval" and "reconstruction". In relation to Lamb's conceptualisation of Shakespeare's contemporaries, it seems possible to add 'qualified reconciliation' to Roger Sales' list of the "famous five Rs".⁷⁹ Fletcher and Massinger are only permitted a re-appraisal in the context of a critical 'repression' of their sins. Lamb casts his criticism in the role of a bustling antiquarian 'tidying' around Shakespeare's living monument; stacking the valuable items together to reflect a greater appreciation of their worth: and a subsequent devaluation of those writers who have received unwarranted acclaim.

Another object I had in mind in making these selections was to bring together the most admired scenes in Fletcher and Massinger, in the estimation of the world the only dramatic poets of that age who are entitled to be considered after Shakespeare, and to exhibit them in the same volume with the more impressive scenes of old Marlowe, Heywood, Tourneur,

Webster, Ford, and others. To show what we have slighted, while beyond all proportion we have cried up one or two favourite names.⁶⁰

The critic's role is that of a natural 'selector', justified in his cause by means of careful construction of his subordinate position to the 'text themselves'. The critical persona is also a subservient martyr to the innocence of the "imperfect intellect".⁶¹

In a letter to Southey, Lamb criticises the 'structuration' of the presentation of the moral framework of the former's poem, "The Victory". The presentation of morality in any perfect artistic sense must assume the form of "Idealist Mimesis".⁶²

A moral should be wrought in the body and soul, the matter and tendency, of a Poem, not tagged to the end, like "A God send the good ship into harbour" at the conclusion of our bills of lading ...

These remarks, I know, are crude and unwrought, but I do not lay claim to much accurate thinking—I never judge system-wise of things, but fasted upon particulars.

(*Lamb as Critic*, p.233)

It is useful to consider this 'general rule' in relation to Lamb's comments on Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*, a play whose 'moral framework' corresponds to that for which the critic upbraids Southey's poem. Tourneur's version of the "moral tagged to the end" is D'Amville's reversal when on the point of ascending, unchallenged by 'the true righteousness and justice' to the seat of power. This issue is discussed by Jonathan Dollimore in relation to *The Revenger's Tragedy* as a 'subversion within orthodoxy', a self-displaying mockery of the demands of the censor.⁶³ Lamb's brief observations on the play, which seem to gesture towards appreciation of D'Amville's pithy aphorisms, pointedly deflect any analysis of their 'content' by digressing into a discussion of Sir Philip Sidney. Lamb, then, takes refuge within the symbolic rhetoric of the "unimpassioned deities" of the "Arcadian pastorals" which he tells us, in his preface to the *Spectimens*, he will shy away from.

D'Amville is domesticated in the form of a digression which both de-historicises and universalises his 'achievements'. These are viewed as the focus of a representation of disciplined linguistic dexterity.

This way of describing which seems unwilling to leave off, weaving parenthesis within parenthesis, was brought to its height by Sir Philip Sidney. He seems to have set the example to Shakespeare. Many beautiful instances may be found all over the *Arcadia*. These bountiful Wits always give full measure, pressed down and running over.¹⁴

Any direct reference to Tourneur's text is evaded in allotting the play a shadowy place within a progressive literary tradition which displays a skilfully ordered exuberance. This does not damage the sense of decorum which he wishes to portray. Its effect is to reaffirm our awareness of a self-regulating pastoral of intellectual 'potential'. This passage is reminiscent of Hazlitt's remarks at the close of his lectures on Shakespeare's contemporaries, and the later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists:

They were lettered men in an unlettered age; not self-taught men in a literary and critical age. This circumstance should be taken into account in a theory of the dramatic genius of that age. Except Shakespeare, nearly all of them, indeed, came up from Oxford or Cambridge, and ... began to write for the stage. No wonder. The first coming up to London in those days must have had a similar effect upon a young man of genius, almost like visiting Babylon or Susa, or a journey to the other world. The stage (even as it then was) after the recluseness and austerity of college life, must have appeared like Armida's enchanted palace ... [They] saw the magic of the scene, and heard its siren sounds with rustic wonder, and the scholar's pride. (p.143)

Both critics represent the Renaissance Dramatists to their audience in terms of a 'whole', despite the disparate elements for which the critics upbraid them. The Playwrights are viewed as synthesising, from, and for their "age" a traditional model of a natural superiority, the "rustic wonder" merging with the outwardly antithetical

"scholar's pride". The 'reverberations' of such a meritorious spiritual and intellectual "journey", however, are set out by Lamb in his strikingly uncomfortable passage on *The Revenger's Tragedy*. He gives extracts from (I.1) and (III.4), which involve Vindice's address to Gloriana's poisoned skull. He then gives several long extracts from (IV.4), which involve Vindice's outrage at his mother's attempt to sell Castiza to the Duke.

It is during his extracts of the latter scene, that Lamb breaks in with his modest unrest over the moral content of the text he is quoting.

The reality and life of this dialogue passes any scenical illusion I ever felt. I never read it but by ears tingle, and I feel a hot blush spread my cheeks, as if I were presently to "proclaim" such "malefactions" of myself, as the Brothers here rebuke in their unnatural parent' in words more keen and dagger-like than those which Hamlet speaks to his mother. Such power has the passion of shame truly personated, not only to "strike guilty creatures unto the soul", but to "appal" even those that are "free".¹³

Lamb's sense of responsibility for the recovery of interest in the Renaissance Dramatists is clearly manifested in this passage. His critical persona 'absolves' Tourneur's play of the radical concerns which the extracts clearly raise. This absolution is enacted on a purely 'personal' level. The critic's "shame" is an open invitation to his readers to elect him to a mythological parity with the Christ figure who is seen to identify with, and internalise, the sins which the "guilty creatures" impose upon him.

The identity of these "guilty creatures" is tantalisingly obscure. Clearly, it is not unreasonable, in view of Lamb's marked unease, to apply the term to the dramatists themselves. In view of the intensity of the self-displaying internalisation, the dramatists are neatly brought to account by the 'moral vision' inherent in their

own works. Nevertheless, this concept of "guilt" and "free[dom]" is something to which the critic intends to alert his readers. This may be seen to indicate an awareness of a level of textual 'resistance' from the Renaissance Playwrights, in relation to the particular ideological recovery which Lamb intends to initiate. At this point, a certain kinship may again be perceived with Joanna Baillie's theoretical concern to warn certain elements of her audience. This "warning"⁶⁴ takes the form of a specific reminder that another "uncultivated"⁶⁷ section of the population may not be so easily educated as to the social function of 'moderation' by coming into contact with the *Plays On The Passions*. For Lamb, too, if the "free" are "appal[led]" they are as likely to emerge 'vigilant' as shocked into impotence in the face of "malefactions". Lamb's text implies a re-assertion of the preventative controls which Baillie subscribes to, which acts as a penance for the guilty, also alerts those in a position to isolate and minimise such anti-social activity. What we are privy to in this passage is the curious paradoxical domestication of Tourneur's play, worked within a justification for the need for such a process. That this re-conciliation in retrieval is a particularly painful process is something which Lamb intends us to recognise. In so doing, we defer to his sacrifice.

Hazlitt's conception of critical authority in relation to Tourneur is equally intriguing, in terms of the construction of critical 'boundaries' around a particular text. In his lecture on 'Marston Chapman and Decker', he offers an analysis of the critical position of a writer 'excavating new ground'. For our realistic and just appraisal of the Dramatists, Hazlitt saves himself effort and rebuke, by 'mak[ing] these the old writers vouchers for their own pretensions" (p.72).

It is not difficult to give at least their seeming due to great and well known names; for the sentiments of the reader meet the

sentiments of the critic more than half way ... But in attempting to extol the merits of an obscure work of genius, our words are rather lost on the empty air, or are "blown stifling back" upon the mouth that utters them ... for it has no relation to any image previously existing in the public mind, and therefore looks like an imposition out of nothing. (p.72)

Although markedly more forthright than Lamb, Hazlitt clearly attempts to evade this potential charge of a critical "imposition". In order to achieve this, he encompasses the 'democratic' concept of the Aristotelian "critical verisimilitude", described, we recall, by Barthes as a representation of "what the public thinks is possible".⁴⁴ In "meet[ing] the sentiments of the critic more than half way", the issues of the 'ethical' responsibility of the 'rescue' in question is effectively relegated, by being universalised as a 'shared' process of recovery.

As the lecture progresses, then, the playwrights are denied the 'voice' to "vouch" with, owing to the critic's presentation of the philosophical disparity of 'word' and the arbitrary cultural mapping of its intention.

Words have become instruments of more importance than formerly. To mention certain actions, is, almost, to participate in them, if consciousness was the same as guilt. The standard of delicacy varies at different periods. (p.80)

It is perhaps this almost mercenary shifting of emphasis as to the ownership of the 'truth about a text' which constitutes the evasive self-justification of all three critics under discussion. In relation to *The Revenger's Tragedy*, it is Hazlitt's pre-conception of the place in literary tradition which he is 'founding', which becomes part of the critical-textual framework of authority, suppressing as subliminal the textual 'resistance' for the play. It is the responsibility of "future determination"⁴⁵ which results in Tourneur's play, "not answer[ing] to the expectations it excites" (p.104).

The Revenger's Tragedy by Cyril Toureur is the only other drama to equal these [Webster's *The Duchess Of Malfi* and *The White Devil*] in the "dazzling fence of impassioned argument", in pregnant illustration, and in those profound reaches of thought which lay open the soul of feeling. The play, on the whole, does not answer to the expectations it excites ... but the appeals of *Castiza* ... are of as high and abstracted an essence of poetry as any of those above mentioned. (pp.103-4)

If the essential formula is present, there is no need for the investigation into socio-historical and political peculiarities of a play written for stage performance; In short, the great characteristics of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them" (p.104).

Coleridge and the "Energy in the Age".

There was in truth an energy in the age, an energy in thinking, which gave writers in the reigns of Elizabeth and James the same energy. At the present, the chief object of a author was to be intelligible at first view; then it was to make the reader think— not to make him understand at once, but to show him rather that he did not understand, or to make him review, and re-meditate till he had placed himself on a par with the writer. (Tomalin Report on Coleridge's Lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, Vol.II, p.58.)

Coleridge's tone in this passage appears to mourn the passing of an essential intellectual rapport between author and audience, a relationship which he believes existed in the seventeenth century. This, nevertheless, is a process of negotiation between playwright and audience which has its source in the superior insight of the "writers in the reigns of Elizabeth and James". There writers are promoted by Coleridge as enacting a process of mediation, in terms of educating their audience as to the intended focus of a particular text. Meaning is revealed in progressively demanding stages to the audience. This leads to a general augmentation of their intellectual capacities, which becomes abstracted by the critic to encompass what he

views as the beneficial outcome for the nation as a whole. This is the function and focus of the "energy in the age".

The lack of such a generalised sense of responsible patriotism in modern writers, is represented in the desire to be "intelligible at first view". The passage also offers the paradoxical conclusion, nevertheless, that is it the remnants of the legacy of the Renaissance dramatists which foregrounds the contemporary desire for a rapid and unfulfilling means of communicating 'meaning'. The focus is subtle and curious. Coleridge presents the Elizabethan/Jacobean writers as distant examples to be retrieved in order to reinvigorate less cohesive literary standards. The 'hereditary' implications of the passage also suggest, however, that the fragments of the dramatists' lessons are still with us, and are borne out in our continuing confidence in self-expression. In a sense, then, their "energy" becomes implicated in the progressively 'un-centred' contemporary fashion to elicit an automatic, rather than essential response in an audience. This critical representation of the historical legacy of the seventeenth-century intellectual community aims towards an obscure universal spirit of progressiveness encompassed within the inviolate authority of the unnamed writers themselves. Such a strategy ultimately upholds the "true critic's" position as firmly set apart from his audience.

The sharply defined terrace of revelation which the Renaissance writers are shown to project for an audience, becomes, for Coleridge, the product of an exclusive pact between Shakespearean intention and the critical text. The lecture continues with, and concludes upon, a representation of the individual "twofold energy" of philosophy and poetry which "distinguish him from every man that ever lived" (Vol. II, p.58). The critical persona who reveals this seventeenth-century anatomy of

understanding to a contemporary audience assumes the role of a respectful acolyte. From this position, he sets out his metaphorical prediction of the steps which his readers will have to ascend in order to achieve the "true critic's" insight into the "energy" of Shakespeare's England. The reader's submission before the authority of the critic takes the form, at this point, of a disciplined acquiescence. In his attempt to recover what he believes to be the nature of the relationship between the seventeenth-century playwright and his audience, the critic reconstructs a similar 'journey into meaning' for his own listeners. In this way, he engenders the concept of a possible reward to be gained from following the critic through his logical labyrinth. Coleridge's subtle image of the ladder of achievement serves a dual function. It clearly upholds the sincerity of his own critical position, and also illustrates a munificent basis for his implied but muted interest in Shakespeare's contemporaries, who are not differentiated from him in the passage previously quoted. The critical teacher is released, by this process of revelation, onto a higher plane of spiritual and intellectual consciousness. This, in turn, results in a fusion of the authority of the critic and his Renaissance subjects, as both are beyond the reader in receipt of instruction at this point.

Coleridge's mythologisation of seventeenth-century England involves the construction of an idealised meritocracy in dramatic writing, which reflects upon our greater understanding of Shakespearean exclusivity. This carefully controlled criticism, which barricades itself against its own instability, may be seen to illustrate Pierre Macherey's discussion of the constructive philosophy of essentialist criticism.

This essential immanent criticism, repetition, commentary and 'pure' reading, is inadequate: it is not enough to unfold the line of the text to discover the message inscribed there, for this knowledge implies a separation between discourse and object,

not a repetition of what has already been said. Immanent criticism is inevitably confused, because it begins by abolishing that separation. It can, though, be seen to be the most rigorous form of criticism in its proclaimed intention to be faithful to the meaning, to free it from all the impurities which alter and interrupt it, to ensure an essential adequation between the work and the reader. To recoil from the task of interpretation is accept failure or to vanish into the work.

*(A Theory of Literary Production, p 77)*⁹⁰

Coleridge's presentation of an essential harmonious democracy of seventeenth-century creative "energy" is undermined, as a result of his attempt to evade the "confus[ion]" which Macherey views as the necessary outcome of "abolishing the separation ... between discourse and object". The "true critic" denies that such a "separation" is problematical in relation to his own writing, however. Coleridge's "true critic" may be seen to alter the reader's conception of his own theoretical and historical distance from the literary text in question. This may be read on two levels. Coleridge's creation of a metaphorical dependence upon the insight of the "true critic" confirms the essential relationship as between reader and critical interpreter. The sub-text of such an implication, then, is a subtle acknowledgement that "true" criticism replaces our experience of the text, as it involves a process which is recognisably superior to the concept of a critical "interrup[tion]" between the reader and the text under discussion. The "true critic's" followers experience the sense of a progressive energy in the seventeenth-century writers by contemplating the authoritative rise of the upwardly mobile critical shadow.

Tomalin's report on Coleridge's lecture on Shakespeare and Milton intimates a recognition of a critical policing of the Shakespearean characteristics which are presented to us. We are given "rules" which enable us to identify the 'truly Shakespearean'. The positioning of Shakespeare as a symbol of a self-regulating

status-quo is evident in the following quotation:

Conceive a profound metaphysician and a great poet, intensely occupied in thinking on all subjects, on the least as well as the greatest ... conceive this philosophical part of his character combined with the poetic, the twofold energy constantly acting; the poet and the philosopher embracing but, as it were, in a warm embrace, when if both had not been equal, one or other must have been strangled.

With this rule the reader might go through what was really Shakespeare's, and distinguish him from every man that ever lived.

(Vol.2,p.58)

This report encompasses a critical anxiety as to the disordering consequences of the ascendance of one or other of the component parts of Shakespeare's genius. This may be seen to indicate a subliminal textual recognition of the self-deconstructive potential of the facade of innocence which the "true critic" painstakingly strives to project. Such a tension is viewed by Macherey as the fate of "the author's accomplice, the empiricist critic", who "believes that the work can only emerge under the pressure of participation".⁹¹ The "true critic" appeals to his audience in terms of the active involvement with such "pressure". His aim to offer a true representation of Shakespeare and seventeenth-century England necessitates his simultaneous presentation of the penance which he must undergo in order to merit our faith in him. This critic must undergo an ordeal by innocence in order to substantiate the essential validity of his prescriptive vision of the values which the Renaissance dramatists are shown to personify.

Coleridge's critical self-presentation within his Shakespeare criticism articulates what Empson describes as the 'voices of simplicity and complexity' in the construction of pastoral convention; such voices encompass the role of the "despairing lover" and the idea of "waste".

The praise of simplicity usually went with extreme flattery of a patron (dignified as a symbol of the whole society, through the connection of the pastoral with the heroic [the critic revealing the distance between the reader and Shakespeare, and 'relenting' to provide an access route] ... it allowed the flattery to be more extreme because it helped both author and patron to keep their self-respect. The simple man becomes a clumsy fool who yet has better 'sense' than his betters and can say things more fundamentally true; he is in contact with nature; which the complex man needs to be ... he is in contact with the mysterious forces of our own nature ... he can speak the truth because he has nothing to lose. Also the idea that he is in contact with nature, therefore 'one with the universe'.⁹²

Shakespeare is conceptualised partly in terms of a loss. This is the outcome of a critical prediction which reflects upon present day literary and theatrical conventions. Our own legacy to forthcoming generations is impoverished and irresolute. Without the reinigorating presence of the critic's vision of seventeenth-century energy, the prophetic "future determination"⁹³ is that of a 'future imperfect'. This issue becomes problematised, however, as the argument unfolds; focusing the source of this "energy" as peculiarly Shakespearean.

His education was a combination of the poet and the philosopher—a rapid mind, impatient that the means of communication were so few and defective compared with what he possessed to be communicated.

(Vol. II, p.58)

The critic presides as a malcontented judge of the society which contained Shakespeare, and also passes judgement upon the society which now presumes to examine both 'Shakespeare' and the critic's representation of him. The "truth and energy in the age of Elizabeth and James" and its product, a democratic egalitarian intelligence, is a reconstruction which is undermined by the issue of the "defective[ness]" of the language available to Shakespeare. The paternalism which Coleridge promotes as a function of "Shakespeare's genius", becomes destabilised on

several levels. Not only is Shakespeare a distant figure in terms of meaning for the critic's audience; the acceleration of his "rapid mind" reveals him as essentially unavailable to his contemporary seventeenth-century audience. The cohesive "energy" then, is questioned, as the critic stresses an innate Shakespearean superiority, but does not claim that his contemporaries suffered from such a linguistic misrepresentation. The sense of a seventeenth-century dramatic community breaks down, as only Shakespeare is shown as limited by the means of expression available to him.

By means of this critique, the reader becomes wholly dependent upon the reading of the "true critic" as authoritative mediator of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, Coleridge's attempt to illustrate a seventeenth-century native "energy" results in a version of Shakespeare which completely fragments the image he has laboured to construct. Shakespeare is shown as incompatible with this general reading of seventeenth-century achievement, although he is focused as its origin and apex. The incompatibility is based upon a failure of his contemporary culture to contain him. In this sense, Shakespeare becomes a transhistorical subject in relation to the implied 'other-ness' of his contemporaries. This critical invocation of a Shakespearean 'distance in silence' may be seen to be encompassed within Pierre Macherey's appraisal of the technique of the critical interpreter.

The work is only the expression of a meaning, an ore which must be smelted to extract its precious content. The interpreter accomplishes this liberating violence: he dismantles the work in order to reconstruct it in the image of its meaning; to make it denote directly what it has expressed obliquely. Translation and reduction: focusing the apparent diversity of the work in a single signification ... But such an 'investigation' obviously has a critical meaning, the opulence which it brings to light is a revelation of the poverty of the work: That was it and nothing more. ... Reduced to the expression of a meaning, the work may seem threadbare: to restore it to its own elegance, the commentator will have to add the cosmetic of his own style.

(A Theory of Literary Production, p.75)

Coleridge represents Shakespeare throughout as a focus of plenitude, but this is frequently compromised in terms of the alleged linguistic poverty he is conceived as working within. The critic attempts to underline his own modest honesty by representing Shakespeare's "genius" with reference to the playwright's frustration. In this sense, Shakespeare is beyond his own culture, which implies that he did not interact with his contemporaries on a socio-cultural basis. What we are privy to, then, is an a-historical reading of Shakespeare which includes a theoretical version of its own defence. Coleridge's criticism refuses the implication of Macherey's "translation and reduction", for the inability to give an accurate rendition of the playwright is merely a direct acknowledgement of Shakespeare's 'own' recognition of the limitations which seek to contain him.

The description of the "energy" of the seventeenth century then, is ultimately paradoxical and contradictory: something which requires a critical qualification and control. This process of qualifying the statements he has made is, in part, a critical apology for contextualizing Shakespeare historically, even if in an extremely muted and obscure sense. This issue of critical 'apology', however, is highly visible in both Coleridge's and Lamb's criticism. It is as much a prelude to the 'structuration' of a vision of harmony, as is, in the present case, Coleridge's representation of an obscure confrontation between Shakespeare and his contemporaries for the moral ground which constitutes the nature of the "energy in the age". The critic aims to argue through elements within his criticism which may be seen to undermine his critical honesty. This involves him in the appropriation of a means of persuasion which is invested with an almost 'generic' functional application for both critic and audience. Coleridge's muted apology is a litany which answers questions which are

themselves limited to the successful outcome of the "future determination"⁵⁴ of the critical text itself. In this sense, then, it is both a prelude to the conclusive pastoralisation of the issues addressed within the text, and an ongoing 'sub-plot' which abstracts the issue of critical honesty in order to define and reinforce the original statement of authorial intention. The "true critic" is Empson's 'hero' in his discussion of pastoralisation as an ongoing process.

The comic sub-plot] usually ... provides a sort of parallel in low life to the serious part ... this gives an impression of dealing with life completely, so that the critics say that *Henry IV* deals with the whole of English life at some date, either Shakespeare's or Henry's; this is ... what the device wants to make you feel. Also the play can thus anticipate a parody a hearer might have in mind without losing its dignity, which again has a sort of completeness ... An account of the double-plot, then, is needed for a general view of pastoral because the interaction of the two plots gives a particularly clear setting for, or machine for imposing, the social and metaphorical ideas on which pastoralism depends. What is displayed on the tragi-comic stage is a sort of marriage of the myths of heroic and pastoral, a thing felt as fundamental to both and necessary to the health of society.

(*Some versions of the Pastoral*, p.29-30)

Hazlitt remarks upon this element of apologetic self-justification in Coleridge's writing, and he views this as a form of anti-essential "intoleran[ce]".⁵⁵ "Consistency" in Hazlitt's essay 'On Consistency of Opinion' is the foregrounding element in the construction of a harmoniously opinionated text. Consistency and continuity are clearly constituent elements within Roger Sales' reading of the prime sources of pastoralism. In Hazlitt's case, they are terms which are ideologically linked to the qualities of the 'true patriot' and the "partisan".⁵⁶

Coleridge used to tell me, that this pertinacity was owing to a want of sympathy with others. What he calls *sympathising with others* is their admiring him, and it must be admitted that he varies his battery pretty often, in order to accommodate himself to this sort of mutual understanding. But I do not agree in what

he says of me. On the other hand, I think that it is my sympathising *beforehand* with the different views and feelings that may be entertained on a subject, that prevents my retracting my judgement, and flinging myself into the contrary extreme *afterwards*. If you proscribe all opinion opposite your own, and impertinently exclude all the evidence which does not make for you, or if at any subsequent period it happens to suit your interest or convenience to listen to objections which vanity or prudence had hitherto overlooked. But if you are aware from the first suggestion of a subject, either by subtlety of tact, or close attention, if the full force of what others possibly feel and think of it you are not exposed to the same vacillation of opinion.⁷⁷

Hazlitt defines a 'true' and 'false' patriotism which accords with the theoretical basis for the construction of Coleridge's "true critic[ism]". The insight of the genuine patriot leads him to be inspired by the monument to national achievement which Shakespeare and Milton are shown to provide.

Sir, if the opposing character of character between individuals of different nations is that which allows every one the most strongly to his own country ... if to look up with heartfelt admiration to the great names, whether heroes of ages, which England has produced, and to be unwilling that the country which gave birth to Shakespeare and Milton should ever be enslaved by a mean and servile foe; if to love its glory—that virtue, that integrity, that genius, which have distinguished it from all others, and in which its true greatness consists,—is to love one's country, there are few persons who have a better right to than myself (on the score of sincerity) to offer the kind of advice which is the subject of the following letter however weak or defective it may be found.⁷⁸

In this text, Shakespeare and Milton are represented as offering a form of a nationally productive protection, something which is essentially available to all who wish to resist the "servile foe". This engaging isolationism is to be seen as a process in which ever citizen may theoretically participate. The strength of the symbolic investment which Hazlitt projects in his image of Shakespeare and Milton, clearly implies a problematical relationship with a representation of Shakespeare's more

unfamiliar contemporaries. It is perhaps such a resistance to 'anti-English forces' which the strength and energy of the "partisan" is also employed to illustrate. Hazlitt tells us,

I have in my life known few thorough partisans; ... I conceive, however, that the honestest and strongest - minded men have been so."

The Legitimation of Hierarchy

In their reading of Shakespeare, all three critics under discussion may be seen to appropriate a motif of natural order as a symbolic identification with an established socio-cultural hierarchy. The naturalisation of social division clearly concerns Roger Sales in his discussion of nineteenth-century romanticisms. Don Wayne's analysis of this process at work within the Elizabethan poetic text also offers a valid and provocative insight into this issue.

In his book, *PENSHURST, The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History*, Wayne discusses the naturalisation of division in terms of the legitimisation of the Sidneys' wealth and power. Jonson's conceptualisation of 'nature as order' within his poem *Penshurst* has an ideological basis: "nature" and "culture" become interdependent reflections of an essential and meritocratic social hierarchy. Wayne views a representation of the Aristocrats as "providential administrators of 'Nature'",¹⁰⁰ a relationship between nature and the seat of power relations, which, when generalised to encompass the more 'mundane social relationships', acts as a re-affirmation of the status-quo.

The garden was primarily the operator of a transformation and a transvaluation, of the notion of nobility from a concept based on hereditary descent and wealth the one based on natural virtue.

(*Penshurst*, p.118)

"Excess" is presented as outside of nature.¹⁰¹ The social and intellectual legitimisation of the "ward/benefactor relationship" which Don Wayne describes, may be seen to offer a comparative insight into the mechanics of the process of pastoralisation: most particularly with regard to Coleridge's criticism. The fruitful harmonious integration of critical-textual, and Shakespearean-textual authority, engenders, perhaps, Empson's critical "heroism" in the pilgrim's confrontation with structures of authority which he will disclose and explain for us.¹⁰² As we have seen, this is the mantle assumed by the "true critic".

The "transvaluation of the notion of nobility", when viewed in relation to the revaluation of the Renaissance Dramatists in the early nineteenth century, is an appreciation of their valuable legacy in "hereditary descent". It is in this sense, that we may view the 'hidden' dramatists as a common ancestry. Empson's "machinery for imposing the social and metaphysical ideas upon which pastoralism depends"¹⁰³ involves an uneasy "transvaluation"¹⁰⁴ in Hazlitt's criticism. For Hazlitt, it is the concept of heredity itself which endows our birthright of a Shakespearean inheritance with its fundamental basis in "natural virtue". Our understanding of the advantages of "the age" is the specific product of the critic's admired "consistency of opinion".¹⁰⁵ Hazlitt avoids the damaging prospects of "vacillation"¹⁰⁶ in relation to his own argument, by invoking the seductive notion of Wayne's "natural virtue" as encapsulated in the openly accessible, timeless and inviolate process of chronological progression.

The following quotation, from H.C. Robinson's account of Charles Lamb's reaction to Coleridge's lectures, neatly illustrates the extent to which the idea of Shakespeare's "natural virtue" is an unstable concept. Robinson disrupts the

mythological-nationalism which Coleridge's Shakespeare personifies. Lamb defends Coleridge's reading by means of a curious and subtle reference to a legitimate Shakespearean canon, which chooses to displace plays which present a problem for the particular "future determination"¹⁰⁷ which the critics aim to project. In his observations on *Iago* and *Richard III*, Lamb appears to claim fuel for his view by revealing a Shakespearean sub-text of 'agreement'. This takes the form, almost, of a metaphysical conceit on Shakespeare's part, which the intelligent and morally sensitive critic is able to experience and unravel for his audience.

C.L. [Charles Lamb] spoke well about Shakespeare. I had objected to Coleridge's assertion that Shakespeare became everything except the vicious ... C.L. justified Coleridge's remark by saying ... that Shakespeare never gives truly odious and detestable characters. He always mingles strokes of nature and humanity in his pictures. I adduced the king in *Hamlet* as altogether mean. He allowed this to be the worst of Shakespeare's characters. He has not another like it. I cited *Lady Macbeth*. I think this is one of Shakespeare's worst characters, said Lamb. It is at the same time inconsistent with itself. Her sleep-walking does not suit such a hardened being. -(It however occurs to me that this sleep-walking is perhaps the vindication of Shakespeare in his portraiture of the character, as it certainly is his excellence that he does not create monsters, but always saves the honour of human nature, if I may use such an expression. So in this, while the voluntary actions and sentiments of *Lady M.* are inhuman, her involuntary nature rises against her habitual feelings springing out of depraved passions, and in her sleep she shews to be a woman, while in waking she is a monster.) I then referred to the bastard in *Lear*, but Lamb considers his character as vindicated by the provocation arising out of his illegitimacy. And L. mentioned as admirable illustrations of the skill with which Shakespeare could make his worst characters interesting, *Iago* and *Richard III*. I noticed *King John* and *Lewis*, as if Shakespeare meant like a *Jacobin* to shew how base and vile kings are; L. did not remark on this, but said *King John* is one of the plays he likes the least. He praised on the contrary *Richard II*.

(Vol. II, pp. 171-2)

The issue of a naturally given hierarchy of essential worth within the recovery of interest in Renaissance texts, benefits from a wider cultural appreciation of the

basis for such an approach. Raymond Williams provides a powerful reading of the historical growth of an established artistic division in his book, *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. Williams discusses the creative artist's increasing belief in his mandate to instruct an uninitiated audience, in the early nineteenth century. This is based upon an ideological aim to maintain a standard of artistic purity.

In the introduction to his work, Williams discusses the effects of the Industrial Revolution in the concretization of hierarchial "social divisions" (inherent in the introduction of what he considers to be the indefinite word "class") and also reflected in the narrowing of the definition of what constitutes art. "Industry", "Democracy" and "Art" are terms which Williams discusses as achieving their status as 'institutions' from 'attributes'.

Artist had meant a skilled person, as had *artisan*; but *artist* now referred to these selected skills alone ... *Art* came to stand for a special kind of truth, 'imaginative truth', and an *artist* for a special kind of person ... the same separation as had grown up between artist and artisan grew up between *artist* and *craftsman*. *Genius*, from meaning a 'characteristic disposition', came to mean 'exalted ability', and a distinction was made between it and talent ... these changes, which belong in time to the period of the other changes discussed, form a record of remarkable change in the ideas of the nature and purpose of art, and its relationship to other human activities, and society as a whole.¹⁰⁸

Such an ordering principle when applied to the art of criticism may be seen as constructing a demarcation of ideas: a naturalisation of division of the sort discussed in Wayne's '*Penshurst*'. The 'indefinable' is set within a framework of a normative constitutionalised comprehension: a blueprint for the hierarchical structuring of values. This classification and standardisation of hierarchical artistic status endows the nineteenth-century critics with a legitimate platform from which to exercise their creative discriminatory readings of the Renaissance dramatists. These

writers are to be 'streamed' in terms of their value to us. A critical 'metonymy' is perhaps, Empson's "machinery" which precipitates the institutionalisation of the critics' judgements 'into' and 'as' the national consciousness.¹⁰⁹

The distinction between genius and talent which Williams describes appears to be constituent within the nineteenth-century critics' 'hierarchy of value' with regard to Renaissance texts. This concept is most obviously expressed in Hazlitt's presentation of a 'league table' as a guide to present and future interest in the plays.

The names of Ben Jonson, for instance, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, are almost, though not quite, as familiar to us as that of Shakespeare, and their works still keep regular possession of the stage. Another set of writers included in the same general period (the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth-century) who are next in equal or sometimes superior to those in power, but whose names are now little known, and their writings nearly obsolete, are Lyly, Marlowe, Marston, Chapman, Middleton and Rowley, Heywood, Webster, Decker and Ford. (p.30)

Hazlitt's classification introduces a clearly recognisable standard of success. In relation to his criticism of Marlowe's plays, this means of presenting a text to its audience claims to reach beyond what the critic views as a controversy of silence: a silence imposed by the playwright himself in relation to his 'burning thoughts'. Such a display of unrest is unhelpful in predicting Marlowe's long-standing value for us, and obscures our critical appreciation of the nature of his essential genius.

Marlowe is a name that stands high, almost first in this list of dramatic worthies. He was a little before Shakespeare's time, and has a marked character both from him and the rest. There is a lust for power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by anything but its own energies. His thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames; or throwing out black smoke and mists that hide the dawn of genius, or like a poisoned mineral corrode the heart. ... Faustus himself is a rude sketch, but a gigantic one. This character may be considered as a personification of the pride of will and eagerness of curiosity, sublimed beyond the reach of fear and remorse. (p.43)

Hazlitt's representation of Marlowe is inherently paradoxical, invoking the resources of an obscurantist pastoral "sublim[ation]" in order to evade the critical consequences of the contradictions which he sets before his audience. Initially, the critic employs Marlowe as an illustration of the outer edge of the "truly English" energy, which his series of lectures intend to rescue for a modern audience. The qualities which Hazlitt views as characteristic of the dramatist, nevertheless, clearly endanger the prophetic vision of a progressive harmonious 'common cause'. As we have seen, Hazlitt's recovery of the Renaissance Dramatists is an attempt to re-route a prejudicial reading of these writers which has its source in "a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilisation [constructed] upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times" (p.3). The critic attempts to revoke the "sweeping sentence of barbarism and ignorance [which we pronounce] on our ancestry backwards" (p.3). On one level, then, the critic reveals an awareness of Bennett's concept of "fixing texts in the present by means of the future determination of their pasts" (see p.18 of this chapter). With reference to his own criticism, however, the process of recovering texts as an ideological re-positioning of their 'meanings' is clearly evaded. Hazlitt claims to restore the original voices to the "poor, poor dumb names" (p.2). Their silence has rendered them foreign to us. Curiously, the critic invokes a misreading of Shakespeare in order to illustrate the extent to which other Renaissance writers have hitherto been lost to us within our own canonical heritage.

We begin to imagine that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter ... "Think", says Shakespeare, the prompter of good and true feelings, "there's livers out of Britain". (p.5)

In order to restrain his uneasiness in relation to Marlowe's resistance to the

order he is envisaged to uphold, Hazlitt invests his opening statements on the playwright with a dual element of restriction. Firstly, Marlowe contains himself: the passage clearly intimates that the "bickering flames" are a wholly internal manifestation. In this way, the "poisoned minerals which corrode [Marlowe's] heart" alert us to his status as a glorious, if fractured, transhistorical subject, whilst the "corrod[ing]" power remains firmly sealed within his individual rendition of it. This necessarily guards against the outcome of its "future determination".¹¹⁰ This reading of Marlowe offers a similar, but rather more subtle reflection of the strategy which Hazlitt employs in recovering Beaumont and Fletcher for us. As we have seen, the critic differentiates between what he sees as the "men" as transhistorical subjects, and the provocative and thankfully transient "character of their minds". In the above passage on Marlowe, Hazlitt ensures that the playwright's "hunger and thirst after unrighteousness" is contained within its "own energies", obscuring his "dawn of genius" alone. In so doing, the critic protects the desired outcome of his golden-age vision of a seventeenth-century dramatic movement. Shakespeare is offered a further level of protection, of course, in being distanced from Marlowe at the outset of the passage.

This distinctive representation of Marlowe as a provocative individual, however, retains its power as an arbitrary and unrestrained force which maintains its dis-integrative potential with regard to the critic's restorative vision. It is Marlowe 'himself' then, rather than the irrecoverable "character of [his] mind" who is portrayed as something which we cannot expect to recover. Paradoxically, it is Hazlitt's reading of *Dr Faustus* which is employed to enact the process of domestication which attempts to return the playwright to a version of the "mere oblivion" from which he has purportedly been rescued. Faustus, a "rude sketch, but

a gigantic one ... sublimed beyond the reach of fear and remorse" (p.43) is elevated to the status of essential humanist transcendent subject. He therefore "sublim[ates]" and eclipses the disruptive source which Hazlitt sets out as a focus of Faustus' creator: a disruption which the tragic genre itself may address and overcome.

Hazlitt's Marlowe, nevertheless, is recovered in order to illustrate a version of seventeenth-century society which is wholly akin to the claims which the critic makes for the "prodigious strength and energy" (p.2) which motivated the Renaissance writers.

I cannot find, in Marlowe's play, any proofs of atheism or impiety attributed to him, unless the belief in witchcraft and the Devil can be regarded as such; and at the time he wrote, not to have believed in both would have been construed into the rankest atheism and irreligion. There is a delight, as Mr Lamb says, in "dallying with interdicted subjects", but that does not, by any means, imply either a practical or speculative disbelief in them. (p.49)

This passage may be seen to contradict his opening statements on the playwright. The issue of "impiety" is very carefully presented to us with reference to an implied moral code which Marlowe, and the shadowy presences of his contemporaries, are 'consciously' upholding and working within. In this sense then, they are to be seen as resisting a form of intellectual confinement, whilst remaining loyal to the institutions which permit them a form of ambassadorial authority.

The critic rejects any potential reading of Marlowe which views him as exercising "speculative disbelief". Such a 'mis-representation' of Marlowe's patriotism is inherently detrimental to the harmonious vision of the "AGE of ELIZABETH". The concept of control is presented as beneath the level of debate: it is unconscious. The Renaissance writers police their own texts as a function of their construction. In this way, they accord with the "consistency" which Hazlitt identifies

in "sympathising beforehand".¹¹¹ Marlowe, then, assumes his uneasy place as "almost first in the list of dramatic worthies" as he ensures that "THE AGE of ELIZABETH ... never ... looked more like itself" (p.1).

Hazlitt makes a perfunctory attempt to re-historicise Marlowe in this passage, in order to gain evidence for his attempt to present the dramatist as essentially conformist. The observation of "impiety" becomes transposed within a past belief in the devil's power to disrupt the harmonious social and spiritual order. Hazlitt presents Marlowe as upholding this sense of order by illustrating the consequences of dissent in *Dr Faustus*. It is at this point that the critic's anxiety in sustaining such a version of Marlowe is most clearly manifest, as Marlowe's vision of eternal torment clearly questions the concept of the establishment institutions of 'heaven and hell' as distinctly polarised, in terms of embodying the essence of good and evil. Marlowe's "speculative disbelief" is domesticated by being confirmed as the focus of a benign credulity: "not to have believed in both [witchcraft and the devil] would have been construed as the rankest atheism and irreligion" (p.49). This reading of *Dr Faustus* then, ultimately acts as a destabilising influence in relation to Hazlitt's opening hypothesis of the seventeenth-century dramatists embodying the optimum representation of English intellectual experience. These writers, we recall, "were not the spoilt children of affectation and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but natural grace, and heartfelt, unobtrusive delicacy" (p.2). The anti-intellectual credulity with which Hazlitt invests Marlowe however, is employed to underline the critic's version of an "unobtrusive delicacy" foregrounding the play's construction. Any dispute over such a reading is merely the outcome of a modern decline in such belief: almost a confession by such unbelieving readers as to the spiritual distance which has opened

up between them and the 'text itself'.

Jonathan Bate quotes Hazlitt's essay *On Classical Education* as offering an insight into the nineteenth-century critic's theory of conceptual "disinterestedness". Hazlitt discusses his ideas in his essay *An Argument in Defence of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*. This text aims to offer an essential humanist exposure of the order implicit in our instinctive lack of self-interest. This quality allows us to consider the concerns of others, and even allows us to elevate them above our own.¹¹² Bate prefaces his quotation, however, with a comment which may be viewed as a generalisation of Hazlitt's views on the subject of "Classical learning", with regard to his Shakespearean criticism. Bate describes Hazlitt's understanding of the term 'classical' as a convergent appraisal of native and "ancient" texts.

The study of classical literature—Keats and Hazlitt would both have thought of the English classics as well as the ancients—is seen as the fundamental 'discipline of humanity': 'It gives men liberal views; it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow, and fleeting objects'.¹¹³

Although he rightly points out in this quotation, Hazlitt's intention to represent 'essential' values, Bate endows the nineteenth-century critic with a single-mindedness which may be seen to belie Hazlitt's contrary and paradoxical relationship with "the ancients". In the series of lectures under discussion, Hazlitt clearly indicates that the issue of the retrieval of native texts is inextricably bound up with the active process of "future determination".¹¹⁴ It is for this reason, then, in a series of lectures which intend to promote "forgotten" Renaissance texts that the critic attempts to isolate "The Greek and Roman Classics" from the "whole host of writers of our own who are suffered to moulder on ... [our] shelves". Indeed, Hazlitt explains that "one cause

... as having contributed to the long continued neglect of our earlier writers, lies in the very nature of our academic institutions".¹¹⁵ By adhering to wholly classical models, these institutions "unavoidably neutralise ... a taste for the productions of native genius". The result is a continuous disinheritance of the earlier writers in a dual sense. The "old dramatists" are prevented from perpetuating their "energies" which personify their Englishness, and forthcoming generations are forced to engage in the difficult process of recovering it, and the sense of continuity, for themselves.

The Greek and Roman classics are a sort of privileged text-books, the standing order of the day, in a University education, and leave little leisure for a competent acquaintance with, or due admiration of, a whole host of able writers of our own, who are suffered to moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form's sake, and to save the national character. (p.8)

In Hazlitt's comments on Marlowe's *Edward II*, a vague indication of such a convergence as Bate describes may indeed be visible. The context within which this potential marriage of English and anti-English literary tradition appears, however, is itself the focus and terms of a contradiction in Hazlitt's writing. This, as I shall proceed to argue, is a contradiction which is initially constructed as a critical response to a reading of Marlowe which begins to undermine Hazlitt's central thesis. The critic argues, we recall, for the restoration of an untapped dramatic representation of nationalism whose merit lies partly in its formal generic restraint.

Hazlitt's reading of *Edward II* opens with the claim that it is, "according to the modern standard of composition, Marlowe's best play" (p.54). The qualities which reflect this superiority are prefaced in the Introductory Lecture, and this play is seen to subscribe, on one level, to the myth of a legitimate organic disunity which identifies the raw talent inherent in the British as a race. Such a critical perspective

permits Hazlitt his selective praise of Renaissance drama, and also underpins Lamb's outline of the function of the "imperfect intellect".¹¹⁶ The resulting vision of a Marlovian intellectual limitation is something which the critic arguably addresses in his attempt to offer a vague intimation of *Edward II*'s literary-historical sources. This critique, however, is fraught with contradictions, as it succeeds in appropriating the comparative classical reference point which differentiates English creative energy from the "foreign frippery" (p.2) of continental stylistic influence.

Edward II. is according to the modern standard of composition, Marlowe's best play. It is written with few offenses against the common rules, and in a succession of smooth and flowing lines. The poet, however, succeeds less in the voluptuous and effeminate descriptions which he here attempts, than in the more dreadful and violent bursts of passion. (p.54)

Hazlitt evades the problematical outcome of his comments on *Dr Faustus* by revealing the dual attributes of a stout native "passion" and the less overt but nevertheless visible element of a controlled traditionalism whose "common rules" have no firmly designated base as "truly English" (p.2). In a sense, then, Hazlitt presents his evidence for a reappraisal of forgotten genius, within preconceived "rules" of evaluation. These "rules", he tells us in his Introduction are the means by which the "Greeks and Romans" continue to enjoy an elitist, "privileged" position. This is a problem which Marlowe, paradoxically, has been revived in order to offset.

Marlowe is received into the canon of legitimate English drama by means of a further limitation of his propensity towards a critically unproductive "impiety". This domestication is achieved by means of a brief and, delicate displacement of a Shakespearean text, in favour of Marlowe's play. The initial reference to the death of Edward II is indeed surprising. The later Victorian critic, J.A. Symonds, for example, refuses to give an analysis of the play, as this would involve a critical

flirting with impropriety. Hazlitt represents Edward in terms of a "heart breaking distress" (p.55). The focus of this reading indicates that a hierarchy of transcendence is the ultimate scale which classifies Renaissance drama in terms of its value for a contemporary audience. In the comparison with Shakespeare's play, nevertheless, Hazlitt appears to recognise that the version of Shakespearean omnipotence to which he subscribes throughout his lectures, actually imposes a further silence upon the "poor, poor dumb names" he aims to resurrect. In an attempt to counter this problem, the critic bids to sustain a dual perception of Shakespeare as the predominant national symbol, whilst furthering the cause of writers such as Marlowe. Marlowe is shown to hold a legitimate claim to his place in the literary-historical canon, as a member of, Shakespeare's supporting cast. Paradoxically, the merit which wins him this place is revealed as a potential equality with Shakespeare, which, in fact, he is unable to sustain. The ending of *Edward II* takes precedence over the ending of *Richard II*, yet the nature of this superiority does not contradict what we have come to view as Shakespeare's irreproachable achievement and insight. *Edward II* supersedes *Richard II* in being more 'Shakespeare-like' than Shakespeare's own play. With an admirable deftness this comparison evades a recognition of the anti-monarchical issues raised in both plays.

Edward II is drawn with historic truth, but without much dramatic effect. The management of the plot is feeble and desultory; little interest is excited in the various turns of fate; the characters are too worthless, have too little energy, and their punishment is, in general, too well deserved, to excite our commiseration; so that this play will bear, on the whole, but a distant comparison with Shakespeare's *Richard II* in conduct, power, or effect. But the death of Edward II, in Marlowe's tragedy, is certainly superior to that of Shakespeare's king; and in heart-breaking distress, and the sense of human weakness, claiming pity from utter helplessness and conscious misery, is not surpassed by any writer whatever. (pp.54-55)

Hazlitt tells us that it is the "heart-breaking distress" which renders the death of Edward II "superior" to the death of Richard II. It seems possible to hypothesise that the critic's dislike of Shakespeare's conclusion is the result of the play's resistance to the essential humanist basis for the mythologisation of Shakespeare's plays in general. Curiously, Hazlitt makes no reference to the "historic truth" of Shakespeare's play, especially in relation to the anti-monarchical threat which Elizabeth perceived in the play's performance as part of the Essex rebellion.

In *Richard II*, there is no essential mystery when the machinery of power is exposed. Bolingbroke succeeds Richard through a process of substitution. The nature of this substitution invokes a subversive questioning of the institution of monarchy. The monarch's identity is pared from Richard and assumed by Bolingbroke, whose rise to power disrupts any vision of harmonious restitution on several levels. In ascending to power, Bolingbroke has become desensitised to the controlling mystery of kingship itself but his illness represents a residual awareness of its constraints. He enacts a process of demystification for his audience. Once he has assumed the seat of power, he abdicates and refuses it. This results, to borrow Jonathan Dollimore's phrase, in "[an] effective undermining of the very basis of power itself".¹¹⁷

The radical concerns which Shakespeare represents in *Richard II* are domesticated in Hazlitt's text by means of a critical comparison with Marlowe's play. The faults of the one are cancelled out by the strengths of the other. Their symbolic union is a form of harmonious integration which supersedes the content of both works. *Edward II* is "superior" to Shakespeare's play only in its ending, whilst the body of the Shakespearean text eclipses the "effeminate" (p.54) rendition of

Marlowe's king. The plays are juxtaposed as a harmonious integration of the vigour and lack of sophistication which Hazlitt tells us constitute a powerful element in his pastoral vision of seventeenth-century England (p.2). The evasion upon which this process of pastoralisation is based, however, necessarily destabilises the vision it is engineered to uphold. The section from Marlowe's play which Hazlitt quotes in order to illustrate its transcendent qualities, is Edward's rendition of his endurance of prison conditions and his past glories.¹¹⁴ This passage, however, is neatly decontextualised, distanced from its textual proximity to Matrevis and Gurney's grisly account of the tools for Edward's murder. Similarly, the critic avoids a representation within his own text of the overtly homosexual implications of both the means and manner of the death, which follows closely upon the quotation which he selects. The "death of *Edward II*" is thus systematically excised from Marlowe's play.

This representation of a brief Marlovian ascendance may also be seen, ultimately, as an attempt to justify the playwright's place as "almost first in the list of dramatic worthies" (p.43), a place which is threatened in the critic's previous comments on *Lust's Dominion, Or The Lascivious Queen*.

The continual repetition of plain practical villainy and undigested horrors disgusts the sense and blunts the interest. The mind is hardened into obduracy, not melted into sympathy, by such barefaced and barbarous cruelty. Eleazar, the Moor, is such another character as Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, and this play might be set down without injustice as a "pue-fellow" to that. I should think Marlowe has a much fairer claim to be the author of *Titus Andronicus* than Shakespeare, at least from the internal evidence; and the argument of Schlegel, that it must have been Shakespeare's because there was no one else capable of producing either its faults or beauties, fails in each particular. (p.50)

In the above quotation, Marlowe becomes the repository, nevertheless, for a text

which disrupts the critic's vision of Shakespeare as the symbolic apex of values which foreground the poetic genre. In this sense, then, Hazlitt considers Schlegel's attempt to mythologise the extremities displayed within *Titus Andronicus* inappropriate, and even detrimental to the vision of Shakespeare which both writers aim to uphold.

Hazlitt's essay 'On Court-Influence' offers some provocative insights into the critic's opinions on contemporary social hierarchies. His account of meritocratic principles as the ideological basis for the construction of socio-political 'rank and level' is something which he aims to reveal in his seventeenth-century dramatic criticism. The essay opens out with the indication that "private society" operates upon egalitarian principles which recognise essential merit, independent of social background.

In the mixed intercourse of private society every one finds his level, in proportion as he can contribute to its amusement or information. It is even more so in the general intercourse of the world, where a poet and a man of genius (if extrinsic circumstances make any difference) is as much courted and run after for being a ploughman, as for being a peer of the realm. Burns, had he been living, would have started fair with Lord Byron in the race of popularity, and would not have lost it.¹²⁹

Jonathan Bate implies a radical impetus in Hazlitt's attempt to distinguish "between an 'aristocracy of rank' and an 'aristocracy of letters'".

His *Table talk* essay 'On The Aristocracy Of Letters' attacks the idea that there is any connection between the social and the literary elite, between political and artistic authorities. ... The allusion to Thomson ... makes it clear that Hazlitt's 'aristocrats' are the great writers of the past.¹³⁰

This distinction, for Bate, is the outcome of Hazlitt's response to what he views as a progressively reactionary, "Burk[ian]" impulse in Coleridge's writing.

On the one hand, there was a revolutionary impulse behind most of their best writings; the quest for originality, the desire to throw off the burden of tradition, was fundamentally radical.

On the other hand, they were all obsessed with literary tradition, with entering into a line of descent that ran from Chaucer to Spenser to Shakespeare to Milton. Thus, at the very time Wordsworth and Coleridge were supporting the French Revolution, their literary position was a version of the politics of Burke, the leading spokesman against the Revolution.¹²¹

Hazlitt's relationship with this "line of descent" which Bate describes may be arguably viewed as distinctly more problematical than the critic appears to acknowledge at this point in his narrative. What Bate appears to be pinpointing is the process of substitution which we see Hazlitt enact in his setting the ending of *Edward II* over *Richard II*. The nature of the substitution of a superior "authority of letters" over a historically specific "authority of rank" places Hazlitt firmly within the "obsess[ion] with literary tradition" which Bate describes Hazlitt as attempting to address and qualify.

Hazlitt's account of his "list of dramatic worthies" is built on the basis of an internalised adjudication of the writers' merits, with Marlowe "almost first" (p.43). It is an overtly hierarchical process. This list reveals the extent to which the inherent conservatism of an "authority of rank" is implicit in any example of a canonical "future determination"¹²² which he would wish to become involved in constructing.

In the essay 'On Court Influence', Hazlitt rails against the institution of kingship: "it is infected with the breath of flatterers; and the thoughts of kings. Let us see how its influence descends:—from the king to the people, to his ministers first".¹²³ At this point, then, Hazlitt may appear to offer a version of the nature of power-relations which recalls, in part, the anti-monarchical representations of Tourneur and Beaumont and Fletcher. The radical focus of this statement is tempered, however, by the critic's belief in our national ability to disassociate

ourselves from the issue of institutionalised injustice. Hazlitt's "Dissenter" embodies an inherent national virtue which will overcome such temporal expressions of social disorder.

[The Dissenter] speaks his mind bluntly and honestly, therefore he is a conspirator against the state. On the contrary, the different sects in this country are, or have been, the, steadiest supporters of its liberties and laws: they are checks and barriers against the insidious or avowed encroachments of arbitrary power, as effectual and indispensable as any others in the constitution: they are depositaries of a principle as sacred and somewhat rarer than a devotion to Court-influence—we mean the love of truth.¹²⁴

It is the Dissenter's influential 'pre-social' voice which Hazlitt views as becoming increasingly devalued. What he may be seen to offer an audience in the recovery of non-Shakespearean Renaissance dramatic texts, is a construction of an alternative hierarchy which embodies these essentially democratic and decorous values.

The scepticism which deflects the dissenting voice from the contemplation of its own moral courage is reflected in Hazlitt's critique of *Edward II* and *Dr Faustus*. A maladaptive product of an undoubted sincerity, such scepticism becomes the ultimate "refuge" of Hazlitt's abstraction of the "unhallowed ... energy" (p.43) he views in Marlowe's writings.

It is the fault of sectarianism that it tends to scepticism; and so relaxes the springs of moral courage and patience into levity and indifference. The prospect of future rewards and punishments is a useful set-off against the immediate distribution of places and pensions; the anticipations of faith call off our attention from the grosser illusions of sense. It is a pity that this character has worn itself out; that that pulse of thought and feeling has ceased almost to beat in the heart of a nation, who, if not remarkable for sincerity and plain downright well-meaning, are remarkable for nothing.¹²⁵

The nature of the "future rewards and punishments" which Hazlitt describes in this passage are tantalisingly opaque. Nevertheless, they imply an approval of the

strategy which he employs in promoting the necessity of a national re-appraisal of writers 'left mouldering on our shelves' (p.8). The "prospect" of these "future rewards and punishments" in the political essay is represented in a similar transcendent garb to the energetic nationalism which is the implied "future determination" of the particular recovery in question. It may seem more profitable for us, in the short term, to maintain our appreciation solely of classical texts, as regards the "immediate distribution of places and pensions".¹²⁷ The reinvigorating effect of the process of reviving "lost" dramas may not bring rewards in the guise of such "immediate distributions". It becomes a question of trusting the ideological basis for the process of recovery itself. In order to engender support for this trust, the critic appropriates the conceptual institution of the "anticipations of faith [in order to] call off our attention from the grosser illusions of sense".¹²⁸ In the political essay, the result of such faith is embodied in the final home of the "true priest",¹²⁹ who bears more than a passing resemblance to the "true critic". The former presents us with a progressive single-minded form of self-recognition, built upon libertarian principles which suggest a subtle focus of nationalism. The transcendent platform upon which such a recognition is based, however, suggests that it is to be a wholly passive experience for the reader.

Their sympathy was not with the oppressors, but with the oppressed. They cherished in their thoughts—and wished to transmit to their posterity—those rights and privileges for asserting which their ancestors had bled on scaffolds, or had pined in dungeons, or in foreign climes. Their creed too was, 'Glory to God, peace on earth, good will to man'. ... This belief they had, that looks at something out of itself, fixed as the stars, deep as the firmament, that makes of its own heart an altar to truth, a place of worship for what is right ... It grew with their growth, it does not wither in their decay. It lives when the almond-tree flourishes, and is not bowed, down with the tottering knees. It glimmers with the last feeble eyesight,

smiles in the faded cheek like infancy, and lights a path before them to the grave!—this is better than the life of a whirligig Court poet.¹³⁰

Hazlitt's Dissenter is an emasculated and a-historical malcontented figure. He is proclaimed as an essential humanist subject, whose role is to map out "a place of worship for what is right".¹³¹ This illustration, then, gives a wider frame of reference to the discussion of the critic's underlying concerns in the recovery of interest in Renaissance drama. Although he offers a context in the Political Essay, wherein anti-establishment feeling may be legitimately displayed, it is the nature of this concept of 'establishment' which requires particular attention. What Hazlitt is attempting to reingender is a sense of traditional English values which displace the issues upon which the concept of "dissent" is based. The dissenting voice becomes a legitimate, but necessarily transitory, response to a historically specific, and therefore wholly irrevocable situation. His most potent and worthwhile achievement is the personification of an essential pre-social truth in "look[ing] at something out of [him]self."¹³² The concept of tradition is reflected as a process which is unchanging: whose values are irreproachable and immovable. The "encroachments of arbitrary power"¹³³ which the Dissenter rails against, are the terms in which the perceived threat to this tradition are articulated. The Dissenter and the "true Priest" combine to enact Roger Sales' description of pastoral as 'retrieval in death'.¹³⁴ By implication, then, the issue of monarchy itself becomes abstracted: placed in relation to "the firmament" as a man-made, and therefore essentially mutable institution.¹³⁵

Hazlitt's rescue and rehabilitation of Renaissance drama accords, in a sense, with what he views as the natural "poetic" rather than the artificial "historical" template for the reorganisation of the canon of seventeenth-century dramatic

literature. The benefits of an essential as opposed to a material means of cataloguing events are laid out, in the Introductory lecture in the series "Lectures On The English Poets".

If history is a grave study, poetry may be said to be a graver: its materials lie deeper, and are spread wider. History treats, for the most part, of the cumbrous and unwieldy masses of things, the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed, under the heads of intrigue or war, in different states, and from century to century: but there is no thought or feeling that can have entered into the mind of man, which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not a fit subject for poetry. It is not a branch of authorship: it is "the stuff of which our life is made". The rest is "mere oblivion", a dead letter: for all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it.¹⁸

Middleton's Paradoxical Excess.

Hazlitt concludes his second lecture with comments on Middleton and Rowley. In their "joint pieces" the writers are represented as achieving a form of harmonious integration, which their works are not seen to exhibit in isolation. This co-operation emphasises the critic's central thesis of contemporary individuals who commune to uphold "the genius of Great Britain" (p.1). There is a strong sense in which this reading is to be seen as a conscious effort on the part of the dramatists themselves. They combine to juxtapose and cancel out each other's "paradoxical excess[es]". This label is clearly a form of recognition, on Hazlitt's part, of an instability in his reading of Middleton and Rowley. The focus of this instability suggests a conflict. What we are privy to is a refusal of the national pastoral vision towards which the process of recovery is reaching. The writers themselves are shown to accept responsibility for the conflict which gives rise to the paradox in Hazlitt's text. Middleton and Rowley are presented as joining forces in order to enact a restorative evasion of issues within

their own texts which disrupt Hazlitt's version of seventeenth-century English drama.

The names of Middleton and Rowley, with which I shall conclude this lecture, generally appear together as two writers who frequently combined their talents in the production of joint pieces. Middleton (judging from their separate works) was the "more potent spirit" of the two; but they were neither of them equal to some others. Rowley appears to have excelled in describing a certain amiable quietness of disposition and disinterested tone of morality, carried almost to a paradoxical excess, as in his *Fair Quarrel* and in the comedy of *A Woman Never Vexed* ... Middleton's style was not marked by any peculiar quality of his own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences of his contemporaries. (p.60)

Middleton and Rowley's co-written plays are presented as illustrating a similar evasive juxtaposition to that which we see earlier in the lecture, in relation to *Richard II* and *Edward II*.

Middleton's "potent spirit" is shown as tempered by Rowley's "amiable quietness". This quietness, nevertheless, becomes more problematical as the lecture progresses. Rowley may be seen to resist his role in the domestication of Middleton in this passage, owing to the contradictory nature of his own critical portrait. The image of Middleton as a dramatist who has been overlooked is particularly intriguing. We are to recognise Middleton's illustration of Hazlitt's comments on the Renaissance writers in general. His "potent spirit" justifies his place amongst the "bold vigorous race of thinkers, with prodigious strength, and energy" (p.2). Hazlitt's disapproval of Middleton, however, is best illustrated with reference to the contradiction upon which his version of recovery is based. Hazlitt's early account of a national dramatic vigour, we recall, closes with a list of attributes which reflect a distinctly uneasy co-existence with this disapproval of an individual part of dramatists. The writers retain in general a powerful sense of decorum which directs their energy

and are possessed of "none but natural grace, and heartfelt, unobtrusive delicacy" (p.2).

It is Hazlitt's inability to force Middleton into a conformity with his formulaic recovery of Renaissance drama, which results in the fragmentation of what we see as the writer's contribution to the reconstituted canon.

Middleton's style was not marked by any peculiar quality of his own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences of his contemporaries. (p.60)

Middleton is silenced on two levels. Firstly, he is denied a licence to practice within the range of the "attainments of different kinds [which] had the mark of their age and country upon [them]" (p.1). The discussion is restricted by means of a further process of fragmentation. As he is represented as offering no original additions to the common example of English energy, Middleton, like Marlowe before him, is partly re-classified as a "poor, poor dumb name" (p.2). He is interesting only as an example of a basic common-ground which the dramatists share. Middleton, then, arguably deconstructs Hazlitt's vision of the Renaissance dramatists as moral and patriotic examples for the revitalisation of equivalent emotions in a nineteenth-century audience.

It is worth noting that Hazlitt does not offer a reading of *The Changeling*, although this play had gone through a nineteenth-century edition before the present series of lectures in 1820.¹³⁷ It may be possible to offer some reasons for such an omission. Firstly, an analysis of the critic's comments on *Women Beware Women* may offer a useful insight into the nature of Hazlitt's disapproval of Middleton's plays.

In his *Women Beware Women* there is a rich marrowy vein of sentiment, with fine occasional insight into human nature, and

cool cutting irony of expression. He is lamentably deficient in the plot and *dénouement* of the story. It is like the rough draft of a tragedy, with a number of fine things thrown in, and the best made use of first; but it tends to no fixed goal, and the interest decreases, instead of increasing, as we read on, for want of previous arrangement and an eye to the whole. We have a fine study of heads, a piece of richly coloured drapery, "a foot, a hand, an eye from nature drawn, that's worth a history;" but the groups are ill-disposed, nor are the figures proportioned to each other or the size of the canvas. The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in the possession of excellent materials which he husbands very ill. (p.60)

Hazlitt's unease in relation to Middleton's dramas is a response, on the surface, to various anti-tragic impulses within the text. *Women Beware Women* "tends to no fixed goal". Hazlitt clearly recognises the lack of a teleological objective in this play, and this proves to be at odds with the sense of order he sees the dramatists uphold as one body. The critic articulates a disruptive arbitrariness in Middleton's play which opposes any vision of transcendent restitution. Hazlitt's views on tragedy are set out in the eighth lecture. He recognises "four sorts or schools of tragedy" (p.241) which appears to place his own comments as a prologue to an appraisal of the "four kinds of tragedy" described by Aristotle. Aristotle's fundamental outline of the acceptable tragic styles are listed as follows.

There is complex tragedy, which depends on reversal and discovery; tragedy of suffering, as in the various plays on Ajax and Ixion; tragedy of character ... and fourthly, spectacular tragedy, as in the Phorocides, in the *Prometheus*, and in plays with scenes in Hades. The poet should try to include all these elements, or, failing that, as many as possible of the most important, especially since it is the fashion nowadays to find fault with poets; just because there have been poets who excelled in the individual parts of tragedy, the critics expect that a single man should outdo each of them in his special kind of excellence.¹³⁸

Hazlitt appears to have Aristotle's text firmly in mind in his own outline of the

development of the tragedy or the genre.

There are four schools of tragedy with which I am acquainted. The first is the antique or classical. This consisted, I apprehend, in the introduction of persons on the stage, speaking, feeling and acting *according to nature*, that is, according to the impression of given circumstances on the passions and mind of man, in those circumstances, but limited by the physical conditions of time and place, as to its external form, and to a certain dignity of attitude and expression, selection in the figures, and unity in their grouping, as in a statue or bas-relief. The second is the Gothic or Romantic, or, as it might be called, the historical or poetical tragedy, and differs from the former only, in having a larger scope in the design and boldness of the execution; that is, it is the dramatic representation of nature and passion emancipated from the precise imitation of an actual event in place and time, from the same fastidiousness in the choice, of materials and with the license of the epic and fanciful form added to it, in the range of the subject and the decorations of language. This is particularly the style or school of Shakespeare and the best writers of the age of Elizabeth, and the one immediately following. (pp.241-2)

Middleton succeeds then, only when he may be represented as having internalised in his writing the particular values and emotions which constitute the ideal function of tragedy. The playwright is "lamentably deficient" in this process, which leads to the classification of the text in question as "the rough draft of a tragedy" (p.60). Against which standards is Hazlitt comparing Middleton's play? This declamation of Middleton's failure to achieve certain artistic goals implies a reference, perhaps, to Aristotelian principles. Hazlitt echoes Aristotle in order to justify the terms within which he designates Middleton's failure. His comments on Middleton invoke Aristotle's views on the means of discriminating between events which are to be seen to precipitate the outcome of a particular drama, and those events which have no direct bearing upon it. As we have seen, it is the "plot and *dénouement*" (p.60) of *Women Beware Women* with which Hazlitt finds fault. His

unease appears to be based upon what he sees as a breakdown of an essentialist moral framework in Middleton's play: the "fine occasional insight into human nature ... tends to no fixed goal" (p.60). By invoking Aristotle, then, the ideological implications of the critics' moral judgement becomes diffused within the objective ethos of the classical source.

Every tragedy has its complication and its denouement. The complication consists of the incidents lying outside the plot, and often some of those inside it, and the rest is the denouement. By complication I mean the part of the story from the beginning to the point immediately preceding the change to good or bad fortune; and by denouement the part from the onset of this change to the end.¹³⁹

If Hazlitt is invoking Classical guidelines, this, as I will go on to argue, involves him in a whole series of contradictions. The most obvious of these difficulties is Hazlitt's own fundamental rejection of the dehumanising aspect of Classical tragedy. The terms of the rejection suggest that the rigorous structure of such Classical texts do not easily promote a justification of the pastoral abstraction which Hazlitt aims to invoke within his own text. At this point, however, it is useful to apply his broad based comments on tragic representation to his specific analysis of Middleton's play. Such an investigation aims to elucidate the context of the critic's disapproval.

Hazlitt tells us that *Women Beware Women* "tends to no fixed goal ... for want of previous arrangement and an eye to the whole" (p.60). In this passage he echoes Aristotle's comments on artistic unity.

The plot of a play, being the representation of a single action, must present it as a unified whole; and its various incidents must be so arranged that if any one of them is differently placed or taken away the effect of wholeness will be seriously disrupted. For if the presence or absence of something makes no difference, it is no real part of the whole.¹⁴⁰

Hazlitt is clearly aiming to appropriate and abstract the authoritative judgemental sub-text which underpins this critical ethos. What appears to appeal to the nineteenth-century critic is the unquestioned concept of an elect critical authority which designates what is to constitute our idea of "the whole". Aristotle's passage implies that the judgement it reflects is the personification of a set of common shared beliefs amongst accountable, knowledgeable writers and theoreticians. This idea of an unwritten but universally acknowledged common standard has, as we have seen, enormous appeal for Hazlitt. It is the focus of his outrage in supporting writers who have been unjustifiably ignored. Hazlitt is the spokesman for the hierarchical list of dramatists which he draws up, rather than its creator. The concept of the critic having, to use Hazlitt's words, "an eye to the whole" (p.60) allows him to judge what "may be "taken away" without affecting what we see as the nature of "the whole". This may be seen as a subtle justification of what Lamb describes as the right to "expunge".¹⁴²

Hazlitt delivers an illustration of fragmentation and failure in his motif of the distorted portrait *Women Beware Women*. The terms of Middleton's failure are related to the critic's internalisation of what Aristotle sets out as a theoretical discussion of a breakdown of a previously documented set of scripted rules. Classical tragedy, for Hazlitt, offers an unacceptable limitation upon the "passions and the mind of man" through the restrictions of "the physical conditions of time and place" (p.242). Middleton is historically distant from this particular influence, yet he is seen as transgressing against the ethos of "romantic" liberation which his contemporaries are shown to be working within. Middleton's play "is the rough draft of a tragedy", and "tends to no fixed goal" (p.60) on several levels. Firstly, Hazlitt shies away from

the direct acknowledgement that the process of writing is not an innocent procedure. Joanna Baillie for example, sets out her position on the correct moral function of tragedy. The question of a set of unwritten rules which Middleton allegedly violates, suggests an evasion on Hazlitt's part of any acknowledgement that the process of recovery is ideologically based. The nature of these unwritten rules by which Hazlitt judges tragic success or failure are again circumscribed within a process of pastoralisation. He achieves this abstraction by means of an introduction of the fundamental role which nature plays in the process of tragic construction.

In his comments on the "schools of tragedy" (p.241) the critic employs a subtle re-assertion of the concept of an artistic hierarchy. What he describes as the "unity in [the] grouping" of classical "bas-relief" (p.242) is recognisably superior to the stylised and discordant artistry which Middleton purportedly projects. *Women Beware Women* is implicitly demonstrated as an unnatural text both in Hazlitt's precise comments on the play, and with reference to his wider appraisal of tragedy in the concluding lecture. Middleton's power, we recall, is "in the subject, not over it" (p.60). This suggests that his strength is limited to his right to exercise a creativity which is confined to a recognition of common features of the human condition. The playwright gives us, "a foot, a hand, an eye from Nature drawn", but "the groups are ill-disposed, nor are the figures proportioned to each other of the size of the canvas". Middleton is not invested with the essential insight which will endow him with the self-discipline to assert "power over the subject" (p.60). Middleton is shown as having no mastery over the issues he raises, and has, therefore, no authority over his material. Curiously, Middleton's excesses are described as as unnatural as Sidney's *The Countess Of Pembroke's Arcadia*, which is "spun with great labour out

of the author's brains, and hangs like a huge cobweb over the face of Nature!" (p.204). Unlike Sidney, in this work, Hazlitt evades the issue of the text as a material project.

Hazlitt's "Gothic or romantic" drama (p.242) refers to Shakespearean and Jacobean texts. The most striking feature of this type of tragedy is its encapsulation of the hitherto antihetical genres of poetry and history. As we have seen in another context, history and poetry are viewed by Hazlitt as wholly oppositional forces: the particular as compared to the universal. He describes the outcome of their coalition as an "emancipat[ion] from the precise imitation of an actual event in place and time" (p.242). Whilst he shows that poetry transcends the limitations of history in *Lectures On The English Poets*,¹⁴³ such a definitive reading is rendered deliberately ambiguous in the text under discussion. Classical tragedy retains its decorum as a result of our perception of its historical and geographical distance. A combination of history and poetry, then, permits English Renaissance drama a vestige of this decorum, and enables the texts to transcend their own history.

The critic's relationship with Classical theory involves him in a series of contradictions. He wishes to maintain a rigid and formalised conception of a tragic whole, but aims to transcend his own historical reference point. This also applies to his reading of Classical and Renaissance drama. Hazlitt endows English Renaissance drama with the "license of the epic" (p.242), an invocation of a form of liberty which he conceives of as structured and decorous. Aristotle, however, pointedly reflects upon the failure of tragedies which embody the elements of the epic genre. The introduction of a "multiplicity of stories" results in a process of fragmentation: a destruction of what we have come to recognise as "the proper development of

[tragedy's] various parts"¹⁴⁴. Hazlitt's reference to classical epic destabilises the vision of Classical unity which he wishes to retain, in part, for English Renaissance drama. To follow the Aristotelian connection, the multifarious qualities of classical epic detract from the underlying sense of tragic values which Hazlitt views as indissoluble. These values are central to what the nineteenth-century critic sees as the basis of all future development within the genre itself. What Hazlitt conceives of as the license of epic, permits him to invoke an vision of daring and experimentation for native English texts in the seventeenth century. The dramatists in question are to be read as both "fastidious" and "fanciful" (p.242). The abstraction which this reference involves is constructed with consummate skill; and its very diffuseness renders it doubly productive, as we are able to recognise this potentially disruptive epic element in writers who are not "of the best" (p.242). The extent of any disruption of Hazlitt's overall view of Renaissance drama is limited by means of a further reference to the sub-text of Aristotelian critical authority. What Hazlitt appears to imply in the later lecture is that his criticism of writers such as Middleton may itself be inappropriate, as the dramatist is reflecting excellence in "the individual parts of tragedy" which Aristotle describes.¹⁴⁵

Hazlitt rejects any possibility of artistic unity in *Women Beware Women* in his specific comments on the play, as this suggests a disruptive potential for his own conclusions on Renaissance drama. Middleton, after-all is not to be seen as one of the best examples of seventeenth-century English dramatists. The critic limits his long quotations to (II.1) of *Women Beware Women*, and he does so in order to illustrate the qualities of "internal sentiment" (p.60) which he sees as the play's positive achievement. The moral vision which Hazlitt draws from the play is based upon a reversal of fortune: the ruination of Leantio's legitimate expectations.

Leantio, Hazlitt tells us, "treads on the brink of perdition [by] musing on his own comforts, in being possessed of a beautiful and faithful wife" (p.62). The Renaissance writers in general are shown to be motivated by a moral vision which is pre-social, and this permits the critic to shy from particular socio-political issues raised within the texts themselves. As Hazlitt's subtle argument stands, an examination of such issues is less fundamentally valuable than the necessity of retaining an idea of a "fixed goal" and an "eye to the whole" (p.60). In the first passage from *Women Beware Women*, Leantio describes Bianca as a material possession and reaffirms his sense of his own masculine identity: his place in the whole. This masculine discourse is firmly entrenched within recognisably pastoral symbols and metaphors. Middleton's text illustrates the extent to which such arcadian images of temples and roses are involved in perpetuating socio-cultural values which uphold the code of patriarchy. It is a distinctive element within the language of power, and Leantio both abstracts and augments the value of his new wife for himself by employing such pastoral imagery.

How near am I now to a happiness
 That earth exceeds not! Not another like it:
 The treasures of the deep are not so precious,
 As are the conceal'd comforts of a man
 Lock'd up in woman's love. I scent the air
 Of blessings when I come but near the house:
 What a delicious breath marriage sends forth!
 The violet-bed's not sweeter. Honest wedlock
 Is like a banqueting-house built in a garden,
 On which the spring's chaste flowers take delight
 To cast their modest odours; when base lust,
 With all her powders, paintings, and best pride,
 Is but a fair house built by a ditch side.
 When I behold a glorious dangerous strumpet,
 Sparkling in beauty and destruction too,
 Both at a twinkling, I do liken straight
 Her beautified body to a goodly temple
 That's built on vaults where carcasses lie rotting;

And so by little and little I shrink back again,
 And quench desire with a cool meditation;
 And I'm as well, methinks. Now for a welcome
 Able to draw men's envies upon man:
 A kiss now that will hang upon my lip,
 As sweet as morning dew upon a rose,
 And full as long; after a five days' fast
 She'll be so greedy now and cling about me:
 I take care how I shall be rid of her;
 And here't begins.

(III. 1. 82)¹⁴⁶

Hazlitt promotes these lines, which are sifted from the "denouement" which he finds disturbing. This, we recall, is the fragmentation of the established code of values which set out Leantio's position as "manly [and] independent" (p.62). In Middleton's play, this disruption involves a subtle interrogation of the ideological basis of the pastoral genre in narrative. Hazlitt works within a recognisably pastoral discourse as a means of supporting the lasting value of his particular recovery of Renaissance texts.

The second quotation from *Women Beware Women* which Hazlitt highlights is also from (III.2), and deals with Leantio's arrival home. At this point in the play, the audience has witnessed the actions which precipitate the denouement which the critic rejects as inefficient. The Duke and Livia's machinations in planning Bianca's rape are excised from Hazlitt's text, and the Duke's attempt to redeem his actions by promises of wealth and social status are similarly ignored. The Duke echoes Leantio's metaphors of wealth and power, and we view a fundamental kinship between the pseudo-protective discourse of the aristocrat, and the merchant husband.

Hazlitt views an idealistic Leantio who, "in the first instance" (p.62) transcends the potential tragedy which awaits him. The critic misreads or by-passes a discussion of Middleton's interrogative irony in the description of marriage as a

"banqueting- house built in a garden". In Hazlitt's text, Leantio's reverie is broken into: "dissipated by the entrance of Bianca and his mother" (p.62).

Leantio's misfortunes are presented, in Hazlitt's text, solely as a reaffirmation of the cliché of feminine lasciviousness and inherent disruptive promiscuity. Once she has "made her first false step", we view her "sudden transition from unblemished virtue to the most abandoned vice" (p.61). Hazlitt's critique is once more enacted at the level of substitution. The former category presupposes the existence of the alternative definition of the feminine other. Hazlitt may be seen to base his critique, then, on a subtle invocation of classical values which domesticate anti-establishment elements in Middleton's text. *Women Beware Women* is presented purely as an unexpected reversal of fortune for an inoffensive bourgeois tragic hero.

The denouement of the play presents a vision of arbitrary murder, which violates Hazlitt's image of the nature of the energy which the dramatists possessed. Middleton leaves few openings for the reading of a moralistic conclusion to *Women Beware Women*; for example, Bianca does not succeed in murdering the Cardinal, and kills the Duke instead, by accident. For her own part in this disordered vision of providential justice, Bianca chooses to die by her own hand. The corrupt system of authority which disintegrates in this text resists the critical appraisal of a providentialist conclusion. The Cardinal's closing speech, indeed, suggests a commentary upon a material power-struggle which has no precise spiritual ramifications. The Cardinal's clichés are as hollow as Alsemero's words of comfort to Vermandero at the close of *The Changeling*.

Hazlitt's response to the difficulties posed by *Women Beware Women* is to offer an alternative critical conclusion to that which is offered by the play, a

conclusion which is crafted with reference to the critic's Old Testament historicity, and which represents the "manly, independent character of Leantio" falling prey to the corruption of the female. Hazlitt, then, reveals a distinct uneasiness in dealing with Middleton as a writer, and this is a direct result, perhaps, of the destabilising effect of the extensive mis-reading of the play itself. This misrepresentation is something which the critic must effect, nevertheless, if he is to conscript Middleton in support of his vision of the age. The uneasiness is highlighted in an unexpected reference to the ideological basis for the recovery of interest in Renaissance drama. Hazlitt wishes to promote a body of writers who are involved in stabilising, and modifying values which underpin the concept of artistic and socio-cultural order. From his discussion of Middleton's lack of "power over the subject", Hazlitt launches into a thoroughly negative critique of Shakespeare's contemporaries. This suggests that the critic recognises that he has not succeeded in domesticating the more disturbing elements in Middleton's play. Once Shakespeare is invoked, however, a form of stability is restored to the critical discussion. At this crucial point, Shakespeare is employed to enact a symbolic rescue, and to introduce an awareness of the pastoral transgressive values upon which the process of recovery depends.

The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in the possession of excellent materials which he husbands very ill. This character, though it applies more particularly to Middleton, might be applied generally to the age. Shakespeare alone seemed to stand over his work, and to do what he pleased with it. He saw to the end of what he was about, and with the same faculty of lending himself to the impulses of the moment, never forgot that he himself had a task to perform, nor the place which each figure ought to occupy in his general design. The characters of Livia, of Bianca, of Leantio and his Mother, in the play of which I am speaking, are all admirably drawn. The art and malice of Livia show equal want of principle and acquaintance with the world; and the scene in which she holds the mother in suspense, while she betrays the

daughter to the profligate Duke, is a masterpiece of dramatic skill. The proneness of Bianca to tread the primrose path of pleasure, after she has made the first false step, and her sudden transition from unblemished virtue to the most abandoned vice, in which she is notably seconded by her mother-in-law's ready submission to the temptations of wealth and power, form a true and striking picture. ... The moral of this tragedy is rendered more impressive from the manly, independent character of Leantio. (pp.61-2)

The invocation of Shakespeare allows Hazlitt to re-ally himself with Middleton, by means of an evasion of the dramatist's ironic portrayal of Leantio's mercantilistic values.

It is at this point in the discussion that it may be possible to speculate upon Hazlitt's lack of interest in *The Changeling*. His comments on Bianca's spiralling immorality would, perhaps be equally applicable to a reading of Beatrice-Joanna's actions, especially in relation to Deflores' observations on female promiscuity.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, another issue intervenes between a limited reading of the fallen woman, and the critical silence which voices doubts about the ability of this text to promote his central thesis. The most obvious solution to this silence is the question of class-consciousness, which is one of the most provocative issues which Middleton raises in *The Changeling*. Deflores "tumbled into th' world a gentleman", and refuses to accept the place which his "hard fate" sets out for him.¹⁴⁸ His comments indicate that he views his position of "servitude" as socially produced state, rather than as an indication of his fixed place in a sense of universal order. This insight allows him to claim the rights which are reserved for aristocratic males within the play-society. Deflores, then, strikes at the fundamental basis of the issue of constructing a socially approved hierarchy of value. The critic prefers to silence him completely, perhaps, rather than offer a reading of a servant-villain which is actually questioned in the

play-text itself. *The Changeling* may be seen to imply a destabilising examination of such a hierarchy of influence as Hazlitt constructs for the Renaissance playwrights.

Hazlitt's selective reprocessing of Middleton's plays is clearly visible in his censorship of *The Changeling* and *Women Beware Women*. His choice of Middleton's "most remarkable performance" is also curious, since he chooses *The Witch* for this accolade. Although the text is viewed as having merits of its own, its claim to respectability lies in its relationship to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. A sample of this critique reaffirms Hazlitt's intention to re-establish the Renaissance dramatists by means of their proximity to Shakespeare's genius. As we have seen, the nature of this relationship is constantly shifting in Hazlitt's criticism. It is contrary and paradoxical. Earlier in the lecture, a reference to Shakespeare allows Hazlitt to distance himself from a perilous association with *Women Beware Women*, and then to justify the critique. At this point, in Hazlitt's discussion, Middleton is subtly re-placed in the "list of dramatic worthies" (p.43). From the implication that he is not one of the most valued writers, Middleton moves on to achieve a position from which he may contend for the original representation of the powerful Shakespearean symbol of the witches in *Macbeth*. A reference to the Shakespeare mythos legitimises an already sanitised Middleton. The prevailing understanding, however, is that any potential discovery of Middletonian originality is superseded by Shakespeare's "stupendous agency" (p.65).

The Witch of Middleton is his most remarkable performance; both on its own account, and from the use that Shakespeare has made of some of the characters in *Macbeth*. Though the employment which Middleton has given to Hecate and the rest, in thwarting the purposes and perplexing the business of familiar and domestic life, it is not so grand or appalling as the more stupendous agency of Shakespeare has assigned them, yet

it is not easy to deny the merit of the first invention to Middleton, who has embodied the existing superstitions of the time, respecting that anomalous class of beings, with a high spirit of poetry, of the most grotesque and fanciful kind. The songs and incantations made use of are very nearly the same. The other parts of this play are not so good; and the solution of the principal difficulty, by Antonio's falling down a trap-door, most lame and impotent. (p.65)

The critic's reference to Renaissance drama as the ultimate manifestation of values which are inherently productive, is based on the process of transhistorical abstraction. When the specific focus of Renaissance drama is Shakespeare, however, the process of welding Classical and Romantic values becomes almost untenable. The essentialist conclusion to this passage belies the sincerity of the contrast set out in the body of the text, and appears wholly defensive. The defence is acted out on behalf of the "future determination"¹⁸⁹ which Hazlitt has in mind for "the age of Elizabeth".

Sophocles differs from Shakespeare as a Doric portico differs from Westminster Abbey. The principle of the one is simplicity and harmony, of the other richness and power. The one relies on form or proportion, the other on quantity and variety and prominence of party. The one owes its charm to a certain union and regularity of feeling, the other adds to its effect from complexity and the combination of the greatest extremes. The classical appeals to sense and habit; the Gothic or romantic strikes from novelty, strangeness, and contrast. Both are founded in essential and indestructible principles of human nature. (p.243)

Hazlitt's passage illustrates David Punter's discussion of the growth of the gothic impulse in fiction¹⁹⁰. Punter argues that, contrary to popular belief, the gothic response of discord and dislocation is a reactionary re-appraisal of natural forces, in the face of social changes which threaten for the ruling economic and artistic elite. The ambivalent, yet productive critique which the invocation of epic brings to Hazlitt's version Renaissance tragedy, is itself a further defence of inherently English values. One of the most powerful elements in his eighth lecture is the strident

nationalism which follows his appraisal of seventeenth-century English tragedy as an interdenominational phenomenon.

The third sort is the French or common-place rhetorical style, which is founded on the antique as to its form and subject matter; but instead of individual nature, real passion or imagination growing out of real passion in the speaker, it deals only in vague, imposing and laboured declamations, or descriptions of nature, dissertations on the passions, and pompous flourishes, which have never entered any head but the author's, have no existence in nature which they pretend to identify, and are not dramatic at all, but purely didactic. The fourth and last is the German or paradoxical style, which differs from the others in representing men as acting not from the impulse of feeling, or as debating common-place questions of morality, but as the organs and mouth-pieces ... of certain extravagant speculative opinions, abstracted from all existing customs, prejudices, and institutions. (pp.242-3)

Despite Hazlitt's attempt to isolate nature from what he sees as the un-natural forces in French and German tragedy, it is possible to trace a critical reconstitution specifically levelled at Middleton and Rowley. The English writers, we recall, are identified, for the most part, as fragmentary and excessive. The criticism of "dissertations on the passions" implies that Joanna Baillie, too, is to be considered potentially unpatriotic. This is a charge which may be added to the list which Hazlitt draws up against Baillie, a subject which I will discuss in detail in a later chapter.

Lamb's extracts from *Women Beware Women* address the scenes, in part, which Hazlitt appears to shy away from. Lamb quotes Livia's attempts to cajole Leantio's mother to visit (II.2). These lines are prefaced with the following statement,

Livia, the Duke's creature, cajoles a poor widow with the appearance of Hospitality and neighbourly Attentions, that she may get her Daughter-in-Law (who is left in the Mother's care in the Son's absence) into her trains, to serve the Duke's pleasure.¹⁵¹

The extract concludes with a footnote, however, which appears to limit the disruptive potential of Livia's actions. Lamb distances Livia from the role of procuress by enveloping her in a formulaic version of pastoral nostalgia which is, once again, based upon a reading of the literature of a historically remote era. Livia is romanticised in order to comply with the "future determination"¹⁵² which Lamb projects for *Women Beware Women*.

This is one of those scenes which has the air of being an immediate transcript from life. Livia, the "good neighbour" is as real a creature as one of Chaucer's characters. She is such another jolly housewife as the Wife of Bath.¹⁵³

The extracts which Lamb quotes, are, not unexpectedly, tailored to illustrate both the ambiguous preface and the strikingly inappropriate footnote. He does not refer to the lines which deal with Guardiano's leading Bianca to the Duke, and the game of chess which counterpoints the off-stage rape. Lamb closes his quotations from (II.2) of the play with the heading: "*Brancha resists the Duke's attempt*". What follows is an abridged version of lines 318-356¹⁵⁴. This abridgement is a process which Lamb omits to acknowledge, and the lines which the critic has "expunged", then, are given below.

Duke. as I'm a friend to brightness,
There's nothing but respect and honour near thee:
You know me, you have seen me; here's a heart
Can witness I have seen thee.

Bianca. The more's my danger.

Duke. The more's my happiness. Pish, strive not, sweet;
This strength were excellent employ'd in love now,
But here 'tis spent amiss; strive not to seek
Thy liberty, and keep me still in prison.
I'faith you shall not out, till I'm releas'd now,
We'll both be freed together, or stay still by't;
So is captivity pleasant.

Bianca.

Oh my Lord.

Duke. I am not here in vain; have but the leisure
 To think on that, and thou'lt be soon resolv'd:
 The lifting of thy voice is but like one
 That does exalt his enemy, who proving high,
 Lays all the plots to confound him that rais'd him.
 Take warning, I beseech thee; thou seem'st to me
 A creature so composed of gentleness,
 And delicate meekness; such as bless the faces
 Of figures that are drawn for goddesses,
 And makes art proud to look upon her work:
 I should be sorry the least force should lay
 An unkind touch upon thee.
 (II.2.321-343)

What Middleton may be seen to have "better never have written" is, perhaps, the striking plausibility of the Duke's denial of his sexual advance towards Bianca.¹⁵⁵ The Duke explains that he has the liberty to attend the outcome of his desires, and he may appropriate any discourse which supports this aim. His metaphors of captivity and freedom, and the pseudo-pastoral account of Bianca's passive qualities refer to a code of essentialist values. By this means, the Duke abstracts and obscures the undeniably physical threat which he aims to carry out. In conclusion, then, both Lamb and Hazlitt rely on such a process of abstraction for their own texts. It is even represented as the moral guideline upon which the revival of Renaissance drama is based. The critics' censorship appears to take place at the points where Middleton interrogates the Duke's idealisation of the forthcoming assault. The "trifling omissions" which Lamb refers to in his preface to the *Specimens* play an integral role in constructing what we are to view as "the moral sense of our ancestors".¹⁵⁶

The Politics of Co-operation

In his opening lecture, Hazlitt bemoans our caution, when confronted with writers who have been previously denied the positive recognition they deserve. This denial takes the form of a theoretical excommunication from the canon of English

drama taught at university level. Hazlitt has no quarrel with the concept of canonicity. What he finds disturbing is the impurity of the Classical texts which are offered at present, in relation to the desired object of a more wide-ranging representation of a wholly English dramatic tradition. Whilst he claims to be opening out and democratising our experience of dramatic literature, then, Hazlitt is working from exclusionist principles. The outspoken tone of the introduction, and the hierarchy of writers with which he gives us to replace the "Greeks and Romans", suggests, once again, a simple process of substitution, rather than a questioning of the concept of canonicity. The critic anticipates, even if only by implication, a potential resistance, from academic institutions at least, to the revival of the Renaissance dramatists. In this way, Hazlitt aims to elicit a level of sympathy from his audience in relation to the uphill task he faces. This task involves the unmasking of a false tradition on behalf of the true native legacy, and takes the form of laying down structures which will promote the success of a revised canon.

Hazlitt projects himself as a lone voice, who nevertheless demands our co-operation, owing to the fundamental priority of what he is attempting to achieve on our behalf. The issue of such a "co-operating power" as an essential feature of literary authority is best illustrated in Wordsworth's lines "On Feeling And Imagination", from which the term is drawn. Raymond Williams includes the following lines in an extended quotation in support of his argument that an underlying conservatism underpins much of the writing of the Romantic period.

Without the exertion of the co-operating power in the mind of the Reader, there can be no adequate sympathy with either of these emotions: without the auxiliary impulse, elevated or profound passion cannot exist ... [the "poet, the artist in general"] is seen as an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love.¹⁷

Hazlitt offers a similar version of Wordsworth's "co-operating power" in his third lecture, "On Marston, Chapman, Decker And Webster". As this is a natural shared response between critics and readers of "well-known names" (p.72) the critic becomes involved in the paradoxical anatomisation of this relationship order to reconstitute it in another, less familiar, context. The "sentiments of the reader" are projected as the dominant force, presiding over the range of opinion which negotiates the lesser-known dramatists' place in the literary historical canon. As critical intervention tends to be viewed as "disproportionate" when acting on its own authority, the rescue of the Renaissance writers is to be seen to be executed, as I have already argued, at the behest of the dramatists themselves.

Although Hazlitt aims to re-settle the Renaissance writers within a legitimate hierarchy of value, the passage given below suggests that in order to re-educate his audience, the critic is empowered to enact a further de-historicisation of the texts in question (over and above that which they have suffered by being surplus to our Elizabethan canon.) The yardstick by which the acceptability of certain writers is measured, is clearly the prevailing "image previously existing in the public mind". In order to render the playwrights acceptable, they must be shown to lay claim to the moral base which defines the nature of our present means of recognising acceptable dramatic texts.

The writers of whom I have already treated, may be said to have been "no mean men;" those of whom I have yet to speak are certainly no whit inferior. Would that I could do them any thing like justice! It is not difficult to give at least their seeming due to great and well-known names; for the sentiments of the reader meet the descriptions of the critic more than half way, and clothe what is perhaps vague and extravagant praise with a substantial form and distinct meaning. But in attempting to extol the merits of an obscure work of genius, our words are either lost in empty air, or are "blown stifling back" upon the

mouth that utters them. The greater those merits are, and the truer the praise, the more suspicious and disproportionate does it almost necessarily appear; for it has no relation to any image previously existing in the public mind, and therefore looks like an imposition fabricated out of nothing. In this case, the only way I know of is, to make these old writers (as much as they can be) vouchers for their own pretensions, which they are well able to make good. (p.72)

What we see in this passage supports Raymond Williams' argument that early nineteenth-century writers aimed to promote a shared system of belief, a discriminatory insight, which exists outwith invasive and mutable social change. Williams views this response as a defensive reaction to the early stages of industrialisation, and the growth of a progressively middle-class market-force economy.

What was seen at the end of the nineteenth-century as disparate interests ... were normally, at the beginning of the century, seen as interlocking interests; a conclusion about society, and about personal feeling became a conclusion about society, and an observation of natural beauty carried a necessary moral reference to the whole and unified life of man.¹³⁸

Williams' comment encompasses a facet of the tension inherent in criticism which projects itself as fulfilling a morally instructive role. The movement in literary consciousness which the critic describes is then a potential product of, and reply to, "the republic of letters" which Hazlitt views falling prey to the forces of supply and demand: at the behest of publishers and readers.¹³⁹ Williams continues:

at a time when the artist is being described as just one more producer ... he is describing himself as a specially endowed person, the guiding light of common life ... the response is not merely a professional one ... an emphasis on the embodiment in art of certain human values ... which the development of society towards industrial civilisation was felt to be threatening, or even destroying.¹⁴⁰

What we are privy to, as I have previously argued, is the growth of an artistic

and critical elitism. Coleridge, the poet-critic, offers the most striking example of the critic's exclusive right to sanction and control the terms in which this process of co-operation between critic and reader is acted out. Coleridge breaks down his audience into a hierarchy of readership, and indicates that he is targeting a particularly privileged group amongst them.

[Classes of readers] ...

1) Sponges that suck up everything and when pressed, give it but in the same state, only perhaps somewhat dirtier. 2) Sand-glasses ... which in a brief hour assuredly lets out what it has received ... 3) Straining bags, who get rid of whatever is good and pure, and retain the dregs ... 4) And lastly, the great Mogul's diamond, sieves ... these are the only good, and I feel the least numerous, who assuredly retain the good while the superfluous or impure passes away and leaves no trace.
(Vol. I, p. 220)

Hazlitt's vision of seventeenth-century dramatic writing has taken as its focus the issue of a cohesive group of playwrights, whose like-mindedness in promoting a certain set of values has been undermined by succeeding generations. He maintains this image of co-operation in his dealings with the dis-integrative examples of Marston and Jonson. The critical palliative which the following quotation leaves us with, reflects, once again, Raymond Williams' view of the defensive Romantic writer. Hazlitt's commentary may be seen to represent Williams' "access to the ideal of human perfection which was to be the centre of defence against the disintegrating tendencies of the age".¹⁶¹ In his description of individual disagreements between the dramatists themselves the critic takes upon himself the role which he maps out for the redeemer, "posterity". It is the foundation of their "future determination"¹⁶² (what Hazlitt calls "reputation") which is at stake, and which surmounts any need for a detailed discussion of historical determinants. In the following example, genius is

essentialised, and transcends personal difference.

Marston is a writer of great merit, who rose to tragedy from the ground of comedy, and whose *forte* was not sympathy, either with the stronger or softer emotions, but an impatient scorn and bitter indignation against the vices and follies of men, which vented itself either in comic irony, or in lofty invective. He was properly a satirist. He was not a favourite with his contemporaries, nor they with him. He was first on terms of great intimacy, and afterwards at open war, with Ben Jonson; and he is most unfairly criticised in *The Return from Parnassus* under the name of Monsieur Kindsayer, as a mere libeller and buffoon. Writers in their life-time do all they can to degrade and vilify one another, and expect posterity to have a very tender care of their reputations! The writers of this age, in general, can not however be reproached with this infirmity. the number of plays which they wrote in conjunction, is a proof of the contrary; and a circumstance no less curious as to the division of intellectual labour, than in the cordial union of sentiment it implied. Unlike most poets, the love of their art surmounted their hatred of one another. genius was not become a vile and vulgar pretence, and they respected in others what they knew to be true inspiration in themselves. They courted the applause of the multitude, but came to one another for assistance. When we see these writers working together on the same admirable productions, year after year, as was in the case of Middleton and Rowley, with Chapman, Decker, and Jonson, it reminds me of one of Ariosto's eloquent apostrophe to the Spirit of Ancient Chivalry, when he has seated his rival knights, Renaldo and Ferraw, on the same horse. (pp.72-3)

This pastoral conclusion recalls Hazlitt's comments on Middleton and Rowley, which are engineered to distance an audience from what he views as the anti-social fragmentary text of *Women Beware Women*. Foremost amongst these "admirable [joint] productions", *The Changeling* remains, as we have seen, a ghostly presence which undermines the critic's vision of a drama which both constitutes and reflects our national conscience. Marlowe, too, is only admitted into the "list of dramatic worthies" (p.43) by means of a defensive invocation of the Shakespeare mythos. What we are to recognise in these writers is not any particular shared response to contemporary socio-historical circumstances. We are to re-assess the immutable value

of what they represent, in the context of an ongoing struggle "with ruthless destiny" (p.88). The critic employs a similar obscurantist gesture in his comments on *The Duchess of Malfi*. He avoids any discussion of the issues which Webster raises in this play, particularly the Duchess' challenge to the fundamental edicts of patriarchy. Instead, Webster is personified as a writer who makes the justifiable error of attempting to challenge the inviolability of the Shakespeare myths. The conflict which is visible at this point in Hazlitt's criticism suggests that he is as much disturbed by what he sees as the merits of the play, as by its disruptive content. Unlike Marlowe and Middleton, Webster is not so successfully rescued by an invocation of Shakespearean proximity, as he is viewed as coming dangerously close to usurping Shakespeare's position of centrality. What is under threat is the concept of a legitimate teleological hierarchy, with Shakespeare as 'primum mobile'. If Webster does not appear to fit comfortably into the role of flawed, if precious, satellite, then the question of historical determinants as the focus of the critical comparison between contemporary writers cannot be ignored. This leads to a dilution of the values they are to symbolise for forthcoming generations.

Webster would, I think, be a greater dramatic genius than Decker, if he had the same originality; and perhaps is so, even without it. His *White Devil* and *Duchess of Malfi*, upon the whole, perhaps, come the nearest to Shakespeare of anything we have upon record; the only drawback to them, "by which they lose some colour", is, that they are too like Shakespeare, and often direct imitations of him, both in general conception and individual expression. So far, there is nobody else whom it would be either so difficult or so desirable to imitate; but it would have been still better if all his characters had been entirely his own, and had stood out as much from others, resting only on their own naked merits, as that of the honest Hidalgo on whose praises I have dwelt so much above. (pp.95-6)

Once the critic attempts to offer even a vague analysis of the issues which

Webster raises, the original view of a disruptive and antagonistic writer reasserts itself. The implication for Hazlitt's central thesis appears to be that by resisting his place in a revised seventeenth-century dramatic universe, Webster is systematically depriving a future generation of readers of a sense of this "whole" which the critic aims to project.

The Duchess of Malfi is not, in my judgement, quite so spirited or effectual a performance as *The White Devil*. But it is distinguished by the same kind of beauties, clad in the same terrors. I do not know but the occasional strokes of passion are even profounder and more Shakespearean; but the story is more laboured, and the horror is accumulated to an overpowering and insupportable height. However appalling to the imagination and finely done, the scenes of the madhouse to which the Duchess is condemned with a view to unsettle her reason, and the interview between her and her brother, where he gives her the supposed dead hand of her husband, exceed, to my thinking, the just bounds of poetry and of tragedy. At least, the merit is of a kind which, however great, we wish to be rare. A series of such exhibitions obtruded upon the senses or the imagination must tend to stupefy and harden, rather than to exalt the fancy or meliorate the heart. (p.102)

To offer an analysis of Hazlitt's comments on Webster's play is to chart a series of reversals and contradictions. Our final impression of the Duchess illustrates her role as a transcendent subject. In Hazlitt's text, what Ferdinand has acted out upon his sister is not a violent re-assertion of patriarchal authority. The critic domesticates *The Duchess of Malfi* in a dual sense. The Duchess herself is re-assessed, and is presented as overcoming the poetic excesses which her punishments display before an audience. She achieves this rescue on Webster's behalf, by revealing an immutable kinship with a traditional code of legitimate feminine values. She is praised for ministering to her children at the point of death. This scene is abstracted by Hazlitt into a performance of an essential stolid humanity, rising above earthly suffering. As a victim, the Duchess is considered too disturbing

a prospect for stage-representation. The children are similarly conscripted within an idealised pastoral of the mother nurturing her young; the familial bond which binds them is not threatened by any culturally imposed restrictions. In *The Duchess of Malfi* the children are murdered precisely because they symbolise the Duchess' challenge to the hereditary basis of patriarchy. There is no indication in the text that Ferdinand himself has a legitimate heir which will nullify the threat posed by the socially inferior Antonio's offspring.

In a different style altogether are the directions she gives about her children in her last struggles ... and her last word, "mercy" which she recovers just strength enough to pronounce; her proud answers to her tormentors, who taunt her with her degradation and misery—"But I am the Duchess of Malfi still"—as if the heart rose up, like a serpent coiled, to resent the indignities put upon it, and being struck at, struck again; and the staggering reflection her brother makes on her death, "Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle: she died young!" Bosola replies:

"I think not so: her infelicity
Seemed to have years too many.
Ferdinand. She and I were twins:
And should I die this instant, I had liv'd
Her time to a minute".

This is not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical common-places, but the writhing and conflict, and sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself! (p.102-3)

In *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams argues that the representation of critical authority in early nineteenth-century texts takes its reference point as the issue of an artistic elite under threat. As I have shown, this threat is embodied in the writing of all three critics under discussion, as a negative attitude to the reading public. Lamb constructs a judgmental barrier between the awkward "Caledonian" and the innovative "imperfect" intellects, and Coleridge forms his strict attachment to one "class of readers", dismissing those unfit for instruction. Hazlitt's criticism is much less overtly discriminatory, but the prevailing outraged tone which works both on behalf of, and against the Jacobean writers, suggests that he is seeking to initiate a

particular controlled set of responses to the texts which he is rescuing for us. This element of a controlled glimpse into the lost world of Renaissance drama is most strikingly evident in the critic's brief comments on Tourneur, and the long defensive passage which appears as an abstraction of the silence which Hazlitt imposes upon *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

The Revenger's Tragedy, by Cyril Tourneur, is the only other drama equal to these and to Shakespeare, in "the dazzling force of impassioned argument", in pregnant illustration, and in those profound reaches of thought which lay open the soul of feeling. The play, on the whole, does not answer to the expectations it excites; but the appeals of Castiza to her mother, who endeavours to corrupt her virtuous resolutions, "Mother, come from that poisonous woman there", with others of the like kind, are of as high and abstracted an essence of poetry as any of those above mentioned. (pp. 103-4)

We are given no indication of the nature of these "expectations" which Hazlitt views as unfulfilled in Tourneur's play. He defers, in part, to Lamb's criticism of the play in the *Specimens*, which concentrates upon the damning image of the "un-natural parent".¹⁴³ Lamb, we recall, attempts to absolve Tourneur by internalising the "passion of shame" which the text provokes in him. Lamb redeems Tourneur by revealing his own moral standards as the defence against the forces of degradation which the Renaissance writer portrays. Lamb's response, as we have seen, contradicts the prophetic vision of the "moral sense of our ancestors".¹⁴⁴ Hazlitt, however, distances his own criticism from the obvious contradictions which result from Lamb's moral concern. The former gives no extracts from *The Revenger's Tragedy*. The "expectations" which the play does not answer appear to suggest a plot which offers a firm emblematic conclusion of morality triumphing over a representation of vice.

Tourneur offers no vestige of a moral high ground in this play, and questions the nature of the "expectations" which we bring to the text, as the focus of 'morality' is ambivalent, and constantly shifting. The outraged Vindice resorts to murder to secure his revenge for Gloriana's poisoning. Feminine chastity is represented as a marketable virtue, and the formal regulations which set down what we recognise as a legitimate moral outcome are also startlingly anatomised and satirised. "When the bad blood" Vindice tells us, 'then is the tragedy good'.¹⁶⁵ Divine order is also satirised by Vindice, as he views it as the familiar and clichéd metaphor for institutionalised punishment. As Jonathan Dollimore argues in his admirable account of Tourneur's play, "the conception of a heavenly, retributive justice is being reduced to a parody of stage effects".¹⁶⁶ Tourneur then, is denied any textual representation on the stage of Hazlitt's criticism. He gives no selective extracts, and, as in his comments on Beaumont and Fletcher, the critic attempts to distinguish between what he sees as anti-social drama, and the pastoral vision of the writers "themselves".

In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them you only think how the persons into whose mouths certain sentiments are put, would have spoken or looked: in reading Dryden and others of that school, you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen. In this respect, indeed, some of his more obscure contemporaries have the advantage over Shakespeare himself, inasmuch as we have never seen their works represented on the stage; and there is no stage-trick to remind us of it.

The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the play-bills in small or large capitals. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think still higher of nature, and next to that of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them while young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are

to be had everywhere cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe everything to their authors, on this side of barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt while living, and with an epitaph when dead! (p.104)

In not having been "cut down to fit into the prompt-book", the Jacobean dramatists are still a viable resource, in a dual sense. Firstly, the infrequent performances of the plays during the preceding century appears to sanction the formal divorce which Hazlitt initiates on behalf of the texts, and the historical conditions in which they were produced. They are also considered a potentially productive fallow landscape, as they have not been previously contaminated by the feeble melodramatic misrepresentations which characterised early nineteenth-century productions. The passage implies, however, that stage-representation itself commits an affront against nature, and is antagonistic towards the transcendent closet encounter between text and reader. The innocence of this individual relationship is stressed in the invocation of our childhood instinct: "we read them while young", and this precipitates a pattern of controlled responses which police the nature of the relationship between text and reader for a lifetime: "we remember them when old". In opposition to this experience, prowls the worldly and arbitrary "barbarism" of stage-representation.

But here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without even knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's "stern good-night". ... I can "take mine ease at mine inn", beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, master Webster, and master Heywood, are there; and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakespeare is there himself, not in Cibber's management coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. ... Faustus

disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past. (pp. 105-6)

Hazlitt's response, in the above quotation, comes surprisingly close to the concept of mutability underlying "Christian providentialism" which Jonathan Dollimore describes in relation to Milton's *Comus*. Hazlitt's anxiety at the uncontrollable nature of staged drama, and the fragile nature of the pastoral idyll which his co-habiting authors provide, is inherently defensive, and reveals the threat within the conditions which provoke this response. Dollimore argues, in relation to the seventeenth-century text:

Milton's *Comus* declares a faith in natural law—or at least a self-regulating world, one in which evil is programmed to self-destruct. Such a vision is a delight to the providentialist. But just as interesting as the assertion of faith in this order is the inference to be drawn if history and experience prove otherwise ... one implication to be drawn from the controversy over cosmic decay ... is an underlying and pervasive fear of just such a failure. ... To explore any period's conception of chaos is to discover not the primordial state of things, but fears and anxieties very specific to that period.¹⁶⁷

Dollimore's concluding statement clearly has profound implications for any study of Hazlitt's problematical criticism. It also appears to lend support to Raymond Williams' account of an elitist closure enacted by writers who felt that their exclusive skills were becoming progressively viewed as marketable commodities. It is worth noting that Hazlitt's lectures were delivered in the same year that Lord Liverpool's Tory government increased its majority, and the "Cato St Conspiracy to murder the cabinet [was] uncovered".¹⁶⁸ The previous year saw the Peterloo massacre, and the

"Six Acts' to suppress radicalism".¹⁶⁹ The nature of Hazlitt's position on the question of 'radicalism' is the subject of current debate, and is an issue to which I will return.

In so far as he views a progressive conservatism in the writings of Coleridge and Wordsworth, Jonathan Bate's view of the subject accords with Raymond Williams' argument.¹⁷⁰ Bate, however, pointedly distances Hazlitt from this conservatism. The nineteenth-century critic, Bate tells us, "separate[s] the literary sphere from the political".¹⁷¹

[Hazlitt] recognises in his essay on *Coriolanus* that despite Shakespeare's capacity to see both sides of a political argument, 'The language of poetry naturally falls within the language of power'.¹⁷²

This quotation, nevertheless, as it is placed in Bate's text, may be more plausibly seen as a misrecognition of a provocative contradiction in Hazlitt's criticism. The distinction which Bate employs to underline his argument, Hazlitt's distinction between "an aristocracy of rank" and an "aristocracy of letters" is, as I have previously argued, a purely semantic exercise on Hazlitt's part: a process of substitution. The Georgian critic is claiming a generic priority for poetry, and this allows it a natural and pre-social right to appropriate the prevalent "language of power".¹⁷³ This means, then, that poetry naturally reflects the establishment discourse on everything which constitutes "a fit subject for poetry".¹⁷⁴

Hazlitt can not be fundamentally distanced, then, from the "version of the politics of Burke" which Bate views in Coleridge's and Wordsworth's writing.¹⁷⁵ Raymond Williams describes Burke's valediction of political directives which maintain an established version of social control.

[Burke's] position, quite unequivocally, is that man as an individual left to himself is wicked; all human virtue is the creation of society, and in this sense is not 'natural' but

'artificial', 'art is man's nature'. This embodiment and guarantee of the proper humanity of man is the historical community. the rights of man may include the right to be restrained. ¹⁷⁶

Although this statement may appear, on the surface, as diametrically opposed to Hazlitt's claims for poetry, his relationship with emergent Elizabethan and Jacobean texts; the hierarchical "list of dramatic worthies" (p.43) clearly exerts a similar form of productive restraint to that which Williams outlines. As we have seen in his treatment of Tourneur, and in the fragmented and contradictory view of *The Duchess of Malfi*, Hazlitt sets out to limit and transform what he sees as anti-establishment impulses in the works of the dramatists in order to restore them to their legitimate place in the literary/historical canon. Williams' motif of the "historical community" as the "embodiment and guarantee of the proper humanity of man" may be read as a succinct comment on Hazlitt's central thesis: the ideological principle upon which the process of rescuing and recovering our native dramatic heritage is based.

The nature of the nineteenth-century critic's distance from the political stance of Burke is shown to be more problematical than Bate suggests: on another level, one which has important implications for his comments on Renaissance drama. The essay *Character of Mr Burke* (1817) charts the politician's rejection of his original support for both the "American war", and the French Revolution.¹⁷⁷ Although the critic deplora the nature of this reversal, it is Burke's failure of "consistency" which is his fundamental flaw. What we lose, as a nation, by exposure to such inconsistency, is a diminution of the sense of a national identity, and the systems of belief which support and nurture it through forthcoming generations. As Eric Evans describes Burke as "the leading Whig party theoretician and party propagandist of his day"¹⁷⁸ it may be possible to argue that Hazlitt's disdain for the reversal in question merely reflects what he sees as a lack of ideological consistency in the political position to

which Burke adhered. The politician himself, Evans points out, had none of the inbuilt advantages of aristocratic sons claiming their hereditary place in the House of Commons. "The Dublin lawyer", Evans continues, "is only the most illustrious example of the career open to talent through aristocratic patronage".¹⁷⁹ What Hazlitt views in Burke is an abuse of trust: he is a fragmented and therefore historically problematical figure, in terms of the "future determination" such actions may inflict.¹⁸⁰ Although it may seem initially a fanciful comparison, Hazlitt's Burke may be viewed as a Renaissance malcontented figure, who has achieved a level of social status which renders possible, actions which his former servile position would have rendered untenable. He is thus a profoundly dangerous and disruptive force. It is worth giving an extract from this essay to illustrate the above arguments, and also to make the point that many of Burke's qualities appear to mirror those which the critic ascribes to the pugilistic transcendent figure of Coriolanus in the 1817 lectures.¹⁸¹ What we see, then, is the extent to which Shakespeare has become a metaphor for a set of unwritten, shared values of socio-cultural restraint: something which clearly obscures and domesticates the issues raised within the texts themselves.

It is not without reluctance that we speak of the vices and infirmities of such a character as Burke's: but the poison of high example has by far the widest range of destruction: and, for the sake of public honour and individual integrity, we think it right to say, that however it may be defended upon other grounds, the political career of that eminent individual has no title to the praise of consistency. Mr Burke, the opponent of the American war, and Mr Burke, the opponent of the French Revolution, are not the same person, but opposite persons—not opposite only, but deadly enemies. In the latter period, he abandoned not only all his practical conclusions, but all the principles on which they were founded. He proscribed all his former sentiments, denounced all his former friends, rejected and reviled all the maxims to which he had formerly appealed as incontestable. . . . In the one, he insulted kings personally, as among the lowest of mankind; in the other, he held them up to

the imagination of his readers as sacred abstractions. In the one case, he was a partisan of the people, to court popularity; in the other, to gain the favour of the court, he became the apologist of all courtly abuses. In the one case, he took part which those who were actually rebels against the sovereign; in the other, he denounced as rebels and traitors all those of his own countrymen who did not yield sympathetic allegiance to a foreign Sovereign, whom we had always been in the habit of treating as an arbitrary tyrant.

Nobody will accuse the principles of his present Majesty, or the general measures of his reign, of inconsistency. If they had no other merit, they have, at least, that of having all along actuated by one uniform and constant spirit: yet Mr Burke at one time vehemently opposed, and afterwards most intemperately extolled them.¹⁸²

The disruptive consequences of Burke's lack of consistency are raised again, in relation to an unrestricted appraisal of Renaissance texts. Middleton and Webster, as we have seen, are construed as imperfect and disruptive, but are censored and idealised, in order to promote the ideological principles upon which the process of their recovery is based. They are legitimised, to borrow Hazlitt's phrase, by the critic "hold[ing the writers] up to the imaginations of his readers, as sacred abstractions".¹⁸³ The critic aims to avoid the perilous inconsistency which he views in Burke. Middleton, Webster and Beaumont and Fletcher, in relation to his own criticism. In his writing, abstraction is the fundamental element which differentiates the transcendent genius of poetry from the mundane catalogue of history. Tourneur, we recall, reveals "as high and abstracted an essence of poetry" (p. 104) as any amongst his contemporaries. The abstract, de-historicising qualities inherent in "the language of poetry" are justifiably employed to give a reading of past writers who must have shared a similar belief in their chosen genre. This transhistorical analysis by-passes any question of documenting the contemporary socio-political conditions within which the dramatists were working.

Contrary to Bate's argument, Hazlitt's "authority of letters" is not detached from the principles which inform the "aristocracy of rank".¹⁴⁴ It is clear, from the nineteenth-century writer's comments on Renaissance texts, that they share the same foundations. As I have previously argued, then, Hazlitt's statement that as the language of poetry naturally falls within the language of power" is his brief to appropriate the values which uphold both "aristocracies" and to perpetuate them within the context of a poetic recovery which resists any charge of individual political bias.¹⁴⁵ This approach to the recovery of Renaissance dramatic poetry, allows the critic to claim a subtle version of diplomatic immunity for his own criticism.

The critic's ultimate criticism of Burke, then, is a disapproval of the fragmentary nature of his alliances, which make him difficult to 'place' by any other means than the historical documentation of his loyalties and disaffections. Whatever the nature of these disaffections, nevertheless, Hazlitt reveals a powerful admiration for the seductive prose which allows the politician to maintain support for his politic reversals. The following passage is strikingly reminiscent of the abstract comments on the "elder dramatic writers" (p.104) which Hazlitt was to deliver three years later. The praise which Burke receives, indeed, supersedes that which is afforded to Marlowe and the censored Webster, and is conceived in almost Shakespearean terms. Whatever his motivation, Burke is praised for achieving the version of order which he sets out to impose.

His style has all the familiarity of conversation, and all the research of the most elaborate composition. He says what he wants to say, by any means, nearer or more remote, within his reach. He makes use of ... the plainest and most downright, or of the most figurative modes of speech. He gives for the most part loose reins to his imagination, and follows it as far as the language will carry him. As long as the one or the other has any resources in store to make the reader feel and see the thing as he has conceived it, in its nicest shades of difference, in its

utmost degree of force and splendour, he never disdains, and never fails to employ them. Yet in the extremes of his mixed style, there is not much affectation, and but little either of pedantry or of coarseness. He everywhere gives the image he wishes to give, in its true and appropriate colouring: and it is the very crowd and variety of these images that has given to his language its peculiar tone of animation, and even of passion. It is his impatience to transfer his conceptions entire, living, in all their rapidity, strength, and glancing variety, to the minds of others, that constantly pushes him to the verge of extravagance, and yet supports him there in dignified security—
 'Never so sure our rapture to create,
 As when he treads the brink of all we hate.'

He is the most poetical of our prose writers¹⁸⁶

Although Hazlitt criticises the progressive conservatism of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the aforementioned essay, the nature of the criticism appears to be based upon the actual reversal of their position, rather than on the ramifications of the change itself. The values which Hazlitt's criticism appears to be based upon accord very well with the stance of the Whig critic Francis Jeffrey, editor of *The Edinburgh Review* from 1802 to 1829. Peter Morgan's comments upon Jeffrey's cautiously conservative editorials highlight what Raymond Williams views as the "directly contradictory elements" in nineteenth-century social and literary criticism.¹⁸⁷

The ongoing diatribe between Jeffrey and the "lake school" poets actually reveals a similar ideological position. Both sides seek to set down a series of recognised formal regulations which will safeguard the values implicit in the idea of an isolated 'high art'. This has strategic importance in maintaining the concept of an artistic hierarchy as the basis of our understanding of such values. Williams notes Coleridge's dislike of the reformer Nathaniel Cobbett:

[Cobbett] believed, for political reasons, that the working-people must be in charge of their own educational movements; any other arrangement would be part of the 'comforting system', the incessant persuasion to 'be quiet'.¹⁸⁸

As I have previously argued, both Coleridge and Hazlitt imply, in their criticism of Renaissance drama, that the cultural model offered by poetry (Hazlitt's "aristocracy of letters") is the most potent means of stressing the essential goals which society should be moving to encompass on a socio-political level.

Jeffrey views the lake school poets themselves as chipping away at the established edifice of social cohesion. They are attempting to insinuate their own elitist structures of autonomous authority, which he views as antagonistic to an established canon.¹⁸⁹

Morgan's account of Francis Jeffrey's defensive reaction to the Romantic poets is notably familiar territory. From the date of the last section of Jeffrey's prose which Morgan quotes, it is possible to hypothesise that the reviewer obtained the hierarchical principles on which his "commonwealth" is based, on Hazlitt's "aristocracy of letters". The problems which Jeffrey has with the Romantics' attempt to canonise themselves arise in a similar form in the context of Hazlitt's problematical recovery of the Renaissance dramatists. To take the example of Ben Jonson, the concept of intellectuality is itself abstracted, in order to limit the charge of artistic fragmentation which is levelled in the description of *Sejanus* as "ancient mosaic" (p.127). The critic aims to retain a sense of an abstract moral code as underpinning Jonson's "serious productions" (p.127). The basis of this code of values is the playwright's almost unconscious kinship to a vision of high art. These comments on Jonson reflect a pronounced uneasiness: an indication, perhaps, of the difficulty of retaining him within the confines of the "list of dramatic worthies" (p.43). What appears to be at stake is the actual validity of the playwright's participation in the representation of traditional values which are to justify his recovery to a nineteenth-

century audience. The distinctions which Hazlitt draws between Classical and Romantic literature in the eighth lecture are by-passed in relation to Jonson's works, in order to endow him with a vestige of literary decorum.

His fault is, that he sets himself too much to his subject, and cannot let go his hold of an idea, after insisting on it becomes tiresome or painful to others. But his tenaciousness of what is grand and lofty is more praiseworthy than his delight in what is low and disagreeable. His pedantry accords better with didactic pomp than with illiterate and vulgar gabble; his learning, engrafted on romantic tradition or classical history, looks like genius. (p.127)

Jonson, however, only mimics genius. His essential failure lies in his refusal to censor and limit his subjects to those which do not interfere with the basis of poetry's generic priority. The nature of this priority, as we have seen, is its ability to be self-policing. Whilst the content of *Sejanus* is quickly passed over as unsavoury and anti-social (Hazlitt is, we recall, "half afraid to give any extracts") the play also appears to fail on another level. Jonson does not accommodate to what the critic sees as a traditional form of dramatic morality. This denies a literary archaeologist such as Hazlitt the means of bolstering his mythological rendition of seventeenth-century English drama charting a harmonious chronological progression of values which are self-perpetuating.

He was equal, by an effort, to the highest things, and took the same, and even more successful pains, to grovel to the lowest. He raised himself up or let himself down to the level of his subject, by ponderous machinery. By dint of application, and a certain strength of nerve, he could do justice to Tacitus and Sallust no less than to mine Host of the New Inn. (p.127)

The Case of Massinger and Ford

Hazlitt's treatment of Massinger and Ford is equally complex and contradictory. The account which he gives in the 1820 series of lectures builds upon

a review in *The Examiner* four years earlier. In this review, the critic comments upon a performance of Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* at Drury Lane Theatre.

We do not think that the Duke of Milan will become so great a favourite as Sir Giles Overreach, at Drury Lane Theatre. The first objection to the play is, that it is an arbitrary falsification of history. There is nothing in the life of Sforza, the supposed hero of the piece, to warrant the account of the extravagant actions and tragical end which are here attributed to him, to say nothing of political events. In the second place, his resolution to destroy his wife, to whom he is passionately attached, rather than bear the thought of her surviving him, is as much out of the verge of nature and probability, as it is unexpected and revolting from the want of any circumstances of palliation leading to it. It stands out alone, a piece of pure voluntary atrocity, which seems not the dictate of passion, but a start of phrenzy.¹⁹⁰

This quotation raises several distinct issues, the first being Hazlitt's curious defence of the question of historical accuracy. In his introduction to the *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818) he identifies history as a genre which "treats, for the most part, of the cumbrous and unwieldy masses of things, the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed".¹⁹¹ In other words, it is a practical means of organising necessarily arbitrary events and circumstances. Although History is a "dead-letter",¹⁹² out-ranked by poetry, the fundamental importance of its generic function in controlling our view of past events is not in doubt. Massinger's crime, then, is an unusually provocative one. The dramatist is perceived as interfering with a series of previously documented truths.¹⁹³ Apart from Massinger's apparent license with the sources for his tragedy, Hazlitt upbraids him for a related, and more serious indiscretion. Massinger disrupts the mythological convention that history is an innocent and finite representation which forms the basis of its exact replication for years to come. Just as poetry is self-policing, history is self-fertilising.

Clearly, such a reading of Massinger's text endangers the pastoral innocence of moral purpose which the critic aims to construct, both for his own process of recovery, and in the alleged collective motivation of the dramatists themselves. The historical compromise, however, does work to re-inforce the seriousness of the Duke's affront to the productive aims of poetry. The nature of this affront is the Duke's un-natural assertion of what is, in Massinger's text, the logical conclusion of the masculine ownership of female sexuality. This is the fundamental controlling factor in the relationship between Duke and Duchess in this play. Massinger questions and rejects the ethos of romantic love which the play-society aims to uphold: it is this demystification which holds the key to Hazlitt's problem with the play. Massinger shows us Marcellia supporting the "future determination"¹⁵⁶ of her husband's greatness by achieving equal symbolic status with the "canonis'd ladies" of Greek and Roman mythology.

Sforza. You are the mistress of the feast, sit here;
 O my soul's comfort! And when Sforza bows
 Thus low to do you honour, let none think
 The meanest service they can pay my love
 But as a fair addition to those titles
 They stand possess'd of. Let me glory in
 My happiness, and mighty kings look pale
 With envy, while I triumph in mine own.
 O Mother, look on her! Sister, admire her!
 And since this present age yields not a woman
 Worthy to be her second, borrow of
 Times past, and let imagination help
 Of those canonis'd ladies Sparta boasts of,
 And, in her greatness, Rome was proud to owe,
 To fashion one; yet still you must confess,
 The phoenix of perfection ne'er was seen,
 But in my fair Marcellia.
 (1.3.11)¹⁵⁵

The ending of the performance which Hazlitt had seen was altered,¹⁵⁶ and he rails against such "sickly sentimental endings without any meaning in them".¹⁵⁷ This

comment is followed by a remark which indicates that any sentimental domestication of Massinger may actually be harmful, obscuring the dangers which his play poses to the aims of legitimate dramatic poetry.

The peculiarity of Massinger's vicious characters seems in general to be, that they are totally void of moral sense, and have a glowing pride and disinterested pleasure in their villainies, unchecked by the common feelings of humanity.

These lines are echoed in the opening views on Massinger in the 1820 lectures.

The writers of whom I have chiefly had to speak were true poets, impassioned, fanciful, "musical as is Apollo's lute;" but Massinger is harsh and crabbed; Ford finical and fastidious. I find little in the works of these two dramatists but a display of great strength or subtlety of will. This is not exactly what we look for in poetry, which, according to the most approved recipes, should combine pleasure with profit, and not owe all its fascination over the mind to its power of shocking or perplexing us. The Muses should attract by grace or dignity of mien. Massinger makes an impression by hardness and repulsiveness of manner. In the intellectual processes which he delights to describe, "reason panders will;" he fixes arbitrarily on some object which there is no motive to pursue, or every motive combined against it, and then by screwing up his heroes or heroines to the deliberate and blind accompaniment of this thinks to arrive at "the true pathos and sublime of human life". That is not the way. he seldom touches the heart, or kindles the fancy. (p.131)

Hazlitt upbraids Massinger for his "voluntary atrocity" (p.133), something which rejects the organising principle of the "dictate of passion"; and the result is an anti-social "start of phrenzy" (p.133). In this sense, then, the critic appears to support the theoretical unitarianism which he views in Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions*. Baillie aims to set down the life-cycle of a specific, isolated passion, to act as either a warning or example to her audience. This prescriptive control, she tells us, is to banish the disruptive "unamiable passions",¹⁹⁸ such as the seemingly unprovoked "villainy" and "vice" from stage-performance altogether.¹⁹⁹ Hazlitt's "phrenzy", then, reveals a similar censorious conservatism to Baillie's Introductory

Discourse at this point. Nevertheless, he views Baillie's treatise as invested with a "do-me-good air ... insipid and amiable".²⁰⁰ This is something which is clearly detrimental to the bracing tone which will re-introduce the vigour of a by-gone age in his own criticism. The seductive hierarchy of dramatic worth, however, allows for such a potential discrepancy. It allows the critic to maintain his role as censor, but, as in the case of Massinger and Ford, a censor who is prepared to offer reasons for his disapproval. The controlling principle in the process of recovery may be self-evident, but, as an audience, we must not be seen to be deprived of the right to view Hazlitt's text as criticism, and therefore to judge its legitimacy for ourselves.

The critic opens his commentary on Kean's performance in *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* (Jan. 1816) by setting out his views on stage-representation. The passage is unusually complex and opaque.

Massinger's play of *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, which has been brought out at Drury Lane Theatre to introduce Mr. Kean in the part of Sir Giles Overreach, must have afforded a rich treat to theatrical amateurs. There is something in a good play well acted, a peculiar charm, that makes us forget ourselves and all the world.

It has been considered as the misfortune of great talents for the stage, that they leave no record behind them, except that of vague rumour, and that the genius of a great actor perishes with him, 'leaving the world no copy.' This is a misfortune, or at least a mortifying reflection, to actors; but it is, we conceive, an advantage to the stage. It leaves an opening to originality. The stage is always beginning anew; the candidates for theatrical reputation are always setting out afresh, unincumbered by the affectation of the faults or excellences of their predecessors. In this respect, we conceive that the average quality of dramatic talent remains more nearly the same than in any other walk of art. In the other arts (as painting and poetry), it may be supposed that what has been well done already, by giving rise to endless vapid imitations, is an obstacle to what might be done hereafter: that the models or *chef d' oeuvres* of art, where they have accumulated, choke up the path to excellence; and that the works of genius, where

they can be rendered permanent, and transmitted from age to age, not only prevent, but render superfluous, future productions of any kind. We have not, neither do we want, two Shakespeares, two Miltons, two Raphaels, two Popes, any more than we require two suns in the same sphere.²⁰¹

We dispense with the records of individual actors, as they are one definition of those who seek to further their own reputations. Renown, we recall is something which is only justifiably determined by future generations. As genius transcends personal difference, future audiences may expect that "the average quantity of dramatic talent [will] remain more nearly the same than in any other walk of art". On one level, then, stage-representation is viewed as anti-historical in a positive sense. We have no "copy", which indicates the transitory and mutable nature of the poor performance, and the theatrical review. Particular performances may be significant for a specific socio-historical moment, but this is cheerfully erased by the performance which follows. The acted play, then, on one level, offers a safe and favourable representation of discontinuity: the drama healthfully appropriated by succeeding performers "unencumbered of the faults and excellences of their predecessors". The concept of "originality" appears to be based upon a division of the individual performance from the conditions of the text's production. Hazlitt skilfully avoids the challenge which such an emphasis clearly provokes. The essential moral and intellectual qualities which characterise the play-texts are not endangered, precisely because of the transitory existence of any stage-misrepresentation. The critic skilfully limits the potential of staged drama to incite social unrest, and places the written text as a symbol of a teleologically ordered universe. To question Shakespeare's place, for example, is as potentially disruptive as altering the structures of the heavens, and our understanding of our own cosmological significance. Another

Shakespeare is as disturbing an idea as the concept of an invading sun, questioning the nature of our own present orbit.

What is the outcome, then, for Philip Massinger, and *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*? In offering an explanation, it is necessary to return to Hazlitt's curious and progressively contradictory review.

But Mr. Kean is an excellent substitution for Mr. Garrick, whom we never saw! When an author dies, it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up.²⁰²

He describes the succession of actors as a form of original input into the mythology of a particular role. Kean re-energizes our now pallid sense of Sir Giles Overreach by means of a natural law of osmosis, the levels of dramatic "excellences" remaining constant from generation to generation. Hazlitt transgresses against his own guidelines on interfering with the process of literary reputation in the case of Kean. He views the question of a given canon of "great names" as almost pre-destined, a competitive struggle which always results in the emergence of undisputed guardians of values who sustain their own mythological permanence. Kean's Sir Giles Overreach is to claim such a place. In so doing, however, he eclipses the figure of Massinger, and submerges the historical determinants of Sir Giles' actions within the cult of personality which the nineteenth-century actor is beginning to enjoy. Hazlitt offers a sub-text of praise for Kean's ability to rescue Massinger in an acceptable form: to translate what is a seemingly illogical reversal of Sir Giles' values into a meritorious humanitarian response.

Besides Fame, as if their reputation had been entrusted to her alone, has been particularly careful of the renown of her theatrical favourites; she forgets one by one, and year by year, those who have been great lawyers, great statesmen, and great warriors in their day; but the name of Garrick still survives,

with the works of Reynolds and Johnson.

We do not know any one now-a-days, who could write Massinger's *Comedy of A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, though we do not believe that it was better acted at the time it was first brought out, than it is at present. We cannot conceive of any one's doing Mr. Kean's part of Sir Giles Overreach so well as himself. ... The passages which we remarked as particularly striking and original, were those where he expresses his surprise at his nephew's answers ... and again, where, after the exposure of his villainies, he calls to his accomplice Marall, come hither. Though the speech is itself absurd and out of character²⁰⁸

Hazlitt returns to the question of Sir Giles' repentance in his article on *The Duke Of Milan* (March 1816). In Massinger's text, the issue is not problematical in the sense which Hazlitt claims, but overtly and deliciously satirical. Sir Giles only pays a transitory lip-service to repentance, when he realises that he has no means of escape. Indeed, both he and his captors recognise that his values are rigidly entrenched. He considers himself as far above the law at the close of the play as he does in (11.2). Sir Giles escapes punishment within the body of the play, precisely because he is able to buy the silence of Justice Greedy.

<p>Overreach. In being out of office I am out of danger; Where if I were a justice, besides the trouble, I might, or out of wilfulness, or error, Run myself finely into a praemunire, And so become a prey to the informer. No, I'll have none of 't; 'tis enough I keep Greedy at my devotion. So he serve My purposes, let him hang, or damn, I care not. Friendship is just a word. (II.1.13)</p>	<p>Thou art a fool.</p>
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In Act IV, Overreach rails against any opposition to his individual actions, as he is only one representative of the values sustaining the society which now decides to turn against him. His challenge "Why, is not the whole world included in myself?" (V.1. 355) is reminiscent of Beatrice - Joanna's vision of the hell which constitutes the

play-society in Middleton's *The Changeling*: "We are all there, it circumscribes here"
(V.3.167).²⁰⁴

Overreach. Some undone widow sits upon mine arm,
And takes away the use of 't; and my sword,
Glu'd to my scabbard with wrong'd orphans' tears,
Will not be drawn. Ha! what are these? Sure, hangmen,
That come to bind my hands, and then to drag me
Before the judgement seat! Now they are new shapes,
And do appear like Furies, with steel whips
To scourge my ulcerous soul! Shall I then fall
Ingloriously and yield? No; spite of fate,
I will be forc'd to hell like to myself.
Though you were legions of accursed spirits,
Thus would I fly among you!

Wellborn.
Disarm him first, then bind him.
(V.1.362)

There's no help;

In order to absolve Massinger from a charge of pointed social satire, then, he must be accused of an illogical and inartistic portrait of "hardened unprincipled characters ... seized by a sudden qualm of conscience ... visited with a judicial remorse".²⁰⁵ Clearly, this criticism of Massinger's play must itself be limited, as *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* is only invoked, in the review of *The Duke of Milan* and the 1820 lecture on the latter play, in order to balance the tragedy's display of "voluntary atrocity". In order to limit our sense of the dramatist's artistic or poetic failure, Hazlitt offers a reading of seventeenth-century England which contradicts the vision of a golden-age which he attempts to offer in the 1820 lectures.

We will not, however, deny that such may be a true picture of the mixed barbarity and superstition of the age in which Massinger wrote. We have no doubt that his Sir Giles Overreach, which some have thought an incredible exaggeration, was an actual portrait. Traces of such characters are still to be found in some parts of the country, and in classes to which modern refinement and education have not penetrated ... In the time of Massinger, philosophy had made no progress in the minds of country gentlemen: nor had theory of moral

sentiments, in the community at large, been fashioned and moulded into shape by systems of ethics continually pouring in on us from the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen. Persons in the situation, and with the dispositions of Sir Giles, cared not what wrong they did, nor what was thought of it, if they had only the power to maintain it. There is no calculating the advantages of civilization and letters, in taking the hard, coarse edge of rusticity, and in softening social life. The vices of refined and cultivated periods are personal vices such as proceed from too unrestrained a pursuit of pleasure in ourselves, not from a desire to inflict pain on others.²⁰⁶

As the quotation unfolds, Massinger's Sir Giles appears to encompass a fragment of what we can now view as native English untouched values. Hazlitt's text implies that he is a natural aristocrat: a museum piece, yet in an admirable state of self-determination (the critic's dislike of Scottish literary influences is well documented.) This a curious and subtle inference, and appears as an attempt to diminish the issue of Sir Giles as an overreacher. Massinger's plot turns upon the question of Sir Giles' social standing: his wealth appears to have been acquired through illegal property deals and extortion, rather than access to a family title and vault. He wishes to attain respectability, by marrying his daughter to 'old money' in the shape of Lord Lovell. His inability to succeed suggests a residual faith in the just principles of this old ruling order, but also demonstrates their vigilance and determination to keep such as Sir Giles on the sidelines. He is, after-all, despatched to Bedlam for his pains, and does not view himself, as we have seen, as morally or intellectually separate from those who aim to exclude him.

The reference point for the "cultivated periods" referred to in Hazlitt's passage is relatively obscure.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the general tone of the piece appears to suggest that such powers as Sir Giles wields in Massinger's play have now been limited, by means of an on-going civilising process. Society is evolving, and rendering the

power-base more accountable. The issue of "personal vices" which the critic raises in relation to this vision of civilisation, is particularly fascinating.²⁰⁸ We cannot judge contemporary abuses of power in the same way that we judge Sir Giles, because we have the benefit of entrenched legal accountability, which maintains a just social order. "The vices of ... cultivated periods" are to be viewed as personal: that is, mutable and self-contained.²⁰⁹ What appears to absolve the modern Sir Giles of similar behaviour is his motivation towards vice: it is innocently self-seeking, rather than overtly aggressive and threatening to the power-base itself.

A similar sinister paradox appears again in the 1820 lecture on Beaumont and Fletcher, when the dramatists are distanced from the "personal vanity and laxity of principle" which the critic views in their dramas. "I do not say this was the character of the men; but it strikes me as the character of their minds. the two things are very distinct"(p.110). Beaumont and Fletcher do not intend to promote anti-monarchical feeling in their dramas: their innate moral sense ensures this. "Some of the most unguarded professors of a general license of behaviour", we recall, "have been the last persons to take the benefit of their own doctrine" (p.110). Even the theatrical whitewash which the prodigious personality of Kean can bring to a problematical drama nevertheless, is not effective in the case of *The Duke Of Milan*. The play cannot be rescued, as "the character is too much at cross-purposes with itself, and before the actor has time to give its full effect to any impulse of passion, it is interrupted and broken by some caprice or change of object".²⁰¹ Like Middleton and Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger offers no clear moral line, and so he is shown as unable to control his material: to have no authority over it.

In offering an analysis of *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, Hazlitt makes a

concerted effort to give a praiseworthy account of Massinger. It is notable that he chooses a comic drama to fulfil this role. Hazlitt's comments on comedy are rare, but the most telling and dismissive phrase appears in his 1818 lecture on Shakespeare and Milton. "Shakespeare's tragedies are better than his comedies, because tragedy is better than comedy".²¹ Massinger's comic success, then, hardly overcomes what the critic views as a general rejection of tragic ideals. The opening lecture in the series *Lectures On The English Poets* sets out the value of tragedy as a means of cataloguing and controlling representations of distress: clarifying and defining their value to us through the paradoxical process of transcendence. The rapidity of the tumultuous ascent towards the "highest contemplations of human life" indicate a legitimate, healthily taxing journey which will reveal an essential truth about ourselves. Both the unwieldy nature of tragedy, and its eventual stable resolution, play a part in reflecting the genre as an imperfect, but potent national resource.

Tragic poetry, which is the most impassioned species of it, strives to carry on the feeling to the utmost point of sublimity and pathos, by all the force of comparison or contrast; loses the sense of present suffering in the imaginary exaggeration of it; exhausts the terror or pity by an unlimited indulgence of it; grapples with impossibilities in its desperate impatience of restraint; throws us back upon the past, forward into the future; brings every moment of our being or object of nature in startling review before us; and in the rapid whirl of events, lifts us from the depths of woe to the highest contemplations of human life.²²

In order to palliate Massinger's inability to "arrive at the true pathos and sublime of human life" (p.131), Hazlitt elevates his comic text to the level reserved for tragedy. This necessarily involves him, as I have shown, in a domestication of issues raised within *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*. Justice Greedy, for example, is a remarkably powerful caricature of political corruption. The play does receive

criticism, though, for displaying the "Unitarian" qualities viewed in Joanna Baillie's dramas.²³ Baillie, as I will go on to argue in the following chapter, is accused of attempting to stylise and thus misrepresent the essential harmonious complexity of the human condition. Massinger is taken to task over the very elements which sustain his pointed social satire. Sir Giles, for example, is prepared to prostitute his daughter to the prospective wealthy husband, in order to whet his appetite for the financial union which Overreach himself desires. The nineteenth-century critic views the actions of Sir Giles and his creator as the product of "obstinacy" (p.136), something which is both anti-social and anti-Shakespearean. In employing 'Unitarian' principles, Massinger implies that the motivation which precipitates Sir Giles' actions is culturally based. His "obstinacy" is not a choice, but a condition of the position he holds, and wishes to further, within the play-text.

Shakespeare's characters act from mixed motives, and are made what they are by various circumstances. Massinger's characters act from single motives, and become what they are, and remain so, by a pure effort of the will, in spite of circumstances. This last author endeavoured to embody an abstract principle; labours hard to bring out the same individual trait in its most exaggerated state; and the force of his impassioned character arises, for the most part, from the obstinacy with which they exclude every other feeling. Their vices look of a gigantic stature from their standing alone. Their actions seem extravagant from their having always the same fixed aim—that same incorrigible purpose. The fault of Sir Giles Overreach, in this respect, is less in the excess to which he pushes a favourite propensity, than in the circumstance of its being unmixed with any other virtue or vice. (p.136)

The choice of the text in question is clearly unusual: as a comedy, it is not bound to support the critic's outline of tragic conventions. The play then, is ultimately invoked in order to underline two contradictory critical positions on the subject of Massinger. It illustrates his serious and inexcusable faults, and also offers

the means of his absolution, and subsequent place in the ubiquitous "list of dramatic worthies" (p.143). Massinger's re-instatement is a remarkably subtle procedure.

Social satire in a comic framework clearly lends itself to the type of essentialist reading which Hazlitt attempts to construct for Renaissance tragedy in general. It may be possible to argue that the issues raised in *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* only evade censorship by means of the comic convention which requires that the villain receives his portion of poetic justice. Hazlitt, however, elevates the pointed caricature of Sir Giles, Justice Greedy and Wellborn to the level of an essential truth about a certain emblematic human failing, which we may recognise and cheerfully disclaim. As *Overreach* suffers a timely reversal, it is possible to view the restitution of a morally determined social order at the close of the play. This is what the critic draws from the invocation of a comic drama, and offers as evidence for Massinger's place in the revised canon of seventeenth-century English plays. In order to silence anti-tragic representations in *The Duke Of Milan*, the subordinate comic genre is permitted to take centre stage and fulfil the role reserved exclusively for tragedy. Once again, nevertheless, the critic indicates that this playwright remains a relatively dubious "candidate for praise".²¹⁴ This is shown in the preference for the modern acted interpretation of the play. The humour of Munden's Sir Giles supersedes the satirical element in the "horrid laughter"²¹⁵ which Massinger's text incites.

As I have shown, Hazlitt views Shakespeare as his tragic standard, and it is against this that Massinger is accused of transgressing.

Impassioned poetry is an emanation of the moral and intellectual part of our nature, as well as the sensitive—of the desire to know, of the will to act, and the power to feel; ought to appeal to these different parts of our constitution in order to

be perfect ... the tragedy of Shakespeare, which is true poetry, stirs our inmost affections; abstracts evil from itself by combining it with all forms of imagination, and with the deepest workings of the heart, and rouses the whole man within us.²¹⁶

This quotation, taken from the 1818 lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, prefigures the later arguments which relate to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Webster and Tourneur may reflect elements of Shakespeare's genius but they are regulated to the role of disciples, gifted, yet unenlightened. Hazlitt's Shakespeare is personified, as this passage progresses, almost in terms of an Old Testament omniscience. He accepts the duty of policing "all corners of the earth" with his "searching glance" in order to set down what we now view as a "fit subject for [tragedy]".²¹⁷ Plays which were not written by Shakespeare, then, are not authorised by him.

It has been said by some critic, that Shakespeare was distinguished from the other dramatic writers of his day only by his wit; that they had all his other qualities but that; that one writer had as much sense, another as much fancy ... This statement is not true; nor is the inference from it well-founded, even if it were. ... the great distinction of Shakespeare's genius was its virtually including the genius of all great men of his age, and not his differing from them in one accidental particular. But to have done with such minute and literal trifling.

The striking peculiarity of Shakespeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds—so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar bias, or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but he was like all other men. ... He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them with anticipation, intuitively, into all the conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion, or turn of thought. He had 'a mind reflecting ages past', and present—all the people that ever lived there. There was no respect of persons with him. His genius shone equally on the evil and on the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar: 'All corners of the earth, kings, queens, and states, maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave', are hardly hid from his searching glance. He was like

the genius of humanity, changing places with all of us at pleasure, and playing with our purposes as with his own. He turned the globe round for his amusement, and surveyed the generations of men, and the individuals as they passed.²¹⁸

What Shakespeare alone achieves, then, is the fusion of the generic elements of poetry and history. As he sees where we are going, his tragic representations fulfil an idealist function which is based upon a revealed truth. He fills the symbolic void which the mundane process of history constructs as a by-product of its own formal regulations. History, we recall, produces "the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed".²¹⁹ We are told, in the 1820 lecture on Massinger and Ford, that Shakespeare "never tampered with unfair subjects" (p.137). What Hazlitt represents in his mythological portrait of the transhistorical living Shakespeare, is a prevailing sense of moral order which is reconstituted for forthcoming generations.

It is on this point, then, that John Ford and his supposed successor Joanna Baillie are singled out for criticism. The very nature of the "extravagances" in which they indulge ensures that they are an unproductive source for any sense of a given moral order. This is a relatively unusual reading of Ford's works at this time, and the reference to an alternative reading of *The Broken Heart* appears to acknowledge Lamb's writing on the subject. Lamb emphasises the residual element which offers a just reconstruction of social order by the surviving representative of the power-base, Calantha. Hazlitt chooses, however, to highlight what he sees as the anti-social elements in Ford's writing. Firstly, the playwright appears to be concerned with stylistic devices, which the critic views as both anti-tragic, and appealing to popular acclaim. This sets the text firmly within its own historical moment, and therefore limits its transcendent poetic possibilities. The specific complaint made against Ford's style is overturned by William Carew Hazlitt, who points out that the

"mathematical staircase" is the product of "modern editors" and not of John Ford (p.137). The second complaint, against Ford's anti-sociality, sets the issue on a personal level once again. This limits the playwright's disruptive potential, and also allows the critic to recall a contemporary anecdote to support his vision of the dramatist as a social outcast.

I do not find much other power in the author ... than that of playing with edged tools, and knowing the use of poisoned weapons. ... Except for the last scene of the *Broken Heart* (which I think extravagant—others may think sublime, and be right) they are merely exercises of style and wire-drawn sentiment. Where they have not the sting of illicit passion, they are quite pointless, and seem painted on gauze, or spun on cobwebs. The affected brevity and division of some lines into hemistichs, &c., so as to make in one case a mathematical staircase ... is an instance of frigid and ridiculous pedantry. An artificial elaborateness is the general characteristic of Ford's style. In this respect his plays resemble Miss Baillie's more than any others I am acquainted with, and are quite distinct from the exuberance and unstudied force which characterised his immediate predecessors. There is too much of scholastic subtlety, an innate perversity ... which either seeks the irritation of inadmissible subjects, or to stimulate its own faculties by taking the most barren, and making something out of nothing, in a spirit of contradiction. He does not *draw along* with the reader: he does not work upon our sympathy, but on our antipathy and indifference; and there is as little of the social or gregarious principle in his productions as there appears to have been in his personal habits, if we are to believe Sir John Suckling, who says of him in the Sessions of the Poets:

'In the dumps John Ford alone by himself sat
With folded arms and melancholy hat'. (pp.137-8)

Ford, then is essentially unpoetical, because his work is viewed as "characteristic", rather than exclusively derivative of the distinct Shakespearean standard. The fundamental essence of this standard, nevertheless, is its very indistinctness, which permits the critic to appropriate it as an example of "the spirit of life and motion in the universe".²³⁰

Hazlitt bolsters his comments on the essential function of poetry by invoking

Francis Bacon.

Poetry, according to Lord Bacon, for this reason, 'has something divine in it, because it raises the mind and hurries it into sublimity, by conforming the shows of things to the desires of the soul, instead of subjecting the soul to external things, as reason and history do'. ... This language is not the least true to nature, because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural, if it conveys the impression which the object of passion makes on the mind.²²¹

Bacon is employed to illustrate a poetic ideal form which actually represents a form of material reality. Our experience of this reality is transitory and subtle, and also highly prized, as it is only accessible to spiritually sensitive individuals. Hazlitt's "naturalist" is spiritually handicapped.

Let the naturalist, if he will, catch the glow-worm, carry it home ... and find it next morning nothing but a little grey worm; let the poet visit it at evening, when beneath the scented hawthorn and the crescent moon it has built itself a palace of emerald light. This also one part of nature, one appearance which the glow-worm represents, and that not the least interesting; so poetry is one part of the history of the human mind, though it is neither science nor philosophy. It cannot be concealed, however that the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to clip the wings of poetry.²²²

A clearer definition of Hazlitt's position in invoking Bacon may be gained with reference to Jonathan Dollimore's account of Bacon's outlook on the issue of poetry versus history. Dollimore discusses Bacon's views on the "interrelationship between poesy, poetic justice and providence", and concludes that the Elizabethan is willing to imply that the idealist function of poetry is ideologically based.²²³ Poetry sets itself up as a substitute for history and determines the outcome of events "more just in retribution".²²⁴

In *De Augmentis* this suggestion that poetry is agreeable illusion is even stronger: 'Poesy seems to bestow upon human

nature those things which history denies to it; and to satisfy the mind with the shadows of things when the substance cannot be obtained' (p.440). Consequently the fictive and ideal elements of poetry are inferior by comparison with those branches of knowledge engage, albeit painfully, with empirical reality:

'So as it *appeareth* that poetry serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation. And therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason *doth buckle and bow the mind to the nature of things*'.

... By organising categories of knowledge in this way, Bacon retains the Aristotelian categories of poetry and history, but effectively reverses their priority.²³

Hazlitt, then, blurs the fictive element which Bacon highlights as our principal experience of the poetic text. For the former, we recall, poetry "is the stuff of which our life is made".²⁴ This selective personification of Bacon accords with the principles which constitute the divine Shakespeare for his readers. The critic indicates which qualities we are to recognise as essentially human, and artistic: and which contexts best display them for us.

In his recent volume *Shakespearean Constitutions, Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (1989) Jonathan Bate maintains the argument for a reading of Hazlitt as an anti-establishment writer, which he first undertook in an earlier book, *Shakespeare And The English Romantic Imagination* (1986).

It is a misunderstanding of Hazlitt to say that he was a character critic in the tradition that runs from Morgan to Bradley, and which was exploded by L.C. rights in 'How many Children had Lady Macbeth?' As the simile in the gradations in the picture reminds us, Hazlitt was an art critic before he was a literary critic, and what he learnt as an art critic was to look at a painting whole, to see it as a unified structure. An art critic does not take human figures out of a painting, nor does Hazlitt take the characters out of a

Shakespearean play. He writes about Shakespeare's characters because they constitute the heart of the play, but he writes about them in relation to each other because it is from their relationships that the play derives its wholeness.²²⁷

What Bate is actually describing, however, is Hazlitt's conception of a poetic whole which constitutes the basis of the essential humanist principles upholding the Shakespeare myths: ensuring its "future determination".²²⁸ This is a process which, as we have seen, promotes Shakespeare as unlimited by presenting him as a displaced transhistorical symbol. In concentrating upon what he sees as Hazlitt's critical deference to the "heart of the play", Bate accords with his subject's vision of poetry superseding the conditions in which it is produced, and revealing "the stuff of which our life is made".²²⁹ Indeed, in his account of Hazlitt's views on Johnson's Shakespearean criticism, Bate isolates the nineteenth-century writer from a critical tradition much as Hazlitt isolates Shakespeare from his contemporaries.

What Johnson says of Shakespeare may be applied to Johnson on Shakespeare: 'What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity' (Johnson's preface, quoted, HW iv 178). Hazlitt's Shakespearean criticism, on the other hand, though it sometimes misfires, always has a Shakespearean vitality.²³⁰

It is, we recall, such a display of homogeneous "vitality" which separates Hazlitt's Shakespeare from the provocative "perversity" (p.138) of John Ford, who sustains a persistent representation of "inadmissible subjects" (p.138). Bate's metaphor of Hazlitt as a symbol of artistic sensibility accords with the latter's vision of a necessary standard of dramatic and critical decorum. Bate's Hazlitt remains true to the same Shakespearean standard, whilst Johnson is seen to enact a process of fragmentation. What Johnson is seen to do, then, is disrupt our comprehension of this

standard in a similar fashion to the majority of Hazlitt's Renaissance playwrights. Like Hazlitt's Ford, Bate's Johnson "makes something out of nothing in the spirit of contradiction".³¹

In outlining Hazlitt's critical qualities, Bate comes perilously close to endowing him with the paradoxical interpretive gifts of Coleridge's "true critic". The Georgian writer becomes the passive mediator of Shakespearean meaning, by "giv[ing] himself up to ... the language of the text".

Like Schlegel and Coleridge, he emphasises the rapidity of *Macbeth*, and that rapidity seems to be enacted in his own verbal constructions: 'driven along', 'reels', 'stagers', 'throw', 'baffling', 'entangling', 'blindly rushing forward' and 'recoiling' occur in swift succession ... As he does when he allows Shakespearean quotations to speak through him, Hazlitt gives himself up to and re-expresses the language of the text.³²

Bate's account of Hazlitt's reading of *Coriolanus* is also problematical on several levels. He refers to the review of Kean in the part of *Coriolanus* (*London Magazine* Jan. 1820) and gives a short extract.

Mr Kean's acting is not of the patrician order; he is one of the people, and what might be termed a *radical* performer ... That is, he cannot play *Coriolanus* so well as he plays some other characters, or as we have seen it played often.' ... In what sense is Kean a '*radical*' performer, save in the obvious one that he came from and moved in lower social circles than Kemble did? It is not that Hazlitt saw him as a Tom Paine of the stage, but that the language used to describe his acting made him into the theatrical equivalent of certain key figures in the radical pantheon. Hazlitt and others thought of Kean as an *electrical* performer. ... Hazlitt persistently applied to his performances such phrases as 'electrical effect', 'bursts', 'energy', 'electrical shocks'.³³

Curiously, Bate appears to move away from his carefully constructed reading of Hazlitt as a radical critic at this point. A close reading of the review in question, however, suggests a possible explanation for this evasion, an explanation which

initially appears contradictory. Hazlitt sheds light upon his own critical position as regards the text of *Coriolanus* by means of his dealings with Kean's performances. He promotes Kean as failing the demands of the role precisely because the role demands a display of anti-populist feeling.

The intolerable airs and aristocratical pretensions of which he [Coriolanus] is the slave, and to which he falls victim, did not seem *legitimate* in him [Kean] but upstart, turbulent and vulgar.²⁵⁴

What the critic is ultimately praising Kean for is his refusal to permit an audience to experience *Coriolanus* as a political drama: to fully engage in the debate which the text raises in relation to the general's rise to power within the play-society. Jonathan Dollimore gives a succinct account of this question.

For as long as this hero remains in service to the state an ideological effect occurs which constitutes his reputation as following naturally from his *virtus*. When that reputation is used against the state there emerges a contradiction which reveals both reputation and state to be in some way prior and in some way constitutive of *virtus*.²⁵⁵

Kean is portrayed as giving a deliberately weak performance in order to shield us from what is, in Shakespeare's play, a disruption of a vision of artistic and critical decorum based upon essential humanist principles. Jonathan Bate, then, may be seen to distance himself from his previous reading of Hazlitt's criticism here, in order to shield his central thesis from a similar disruptive outcome. Instead of following through an analysis of the review, he takes refuge in a re-assertion of the Shakespearean energy which both he and Hazlitt recognise in Kean's performances.

Bate reads Hazlitt's opening paragraph on *Coriolanus*, in *Characters Of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) as offering an egalitarian vision of Shakespeare's understanding of patrician and populace. In support of his argument, the twentieth-

century critic refers to Hazlitt's statement that Shakespeare "was at once an actor and spectator in the scene".²⁵⁶ What Bate omits to refer to, however, is the position which Shakespeare holds in *Lectures On The English Poets* (1818) which gives a definitive account of the function which Hazlitt would have him fulfil. This text refers, we recall, to an omniscient judgemental Shakespeare, whose unique genius and "no one peculiar bias"²⁵⁷ invests him with a sense of order which may legitimately police the cultural institutions and artistic productions of "the generations of men".²⁵⁸ Bate, then, does not investigate the implications of Hazlitt's Shakespearean standard. This, I would argue, is a selective mis-reading of Hazlitt's position, and results in the unconvincing conclusion that the nineteenth-century critic sets up a theoretical debate in his essay on *Coriolanus*, which unmask the elitist function of poetry.

But suddenly Hazlitt makes a turn that subverts this principle: 'Shakespeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion for baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it'. ... from this conclusion arises a general principle which seems to undermine the whole project of Hazlitt's writing by calling into question the belief that art is a 'discipline of humanity', that 'the spirit of poetry' is 'favourable to liberty and humanity' ... 'The cause of the people is indeed but little calculated as a subject for poetry ... The language of poetry naturally falls within the language of power'. ... Hazlitt then sets up a dichotomy between the imagination and the understanding 'The principle of poetry is a very anti levelling principle', he continues, introducing a series of images that unequivocally place poetry on the side of arbitrary monarchical power: ... Hazlitt seems to be one step away from becoming a kind of radicalised Plato arguing that poetry should be banned because it is harmful to the ideal republic. ...

How, then, can poetry—can Shakespeare—be repossessed for the cause of liberty? First, I think it must be accepted that Hazlitt has shown that if we are to have poetry in our ideal republic, then we cannot have 'levelling' in every respect. He is surely right to argue that it is the nature of art to sympathise with the lion more than the flock of sheep or herd of wild asses.²⁵⁹

In his concluding attempt to convince us of Hazlitt's sincere advancement of the obscure "cause of liberty", however, Bate offers what may be ultimately recognised as a summary reassertion of the inherent conservatism which Hazlitt's critique displays. The modern critic takes up Hazlitt's metaphor of the legitimate predatory lion, which implies that a pre-social natural selection foregrounds the principle of artistic bias. Hazlitt's passage is given below.

Poetry is right-royal. It puts the individual before the species, the one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep or herd of wild asses is a more poetical object than they; and we even take part with the lordly beast, because our vanity or some other feeling makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party. So we feel some concern for the citizens of Rome ... till Coriolanus comes in and with blows and big words drives this set of "poor rats", this rascal scum, to their homes and beggary before him.²⁴⁰

Hazlitt's comment that "the language of poetry naturally falls within the language of power"²⁴¹ when viewed in the context of his views on poetry as genre, and the authoritative vigour which he sees Coriolanus espouse, is clearly no theoretical interrogation of establishment discourses. What this critic is arguing for, is the concept of a prior poetic justification and legitimisation of this power. Poetry is invested with the unitarian foresight reserved for Joanna Baillie's tragedies. As its critical spokesman, Hazlitt underwrites its appropriation of Shakespeare as its transhistorical signifier, and the position of his dramatic contemporaries as firmly restrained in his orbit.

Footnotes.

- 1 References to Coleridge's criticism are taken from the two volume 1967 reprint of the second edition of Coleridge *Shakespearean Criticism* (first published 1960) edited by Thomas Middleton Raysor.
- 2 See bibliography for details of the edition referred to.
- 3 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.195.
- 4 As above, p.194.
- 5 As above, p.195.
- 6 For Joanna Baillie's opening remarks on her own originality, see *A Series of Plays*, edited by Donald H. Reiman, pp.1-2. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 7 Wordsworth's preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* (1805), in *The Lyrical Ballads* edited by Derek Roper, Second Edition, p.35. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 8 *Radical Tragedy, Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, p.9. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 9 *Literary Theory*, p.106.
- 10 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.195.
- 11 As above, p.196.
- 12 As above, p.195.
- 13 As above, p.216.
- 14 Page-references to Arthur O. Lovejoy's essay refer to the volume *English Romantic Poets, Modern Essays in Criticism*, pp.3-24. Full publication details of the edition referred to are given in the bibliography.
- 15 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.195.
- 16 See note 13, above.
- 17 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.216.

- 18 Wordsworth's Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* (1805), p.38.
- 19 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.1, p.195.
- 20 As above.
- 21 Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* (1805), p.38.
- 22 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.1, p.216.
- 23 Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, pp.187-288. Page-references are given after quotations in the text, and details of the edition referred to are given in the bibliography.
- 24 Lamb makes this observation in the preface to his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808). For the purpose of this study, the text referred to is Volume 4 of *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, edited by E.V. Lucas 1904. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 25 Full details of the text referred to given in the bibliography.
- 26 Full details of the text referred to given in the bibliography.
- 27 *Lamb as Critic*, p.88.
- 28 *Literary Theory*, p.136.
- 29 See *Lamb as Critic*, p.323.
- 30 Full details of the text referred to are given in the bibliography.
- 31 *Lamb as Critic*, p.307.
- 32 As above, p.300.
- 33 See note 27, above.
- 34 The title of Bennett's article is 'Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and their Texts'. This is to be found in *Post Structuralism and the Question of History*, edited by Altridge, Bennington and Young, 1987. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 35 See *Literary Theory*, p.135-6 and Barthes' *Criticism and Truth*.
- 36 *Literary Theory*, p.107.

- 37 Roger Sales, *English Literature in History, 1780-1830*, p.16. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 38 Roger Sales, p.17.
- 39 Page-references to Hazlitt's *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth &c.*, (1820) and *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) refer to the 1882 reprint of William Carew Hazlitt's 1869 One Volume edition of both texts; published as *Elizabethan Literature and Characters of Shakespeare*. Page references are given after quotations in the text.
- 40 Tony Bennett, p.75; see note 34, above.
- 41 *Literary Theory*, p.67.
- 42 *Literary Theory*, p.69
- 43 See *Criticism and Truth*, p.39.
- 44 Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.3. All references to Hazlitt's writing in this paragraph are taken from this page.
- 45 See note 40, above.
- 46 Paul de Man, p.191.
- 47 Yury Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*. Full details of the edition referred to are given in the bibliography, and page-numbers are given after quotations in the text.
- 48 Lotman explains his concept of "redundancy" in a footnote to p.32.
'Redundancy' is the possibility of predicting the following elements of the text conditioned by the limitations imposed on a given type of language. The higher the redundancy, the lower the information content of the text.
(Analysis of the Poetic Text, p.282)
- 49 Tony Bennett, p.76; see note 34, above.
- 50 *Literary Theory*, p.109.
- 51 Roger Sales, p.16.
- 52 *Alternative Shakespeares*, p.4.
- 53 See *Literary Theory*, pp.106-7.

- 54 See note 39, above.
- 55 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.14.
- 56 See *A Series of Plays*, edited by Donald H. Reiman, Vol.I, p.5. A detailed discussion of this issue is contained in the following Chapter.
- 57 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.196.
- 58 As above.
- 59 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.12.
- 60 See *A Series of Plays*, edited by Donald H. Reiman, Vol.I, p.5. A full discussion of this issue may be found in the following chapter.
- 61 Roger Sales, p.16.
- 62 Joanna Baillie's views on the state of the nineteenth-century theatre are full of physical details, and are a useful counterpoint to the anecdotal accounts to be found in Byron's *Letters and Journals*. Baillie's comments are to be found in the Introductory remarks to her third volume of *A Series of Plays on the Passions* (1812), in *A Series of Plays*, edited by Donald H. Reiman, Vol.III.
- 63 See Roger Sales, p.15.
- 64 "Reconstruction" is one of the terms which goes to make up Roger Sales' "famous five Rs". See note 63, above.
- 65 See *Critical Essays on Robert Burns*, edited by Donald A. Low, pp.119-120. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 66 Hazlitt's dislike of overt Scottish nationalism is detailed in the following account, which is quoted in *The Art of Robert Burns*, edited by R.D.S. Jack and Andrew Noble. Full details are given in the bibliography. See also, 'On the Scotch character', *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, Centenary Edition*, edited by P.P. Howe, London (1939), Vol.17, pp.100-106.

You would think that there was no other place in the world but Scotland, but that they strive to convince you at every turn of its superiority to all other places. Nothing goes down but Scotch magazines and reviews, Scotch airs, Scotch bravery, Scotch hospitality, Scotch novels, and Scotch logic. Someone the other day at a literary dinner in Scotland apologised for alluding to the name of Shakespeare so often, because he was not a Scotchman. What a blessing that the Duke of Wellington

was not a Scotchman, or we would never have heard the last of him! Even Sir Walter Scott, I understand, talks of the Scotts novels in all companies; and by waiving the title of author, is at liberty to repeat the subject *ad infinitum*.

- 67 Roger Sales, p.26.
- 68 See *Radical Tragedy*, Chapter I.v.
- 69 See *Radical Tragedy*, Chapter 4.
- 70 See note 40, above.
- 71 Lamb's preface to the *Specimens*, p.xii.
- 72 As above.
- 73 For an abbreviated version of this essay, see *Lamb as Critic*, pp.158-9.
- 74 See note 27, above.
- 75 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, pp.29-30.
- 76 As above, p.37.
- 77 As above, pp.35-7.
- 78 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, p.65.
- 79 Roger Sales, p.15.
- 80 See note 71, above.
- 81 See note 73, above.
- 82 See note 69, above.
- 83 *Radical Tragedy*, p.140.
- 84 *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol.4, p.150.
- 85 As above, p.160.
- 86 See *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, pp.35-6.
- 87 For a discussion of this issue see *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, p.63.

- 88 *Criticism and Truth*, p.34.
- 89 Full details of the text referred to are given in the bibliography.
- 90 *A Theory of Literary Production*, p.17. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 91 *Some Versions of Pastoral*, p.13. 'This perspective is echoed by Roger Sales' "requiem", which he describes on pages 16-17 of *English Literature in History, 1780-1830*. Full details of the edition of Empson's work referred to, are given in the bibliography.
- 92 See note 40, above.
- 93 As above.
- 94 See Hazlitt's essay 'On Consistency of Opinion', Works, edited by P.P. Howe, Vol.17, p.23:
- "I cannot say that, from my own experience, I have found that the persons most remarkable for sudden and violent changes of principle have been cast in the softest or most susceptible mould. All their notions have been exclusive, bigoted, and intolerant."
- 95 See *Lamb as Critic*, p.307, and note 98, below.
- 96 See note 94, above.
- 97 *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs, or Advice to a Patriot*, Works, Vol.1, p.95.
- 98 Hazlitt's essay 'On the Spirit of Partisanship', Vol.17, p.34.
- 99 *Penshurst*, p.25. Full details of the edition referred to are given in the bibliography.
- 100 *Penshurst*, p.125.
- 101 *Some Versions of Pastoral*, pp.29-30.
- 102 As above, p.30.
- 103 *Penshurst*, p.118.
- 104 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.17, pp.22-34.
- 105 As above.

- 106 See note 40, above.
- 107 *Culture and Society, 1870-1950*. All references to Williams' text in this paragraph refer to the preface, pp.xv to xvi. Full publication details are given in the bibliography.
- 108 See note 103, above.
- 109 See note 40, above.
- 110 As above.
- 111 See note 96, above.
- 112 "It is the design of the following essay to shew that the human mind is naturally disinterested, or that it is naturally interested in the welfare of others in the same way, and from the same direct motives, by which we are impelled to the pursuit of our own interest. ... It is only from the interest excited in him by future objects that man becomes a moral agent, or is denominated selfish, or the contrary, according to the manner in which he is affected by what related to his own *future* interest, or that of others."
 (Works, Vol.I, p.1.)
- This passage offers an intriguing gloss upon Hazlitt's stance in his revival of seventeenth-century writers. His own interest in the outcome of his lectures, and the cultural ramifications of reintroducing raw golden-age values into an artistically impoverished society, suggests that his own position qualifies him for the label "moral agent". Hazlitt is obviously uneasy over the ideological implications of such 'agency', but encompasses his wariness within a passage which negates and abstracts its importance. After all, he tells us that self-interest is essentially common-interest.
- 113 *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, p.162. Full details of this edition are given in the bibliography.
- 114 See note 40, above.
- 115 References to Hazlitt's criticism in this paragraph are taken from p.8 of *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*.
- 116 See note 73, above.
- 117 *Radical Tragedy*, p.22.
- 118 *Edward Weep'st thou already? List awhile to me,
 And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is,*

Or as Matrevis', hewn from the Caucasus,
 Yet it will melt ere I have done my tale.
 This dungeon where they keep me is the sink
 Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.

Lightborn O villains!

Edward And there in mire and puddle I have stood
 This ten days' space, and lest that I should sleep,
 One plays continually upon a drum;
 They give me bread and water, being a king;
 So that, for want of sleep and sustenance,
 My mind's, distemper'd, and my body's numb:
 And whether I have limbs or no, I know not.
 Oh! would my blood drop out from every vein,
 As doth this water from my tatter'd robes!
 Tell Isabel the queen, I look'd not thus,
 When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
 And there unhors'd the Duke of Cleremont.

Hazlitt gives his source as "[Marlowe's] Works, ed. Dyce, ii. 281-2".
Lectures on the age of Elizabeth, p.55.

- 119 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.7, p.230.
 120 *Shakespeare And The English Romantic Imagination*, p.38.
 121 As above, p.37
 122 See note 40, above.
 123 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.7, p.236.
 124 As above, Vol.7, p.239.
 125 As above, p.241.
 126 See note 40, above.
 127 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.7, p.241.
 128 As above.
 129 As above.
 130 As above, p.242.
 131 As above.

- 132 As above.
- 133 As above, p.239.
- 134 See Roger Sales, pp.16-17.
- 135 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.7, p.242.
- 136 *Works*, Vol.5. p.2.
- 137 *Old English Plays*, 1814. Hazlitt's lack of interest in *The Changeling* may also be a reflection of Lamb's seeming unwillingness to give an extract from the play in his *Specimens* (1808). As Lamb tells us that he refers to texts in The British Museum, it is not likely that he would not have come in contact with the play. Hazlitt dedicated his *Characters Of Shakespeare's Play's* (1817) to Lamb, and perhaps chooses to defer to his judgement on Middleton's play.
- 138 *Classical Literary Criticism*, p.58. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 139 As above, p.56.
- 140 As above, p.43.
- 141 As above.
- 142 See note 24, above.
- 143 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, pp.1-18.
- 144 *Classical Literary Criticism*, p.57.
- 145 As above, p.56.
- 146 Hazlitt does not give specific scenic references to a text. The references given are from *Jacobean Tragedies*, edited by Andor Gomme, 6th Edition, 1984. Full details are given in the bibliography.

- 147
- I have watcht this meeting, and do wonder much
 What shall become of t'other, I'm sure both
 Cannot be serv'd unless she transgress; happily
 Then, I'll put in for one: for if a woman
 Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
 She spreads ans mounts then like arithmetic,
 1, 10, 100, 1000, 10000,
 Proves in time sutler to an army royal.

The Changeling, (II.2.57-64) in *Jacobean Tragedies*, edited by Andor Gomme, pp.259-60.

- 148 **Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude,
I tumbled into th' world a gentleman.**
The Changeling (II.1.49) in *Jacobean Tragedies*, p.254.
- 149 See note 40, above.
- 150 ***The Literature of Terror, A History of Gothic Fictions From 1765 to the Present Day***, p.1. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 151 ***The Works Of Charles and Mary Lamb***, Vol.IV, p.127.
- 152 See note 40, above.
- 153 ***The Works Of Charles and Mary Lamb***, Vol.IV, p.129.
- 154 *Jacobean Tragedies*, pp.344-345.
- 155 See note 24, above.
- 156 *Preface to the Specimens*, p.xii.
- 157 *Culture And Society*, pp.41-2.
- 158 As above, p.30
- 159 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.8.
- 160 *Culture and Society*, p.36.
- 161 As above, p.42.
- 162 See note 40, above.
- 163 See note 85, above.
- 164 *Preface to the Specimens*, p.xii.
- 165 ***The Revenger's Tragedy***, (III.6.204), in *Jacobean Tragedies*, p.124.
- 166 *Radical Tragedy*, p.140.
- 167 As above, p.140.
- 168 Eric Evans, ***The Forging Of The Modern State, Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870***, p.177.

- 169 As above.
- 170 See *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, p.38.
- 171 *Culture And Society*, p.31.
- 172 See note 170, above.
- 173 See *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, p.50.
- 174 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.V, p.2.
- 175 *Shakespeare And The English Romantic Imagination*, p.37.
- 176 *Culture And Society*, p.8.
- 177 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.VII, pp.226-229.
- 178 Eric Evans, p.13.
- 179 As above.
- 180 See note 40, above.
- 181 An example of Hazlitt's critique is given as follows:

There is nothing heroic in a multitude of miserable rogues not wishing to be starved, or complaining that they are like to be so: but when a single man comes forward to brave their cries and to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will, our admiration of his prowess is immediately converted into contempt for their pusillanimity. The insolence of power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority or even the natural resistance to it, has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination: it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed. The love of power in ourselves and the admiration of it in others are both natural to man: the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp, and circumstance, has more attraction than abstract right.

(*Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, p.51)

- 182 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol 7, p.226.
- 183 As above.

184 See note 120, above.

185 See note 173, above.

186 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.7, p.229.

187 *Culture And Society*, p.20.

188 As above, p.18.

189 Jeffrey is indeed concerned in principles. At all times he believes that the principles of literature were established irrevocably a long time ago. he declares in the *Edinburgh Review* that 'Poetry, has this much ... in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call into question' ... 'in matters of taste... there are no discoveries to be made, any more than in matters of morality... the elements of poetical interest are necessarily obvious and universal—they are within and about all men; and the topics by which they are suggested are proved to have been the same in every age, and every country of the world' Jeffrey states that Wordsworth especially is ignorant of 'the few settled and permanent maxims, which form the canon of general taste in all large and polished societies' ...

Thus Jeffrey appeals to principles, but in the period before 1811 he emphasizes that these principles have been adhered to by great writers through succeeding centuries; to the English tradition belong Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Johnson and Crabbe. Now Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Lamb with hardly creditable presumption expend their admittedly remarkable talents in setting themselves against the whole tradition. Jeffrey even goes so far as to set Wordsworth and his school against 'all existing authority' ... Jeffrey believes that poetry is primarily emotional rather than intellectual ... the end of poetry is to please without any laborious exercise of the understanding ... poets in general 'ought to be confined to the established creed and morality of their country, or the actual passions of mankind; and that practical dreamers ... who pretend to theorise according to their feverish fancies, without warrant from authority or reason, ought to be banished from the commonwealth of letters'.

Literary Critics and Reviewers in Early 19th Century Britain, pp.2-3.

190 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, p.289.

191 As above, p.2.

- 192 As above.
- 193 An account of Massinger's use of historical sources is given in Colin Gibson's Introductory Note to *The Duke Of Milan* in *The Selected Plays Of Philip Massinger*, p.3.
- 194 See note 40, above.
- 195 Quotations from *The Duke of Milan* refer to *The Selected Plays of Philip Massinger*, Vol.I, edited by Colin Gibson. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 196 The review describes the nature of this alteration as follows:
- In the original play, the Duke is killed by a poison which is spread by Francesco over the face of the deceased Duchess, whose lips her husband fondly kisses, though, cold in death, in the distracted state into which he is plunged by remorse for his rash act. But in the acted play, it is so contrived, that the sister of Francesco personates the murdered Duchess, and poisons the Duke (as it is concerted with her brother), by holding a flower in her hand, which, as he squeezes it, communicates the infection it has received from some juice in which it has been steeped. How he is to press the flower in her hand, in such a manner as not to poison her as well as himself, is left unexplained. The lady, however, does not die, and a reconciliation takes place between her and her former lover.
(Works, Vol 5. p.289)
- 197 Ibid., p.290. The following short quotation is to be found on this page also.
- 198 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, p.65.
- 199 "Villainy", p.35; "vice", p.42.
- 200 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, pp.147-8.
- 201 As above, pp.272-3.
- 202 As above, p.273.
- 203 As above, pp.273-4.
- 204 *Jacobean Tragedies*, p.305.
- 205 Hazlitt's review of *The Duke of Milan*, Works, Vol.5, p.290.

- 206 As above.
- 207 As above.
- 208 As above.
- 209 As above.
- 210 As above.
- 211 As above, p.56.
- 212 As above, p.5.
- 213 As above, p.47.
- 214 As above, p.144.
- 215 Nicholas Brook coins this term in his book, *Horrid laughter in Jacobean Tragedy*. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 216 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, p.6.
- 217 See the above volume, p.2.
- 218 As above, p.47.
- 219 See note 191, above.
- 220 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, p.3.
- 221 As above, pp.3-4.
- 222 As above, p.9.
- 223 *Radical Tragedy*, p.76.
- 224 Bacon quoted by Dollimore, see note 223, above.
- 225 As above.
- 226 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, p.2.
- 227 *Shakespearean Constitutions, Politics, Theatre, Criticism, 1780-183*. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 228 See note 40, above.

- 229 See note 226, above.
- 230 *Shakespearean Constitutions*, p.149.
- 231 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.138.
- 232 *Shakespearean Constitutions*, p.154.
- 233 As above, p.139.
- 234 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.18, p.290.
- 235 *Radical Tragedy*, p.218.
- 236 *Shakespearean Constitutions*, p.164.
- 237 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.5, p.47.
- 238 As above.
- 239 *Shakespearean Constitutions*, pp.164-7.
- 240 *Characters Of Shakespeare's Plays*, p.51.
- 241 As above, p.50.

CHAPTER TWO"Tormented in Obscurity" - "The Heretic", and the "Category of Art".

When Voltaire was asked why no woman has ever written a tolerable tragedy? "ah, (said the patriarch) the composition of tragedy requires *testicles*".—If this be true Lord knows what Joanna Baillie does—I suppose she borrows them.¹

Lord Byron, 1817

In the introductory chapter of his book, *The Literature of Terror* (1980) David Punter discusses the amorphous 'labelling' of a genre which attempts a particularly 'out of focus' sense of the historical past. He describes the term 'Gothic' as encompassing, for the early nineteenth-century reader/writer, a conception of disorder. The 'Goths' have fallen heir to a historical legacy as the destructive force which toppled the Roman Empire. The term thus became the focus for an anti-establishment impulse, but in a very non-specific and representational form.

The appreciation of a vision of disorder as reflected in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century literature is portrayed by Punter as a 'thematic' cultural reaction to a very English disease. This fear of an invasion of 'artificial' literary styles from the continent, invoking a subsequent suppression of the 'English questing spirit' is clearly uppermost in Hazlitt's *Elizabethan Literature and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. Punter includes James MacPherson's 'Ossian' poems, and the 'rediscovery' of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatists as a product of the 'Gothic' as a means of artistic cultural dissent.

where the classics offered a set of cultural models to be followed, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilised ... Gothic stood for the old fashioned as opposed to the modern; the barbaric as opposed to the civilised; crudity as opposed to elegance; old English Barons as opposed to the cosmopolitan gentry, indeed, often for the English and provincial as opposed to the European

or Frenchified ... Gothic qualities ... possessed a fire, a vigour, a sense of grandeur which was sorely needed in English culture. Furthermore they began to argue that there were whole areas of English cultural history which were being ignored, and that the way to breathe life into the culture was by re-establishing relations with this forgotten 'Gothic' past.²

The dissent is focused, then, in this description, as a movement born of aristocratic unease, Raymond Williams' "artist" attempting to represent his conceptual and social distance from the "artisan".³ The sense of cultural devaluation in an increasingly middle-class market force economy is seen to make what is seemingly a contradictory appeal to disorder.

Punter's consideration of the Jacobean dramatists within this process of 'gothic' revival offers a succinct reading of the particular 'thesis' of Lamb and Hazlitt. Their selective censorship, as has been discussed in an earlier chapter, institutes a de-politicisation of the "old plays" as an attempt to construct a sense of the continuity of historical past. The view of the Jacobean playwrights as 'imperfect' permits a point of contact for contemporary readers with a 'legitimate' literary historical manifestation of the peculiarly English military questing spirit of adventure. When combined with a vision of Elizabethan/ Jacobean intellectual vigour, this typified Hazlitt's 'spirit of the age'.

This 'imperfection' is, fundamentally, an evasive acknowledgement of the interrogative representation of morality in Renaissance Drama. The result is a curious and profoundly contradictory avowal of a contemporary kinship with them. The very decadence of the "old Dramatists" (which exposes their divergence from Shakespeare) serves to illustrate not only a latent and unrestrained national vitality, but shows how far we have fallen from the mythological impressions wrought as a focus for the achievements of Elizabethan culture. This same 'imperfection' thus

threatens the Jacobean Dramatists as a suitable point of contact from which to determine a revival of the benefits of their 'golden age'. The impoverished state of nineteenth-century drama intimates its vigorous precursor as the source of the present decline, and the recognition of a regenerative creative power in the Elizabethan/Jacobean dramatists invites a sense of limited historical communion with the Shakespeare mythos, defined as it is against their backdrop of decadence. Shakespeare's contemporaries are asserted to reflect a familiarity with their nineteenth-century heirs which will maintain a powerful sense of decorum and restraint regarding the 'tradition' of Shakespearean orthodoxy. The chronological communication between Shakespeare and his contemporaries allows Lamb and Hazlitt a 'window' into a sense of historical inspirational communion with Shakespeare. His mythological distance from his contemporaries (best illustrated in Coleridge's metaphor of the unattainable mountain-top) ensures Shakespeare's value as inviolate manifestation of the pinnacle of national achievement, and thus representation of perfection.⁴ The invocation of the Jacobeans offers a tentative aim towards the recovery of this intellectual/moral 'essential truth'. The attempt, however, is only ideologically tenable (in relation to maintaining the 'distance' required to sustain the impression of genuflection) as 'unfinished', an ongoing process in itself.

Joanna Baillie, (1762/1851) published her *SERIES OF PLAYS: In Which It Is Attempted To Delineate The Stronger Passions Of The Mind, Each Passion Being The Subject Of A Tragedy And A Comedy* between 1798 and 1812. These plays reveal a particularly tentative and problematic association with the revival of interest in Renaissance tragedy.⁵ Baillie's plays not only illustrate a 'gothic' vision of 'natural' disorder,

The inside of a Convent Chapel, of old Gothic architecture, almost dark; two torches only are seen at a distance, burning over a new-made grave. The noise of a loud wind, beating upon the windows and roof is heard. Enter two monks.

De Montfort, IV.2)

A wood, wild and savage; an entry to a cave, very much tangled with brushwood, is seen in the background ... BASIL is discovered standing near the front of the stage in a thoughtful posture, with a couple of pistols laid by him, on a piece of projecting rock; he pauses for some time.

(Count Basil, V.2)

they also exalt, in the entrepreneurial excitement of appealing to, the very social institutions which David Punter views as provoking the development of 'Gothic' as genre. (Punter quotes the 'heyday' of 'Gothic' fiction as between 1760-1820.)⁸

Joanne Baillie was born in Bothwell in 1792. Her father was a presbyterian minister, who became Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University. The widowed Mrs Baillie and her daughters moved to Oxford to stay with Joanna's elder brother Matthew, an Oxford medical graduate. Joanna and her sister later moved to Hampstead, where Joanna died in 1851. The preface to the 1851 first edition of her collected works describes her as:

wholly without affectation. No one ever claimed less deference or externally was more free from the profession of an author. She had all the simplicity of greatness... She was irreproachably good, and she was great.⁷

In the "Introductory Discourse" to her first volume of the *Plays on the Passions* (1798) Joanna Baillie embarks on a detailed discussion of dramatic motive, and announces the arrival of a new idea. "They [her dramas] are part of an extensive design: one of which ... has nothing exactly similar in any language" (p.1). Baillie's confidence in the existence of a market for her 'original' product involves the creation of the dramatic equivalent of the currently popular 'Gothic' fiction, but she is also pugilistic forebear of the prefatory anxiety displayed by Hazlitt in *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, and *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*.

The *Plays on the Passions* are advertised when incomplete, and the playwright promotes the availability of future plays in the series. Baillie insists on Shakespeare as her sole, and limited, literary source. She omits any reference to the Elizabethan/Jacobean dramatists, outwith their ghostly formation beneath the banner of 'irresponsible tragedy', a genre which serves no useful moral purpose. Whereas both Lamb and Hazlitt take extreme precautions in isolating their "extracts", in order to minimise any intertextual risk to their domestication of the "old Plays", Baillie denies her audience the critics' meticulously selective refamiliarisation with the Renaissance playwrights. In this way, the dramatist avoids the contradictions which were to become manifest in the writings of Lamb and Hazlitt, in their appeal for a qualified reinstatement and critical reception for the Renaissance writers.

Baillie 'transcends' the risks and limitations which may result from any direct reference to Renaissance playwrights other than Shakespeare. The denial of an awareness of the Elizabethan/Jacobean writers is seriously questionable, in relation to the increasing frequency of the performances of their works. This upsurge in interest serves to illustrate the necessity of a deliberate statement from Baillie on her theoretical/moral distance from these writers, as the 'physical' theatrical proximity was an undeniable reality. In her book, *The Life and Works of Joanna Baillie* (1923), Margaret S. Carhart discusses a review in the *Theatrical Looker-on* of Birmingham, which refers to "three performances (given under date of July 4 [1822])—*Othello*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and *De Montfort*".⁵

The effectiveness of Baillie's refusal to recognise a reading of the seventeenth-century playwrights illustrates Hazlitt's use of the epithet "heresies" in relation to her plays.⁶ In his *Lectures on the English Poets and Comic Writers* (1819) Hazlitt differentiates between the seeker of popular acclaim, and one who has been

initiated into the "abstracted" eternal forms of truth and beauty which exist outwith the wish to influence, or the demands of, public opinion. The desire for applause circumvents that process of admiration which confers immortality, and which is the reward of the "impartial" genius:

he who is always trying to lay violent hands on reputation, will not secure the best and most lasting. If the restless candidate for praise takes no pleasure, no sincere and heartfelt delight in his works, but as they are admired and applauded by others, what should others see in them to admire and applaud?¹⁰

Baillie's prefatory advertisement for forthcoming plays in the series by-passes Hazlitt's "stream of high thoughts carried down to future ages" and becomes involved in the sordid material process of 'History'.¹¹ The 'essence of poetry is revealed as a means of organising not only the varied sensations of what may be construed as a 'natural' order, but a means of recognising and naming socio-political representations of 'order and decree'. As we have seen Hazlitt's "power" and "harmony" become subtly universalised within the botanical metaphor they serve to introduce;

wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that 'spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its petals to the sun,' *there* is poetry, in its birth. if history is a grave study, poetry may be said to be a graver: its materials lie deeper, and are spread wider. History treats, for the most part, of the cumbrous and unwieldy masses of things, the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed, under the heads of intrigue or war, in different states, and from century to century ... (poetry) is 'the stuff of which our life is made'. The rest is 'mere oblivion', a dead letter: for all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it.¹²

'History' is represented as a bureaucratic process run on predetermined rails, constrained within to a particular ideological template. History is an 'interventionist' means of cataloguing events, as opposed to the vital poetic description of the "stuff of which our life is made". It is a process which is culturally based, dependent upon value judgments which, although recognisable "in different states, and from century

to century", is, in essentialist terms, a crude portrait of 'external' activity. Its lessons are transitory. Hazlitt's "poetry" asserts itself as distinct from such a peripheral "brand of authorship" which 'edits out' any shared sense of spiritual understanding through its 'objective' and detached dialogue. poetry is timeless, in that it is able to circumvent the implications of the spiritual deprivation which is the result upon an audience of exposure to the purely historical account. "Poetry" is the distillation of the sense of flux which is history, dispensing with the impurities of the historical cliché in order to expose a quintessential 'true' ethical code of the ideal response to particular events and circumstances. Hazlitt's discussion of historical mandate, shown as an arbitrary systematic means of storing socio-cultural information, results in the "dead letter", just as the ambitious "candidate for praise" has no essential right to an exalted position in popular culture.

History, then, is seen to create chaos out of order, defining "unwieldy" categories for events which may not be a "fit subject for poetry".¹³ The poetic representation of an essential/natural perfection may seem superficially uncoordinated; but "beauty, or power, or harmony" are designed to surprise us into an understanding of a natural order which precedes our temporal attempts to alter it into staid and readily recognisable elements. Such faulty reasoning results in the writing of 'history'. The essence of poetry is beyond the 'limitation' of historical interpretation: "there is poetry, in its birth". The obscurantist dimensions of Hazlitt's poetic constitution are obstructed and threatened by any attempt to construct a particular ordered view of the episodic revelations which fuel the poetic notion of a universal providential plan. The natural order must not be seen to be misread through the socio-political historical structures which present it as a material entity, within a "cumbrous" documentation of cause and effect.¹⁴

Baillie's justification for her organising principle within the "Introductory Discourse", appears to invite Hazlitt's wrath owing to an indelicate haste. "It is one test of genius indeed", he tells us, "and of a real greatness of mind, whether a man can wait for the award of posterity".¹⁵ Hazlitt's criticism, however, explains itself as a critical/philosophical contract in relation to the "future determination"¹⁶ of his own "immortality".¹⁷

The vitriolic force of Hazlitt's summary of Baillie's essential misdemeanour focuses upon the dramatic representation of the "passions".

"She treats men and women as little girls treat their dolls, makes moral puppets out of them, pulls the wires, and they talk virtue and act vice, according to their cue and the title prefixed to each comedy or tragedy, not from any real passions of their own, or love of either virtue or vice".¹⁸

A deliberate isolation of each emotion invokes similar detrimental effects upon our vision of the 'natural order' as that which results from the process of historicisation. What exactly is Hazlitt's concern over the writings of Joanna Baillie? She may well display and 'sell' her texts as "unitarian", yet in the introduction to the series of lectures from which I have already quoted, the critic appears to condone a subtle form of differentiation regarding the 'passions' in order to illustrate the unfettered and complex variety of nature's product. He tells us that;

Fear is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry; contempt, jealousy, remorse, admiration, wonder, pity, despair, or madness, all are poetry ... Poetry then is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature.¹⁹

Baillie's plays, however, are seen to contravene the mimetic contract between poet and the natural order he or she is committed to uphold.

Her tragedies and comedies, one of each to illustrate each of the passions separately from the rest, are heresies in the dramatic art. She is a Unitarian in poetry. With her the passions are, like the French republic, one and indivisible: they are not so in nature, or in Shakespeare.²⁰

The critic's metaphor of Unitarian heresy refers to a theological movement which had been at odds with the orthodox doctrine of the trinity since the mid sixteenth century. Socinius, one of the founders of the dissenting doctrine, professed Christ to be "an official and not an essential deity".³¹ Socinian belief was declared a capital crime in 1648, yet the popularity of the Unitarian cause became more widespread, and was embraced by John Locke. The rapid growth in Unitarian belief resulted in the foundation of the 'Unitarian Society for promoting Christian knowledge' in 1791. The Society professed "the proper unity of God, and the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, in opposition to the Trinitarian doctrine of the three persons in the deity". The early nineteenth-century representation of Unitarian thought became personified in the Society's founders Priestly and Belsham. Priestly was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society in 1766, preaching, "a simple humanitarian view of the person of Jesus", expounding, "a materialist view of human nature". This, of course, demanded "the most entire resignation to the will of God, and the most unreserved confidence in his goodness and providential care". Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808) set the doctrine up as a radical alternative to orthodox Anglican belief. *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, describes Lindsey's opening in 1744 of, "an auction room in Essex Street, Strand, as a Unitarian chapel" and thus, "first organised Unitarian dissent as a working force in the religious life of England". The doctrine was not granted a legal bill of civil rights until, with Charles James Fox's aid, "the relevant clauses of the Toleration Act were repealed in 1813".

Hazlitt, then, views Baillie's 'specific' attempts to document the 'universal' passion as akin to the Unitarian vision of the text as an indivisible whole, rendered complete by its profession of scriptural authority. Much as such a doctrine may be seen to be reminiscent of the remit of Hazlitt's poetry ('there, in its birth') the result

of Unitarian policy is, for the critic, as dangerously bureaucratic and centralist as are the "cumbrous" constraints of historical organisational policy. Hazlitt's rejection of 'Unitarian' values in Baillie's plays concentrate upon the particular Lockian theological definition. Locke's statement that "miracles were to be judged by doctrine, and not the doctrine by the miracles"²² offers an explanation of Hazlitt's unease at the theoretical/moral certainty of the 'ground - rules' for tragedy presented in Baillie's "Introductory Discourse". The 'Unitarian' denies the critic his poetical reading of the 'natural order' as an essential truth which can only reveal itself to us by its very 'miraculous' existence. Locke's Unitarianism may be invoked once more in order to illustrate its provocative insinuation of the invasive 'historical' methodology posed by the nineteenth-century critic. *The Encyclopedia* describes Locke's reading of the apostolic letters:

treating their teaching as relative to the age and persons for whom it was designed, he really laid the foundation of the historical method.²³

Patriotic Tragedy.

Contrary to her representation in the 1851 preface (that she was "wholly... free from the profession of an author") Joanna Baillie alerts her readers very firmly to their privileged involvement in the creative process.²⁴ In approaching *Count Basil*, and *The Tryal*, we are made aware of the definitive boundaries of the 'category' of literature which she wishes to circumscribe, and prescribe for us.

all that language of the agitated soul, which every age and nation understands, is never addressed to the dull or inattentive. (p. 10)

This, "language of the agitated soul" introduces itself as the articulation of an 'essential' democratic principle, the observation of mass human reactions to the tragic

event. Voyeurism and cruelty (Baillie gives the example of crowds flocking to a roadside hanging) are not in themselves fundamental to the human character, but a behaviour, it is argued, born of a healthy reactive reasoning.

To see a human being bearing himself up under such circumstances ... must be a powerful incentive, which makes us press forward to behold what we shrink from, ... No one goes there who has not made up his mind for the occasion; which would be the case, if any natural love of cruelty were the cause of such assemblies. (pp.5-6)

The idea of revenge is introduced from a specifically non-British standpoint. The discussion represents an example of revenge tragedy from the "savages of America", and that "dreadful custom of sacrificing their prisoners of war" (p.7). The uncivilised American equivalent of the roadside hanging shifts the discussion for, and from, the national audience. Social responsibility is shown as the universal essential product of the moral framework of tragic experience.

But the perpetration of such hideous cruelty could never have become a permanent custom, but for this universal desire in the human mind to behold man in every situation ... scorning all bodily anguish, or struggling with those feelings of nature, which, like a beating stream, will oft 'times burst through the artificial barriers of pride.... and it cannot be supposed men alternately enemies and friends to so many neighbouring tribes, in manners and appearance so like themselves, should so strongly be activated by a spirit of public revenge. This custom, therefore, must be considered a grand and terrible game, ... where they try not the strength of the arm, but the fortitude of the soul. (p.7)

The judicial sentence is thus represented as an image of a universal testing of the soul's fortitude. Representations of the judicial sentence, on the 'universal' scale, thus become the necessary catalyst testing the soul's fortitude. A privileged glimpse of the 'day of judgement' is revealed in the prophetic acknowledgement of the forthcoming stage-plays.

In, *A Theory of Literary Production*, Pierre Macherey discusses the distinction

between the material text as a product of its author, and as it is otherwise transcribed when expressed as the outcome of critical discourse.

The work that the author wrote is not precisely the work explicated by the critic. Let us say provisionally, that the critic, employing a new language, brings out a *difference* in the work by demonstrating that it is *other than it is*.²³

Joanna Baillie deliberately 'confronts' this "difference" which so concerned her Contemporaries as regards the intertextual life of their dramatic works and critical readings of Renaissance plays. The "Introductory Discourse" is involved in a theoretical negotiation, which surfaces at a more indirect and remedial level than the anxious reactions which characterise Byron's demands for complete control over the performance of his 'political' dramas.

Baillie's introductory treatise appeals to the historically sanctioned dramatic device of the prologue, which underlines, for the nineteenth-century audience, an 'agreed' version of seventeenth-century organisational creative orthodoxy. This reading of the 'function' of the prologue in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama offers itself as an illustration of Roger Sales' nostalgia; a selective misreading of the past. This 'recovery' of a lengthy version of Renaissance prologue is, however, distanced from any reference to the moral and political content of the plays themselves. The textual 'resistance' which Baillie's *Series of Plays on The Passions* exert upon the philosophy of tragic discourse, precisely by recalling a reference to one or other of the 'forbidden tragedies, is skilfully portrayed by the nineteenth-century playwright as a misreading of her works by their audience. The writer constructs a conceptual framework for the reading of her dramas which restrains the arbitrary intertextual future which a lack of exploratory regulations and explanatory signposts would otherwise permit.

This 'procedural' prologue, then, reveals several distinct methodological benefits as regards Baillie's promotion of her "original" dramas (p.69). First of all, the dramatist invites only the most indirect and subtle reference to the existence of the dramatic influences which the "Introductory Discourse" is designed to refute. The 'new' plays are transcribed as a particular and deliberate re-writing of the 'differences' within the dramatic content which diverge from the template prescribed by the critic-author. As Renaissance textual echoes are not to be considered part of the 'given' universal work ("Discourse" and dramas) their suppression invokes a very voluble Machereyan 'silence'. The concept of originality addresses this point of conflict, aiming to pacify and clarify the question of influence. Baillie invokes the ethos of the 'profitable treasure' in relation to her own works, which Hazlitt was later to represent as the outcome of the recovery of writers the dramatist professes to deny. The new 'original' dramas replace the artistic justification of an imitative backward-glance by the intricate and formal content of the "Introductory Discourse". Baillie offers a 'consolatory' theoretical foundation for the *Plays on the Passions*, and her "originality" (p.69) becomes a re-naming of the conflict generated within the discourse on influence, removing from the vocabulary of the discussion theoretical contradictions which threaten the edifice of critical authority. Baillie thus takes advantage of the 'recovery' of a version of the introductory dramatic prologue in order to display a 'unitarian' official representation of a courageous dramatic development. The philosophical position from which this exposition of originality is espoused is clearly unstable: the disavowal of 'imitation' employing the projection of desired results from a particular imitative technical revival. The resulting instability is acknowledged, but 'dispersed' into a reading of its aberrant properties which is both meritorious and condescending. The critical "Discourse" has re-routed a

potentially damaging contradiction: it becomes an educative reference point for the reader who has blundered into the Boethian 'cul de sac' offered by the easily accessible 'false god'.²⁴ The question is shown to be an integral part of the 'answer' offered in the philosophy of tragic production. The contradiction, then, is 'shelved' by being absorbed within the obscurantism of universalist cliché. Contradiction is presented as symptomatic of the truly original work: it is unrealistic for such unrefined pieces of writing to be anything other than flawed. The plays themselves, then, are shown to be 'compromised' only at the level of affording a necessary distraction from the philosophical treatise, and, in so doing, fulfilling the essential noble purpose of illustrating its salient features. The play-texts are positioned, almost, as a scriptural 'alibi' footnoting the vindication of the discursive introduction.

In their article, 'On Literature As An Ideological Form',²⁷ Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey discuss the extent to which a particular ideologically programmed reading of "the form and social function of art" may "alter the place of art and literature within social practice", and thus the "practical relationships of individuals to the works of art they produce and consume".²⁸ Literature is represented as engaged in an ongoing process of "compromise", a reaction to its constitutive contradictions. The text addresses the subject of its instability as a means of distancing itself and its audience from the multifarious interpretations describing alternative versions of itself, interpretations which disrupt the ideological form of the text transcribed as a particular functional entity. This acceptance of contradiction as a 'subject' within the work is described by Balibar and Macherey as presenting an "imaginary solution . . . redoubling the contradiction".²⁹ This theoretical anatomisation of the text as a process of confronting and averting inherent contradictions within it, offers a critical framework which is particularly illuminating in relation to the writing

of Joanna Baillie. Such contradictions, write Balibar and Macherey,

can only appear in a form which provides their imaginary solution, or better still, which displaces them by substituting imaginary contradictions soluble within the ideological practice of religion, politics, morality, aesthetics and psychology. [Literature provides] a *mise en scène*, a presentation by means of various displacements and substitutions. For there to be a literature, it must be the very terms of the contradiction (and hence of the contradictory ideological elements) that are enunciated in a special language, a language of 'compromise', realising in advance the fiction of a forthcoming conciliation—or better still it finds a language of 'compromise' which presents conciliation as 'natural' and so both necessary and inevitable".³⁰

Joanna Baillie's representation of such an 'inevitability' is visible, perhaps, in the evocation of the universal 'nourishing' properties of an original dramatic philosophy, whose 'surface scars' invite our recognition of the 'essential' originality of the product on display.

Balibar and Macherey's conclusion takes into account the cultural/intellectual dependence extorted by the "category of art" "at the expense of" alternative Marxist themes which may be introduced as an attempt to interrogate its dominance.³¹

Joanna Baillie's "egalitarian view of human psychology" invites analysis in relation to Balibar and Macherey's theoretical conclusion. The early nineteenth-century dramatist prefaces her works with a lengthy presentation on the civilising merits of inventory. Each "passion" is 'loosed' under an educative mandate, which sets out to re-affirm the significance of the 'category' by re-defining its boundaries. The new organisational philosophy transcribing the original dramas, affirms its intention against "alter[ing] the place of art and literature within social practice".³² The artificial barriers of pride" (p.7) which Baillie sets out as containing our heightened, but "natural" passions, however, present themselves as an unwelcome spectre of doubt as regards the stability of our relationship with the works of art

which the "Discourse" purports to produce. The "artificial barriers" suggesting that a representation of sin, "pride", has become the necessary 'essential' restraint upon our moral, yet at the same time, de-limiting passions, are thus involved in the imposition of a profoundly disruptive sub-text within the dramatic philosophy. Its influence is carefully countered, by being articulated as an individual battle-ground. The victim of the heroic overflow of "feeling" (p.11) becomes a martyr through the anatomisation of his fate by an audience in search of a 'harmonious' intellectual understanding of its properties. Social controls, Baillie insists throughout her opening pages, are the result of an intentional nationalistic intellectual communion. "No one goes there who has not made up his mind for the occasion; which would not be the case, if any natural love of cruelty were the cause of such assemblies" (p.6).

In his chapter, 'Subjectivity and Social Process' (*Radical Tragedy*, p.156) Jonathan Dollimore discusses the philosophical "challenge" which "Jacobean Drama [presented to] Christian essentialism, and indeed its stoic and humanist derivatives". Joanna Baillie articulates the arena in which the 'conflict' (her suppression of the Renaissance Dramatists) is described, as offering an experience of the essential requirements which combine to confirm a humanistic reading of the function of tragedy. The contradictions which evolve from the critical refusal to enter into a discursive relationship with the seventeenth-century writers are 'devolved' by becoming constitutive in a universal vision of moral rectitude. Baillie refrains from any attempt to 'absolve' the Renaissance writers of anti-establishment activity through an essential/humanistic reading of their works. Such an avowal of interest in the overtly decadent, deprecatory or otherwise, may arguably be seen to be rejected by Baillie as inviting the contradictory 'assault' upon the edifice of critical authority, which was to be a focus of the writing of Hazlitt, Lamb, and Coleridge. The

avoidance is displayed as "natural" and "inevitable", however, by deftly 'promoting' itself as meritorious evidence of a poetics of tragedy which is founded upon a scrupulous intellectual objectivity.³³ If Renaissance Tragedy is immoral and 'irresponsible', a corrective 'mis-reading' would serve only to perpetuate its disruptive outcome. Such a strategy skilfully shields the dramatist from the necessity of offering selected dramatic extracts which might be used to challenge or refute the radical implications of Jacobean Drama. The moderate 'success' of a humanistic reading of the Renaissance writers is sacrificed, in order that the 'universal text' of "Discourse" and dramas remains, if not inviolable, at least 'innocent' of the unacknowledged source.

Tragedy is the 'conclusion' of Baillie's humanist philosophy. It presents us with an artistic achievement which mirrors our own inherent fortitude, should we gain access to its essential formality. The moral catharsis involved in our reception of the tragic performance, banishes the, "base and depraved" to the level of farce, a strained and languorous 'imitation' of the fortitude which the 'genuine' passions demand of us, as playgoers and citizens.

When the grand, the generous, the terrible attract our attention far more than the base and depraved, ... the high and powerfully tragic, of every composition is addressed. (p.12)

The acknowledgement of the "grand and the terrible", the "high" passions, however, necessarily pre-dates any vision of a social contract; with its inherent potential for disruption. The intervention of "God Almighty" (p.12) within the "Discourse" invokes an allusive, authoritative demand for a 'submission' before the text. The "artificial barriers" (p.7) whose weakness threatens the expression of that which it is natural for us to express, "the violent agitations of passion" (p.10), are nullified as a flimsy line of defence against a powerful truth. The danger of a lawless being

'acting upon society' however, must be seen to be something rare—an aberration which may justifiably remain unexplained. It is Baillie's God who is to assume the burden of forming a reply to the accusation of evasion which this lack of explanation inevitably invokes. He becomes the both the definitive 'source' and instantly acceptable 'emblem' of the "imaginary solution" which Macherey and Balibar describe: an attempt to divert and placate the "ideological contradictions ... which are represented as the materiality of the literary text".³⁴

"God Almighty" in Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" presents a 'compromise' whose allusive literary contradictions act as a substitution for those evolved from her treatise on 'positive' passion, and that which results in a vision of 'anti-humanism' (activity which resists the authors classification as essentially tragic). Baillie's 'compromise' is ingeniously and coolly evasive. The presentation of the 'very terms of the contradiction' (the book of Genesis) original sin and divine retribution, 'founds' the "Discourse" as an authoritative literary entity. The ideological contradictions provoked by the alternative readings of the 'theoretical mandate', which the "Introductory Discourse" is active in producing, are released into a conceptual arena which extorts a habitual 'learned response'. Baillie defers the active "fiction of conciliation" to the system of belief which Biblical-textual authority demands.³⁵ The 'act of faith' is involved in the production of the philosophical panacea which Baillie seeks and which requires Balibar and Macherey's most successful negotiatory tactic: "the conciliation [which is] 'natural', and so both necessary and inevitable".³⁶ The allusive outcome of the natural compromise', New Testament forgiveness, is invoked as the foundation for the author's philosophical dialogue and play-texts. It becomes the "universalising" process by which the 'progressive form of the ongoing political language of the "Introductory Discourse" is re-established,

This propensity [towards sympathetic curiosity] is universal ... It tempts [children] many times, as well as the mature in years, to be guilty of tricks, vexations, and cruelty; yet God Almighty has implanted it within us, as well as all our other propensities and passions, for wise and good purposes. It is our best and most powerful instructor. From it we are taught the proprieties and decencies of ordinary life, and are prepared for the distressing and difficult situations. (p.12)

Jonathan Dollimore discusses the contradictions inherent in a humanist Conception of 'providential' tragedy. The extremity of mankind's essential fortitude is borne out and 'fixed' as a universal truth only by his achievement of, and submission before, the administrative limits which define and absolve his maladaptive honesty.

In one sense the humanist theory of tragedy repudiates the religious desire to be folded within the absolute; moreover in such tragedy the absolute is typically construed not redemptively but as a force permanently hostile to man's deepest needs. Nevertheless, tragic death restores transcendent unity to the subject and to man, not despite but because of the fact that now it ceases to be conditional upon a redemptive identification with the absolute. Man gathers that unity into himself; his essential nature leads to the apotheosis, who now becomes his own universal. Further—and this too is a consequence of this view being a displaced theology—suffering and loss are mystified, rendered inevitable and unalterable and, as such, become the pre-condition for instantiation of the universal.

(*Radical Tragedy*, pp.56-7)

Joanna Baillie may be seen to evince a recognition of the contradictions involved in a representation of dramatic providential restitution within her plays, most particularly in relation to the tragedy of *De Monfort* (to be discussed later in this chapter). The murderer is transformed into Dollimore's "transcendent subject" by being submitted, complete with monument for future generations, to the laws which are ultimately grounded within the dramatist's vision of society's ritual revenge as a trial of strength on a national scale. Baillie's criminal aristocrat is 'placed' as an

illustration of a providential universe which boldly celebrates its acutely material socio-politic foundations.

The relationship between humanist and providential readings of the 'tragic event', as discussed by Dollimore, and to a certain extent 'implemented' by Baillie, offers a deeper insight into Hazlitt's vision of a "Unitarian" philosophy underwriting the *Plays on the Passions*. Unitarian thought, as has been previously discussed, referred to, "a simple humanitarian of the person of Jesus... [expounding] a materialist view of human nature ... [which] demanded the most entire resignation to the will of God, and the most unreserved confidence in his care".³⁷ Unitarianism, then, irritates Hazlitt as a particularly 'specialised' ideological doctrine, tailored to sustain the 'benefits' of providentialist security, whilst re-writing the traditional, nationally approved, mythological trinitarian hierarchy. Joanna Baillie is viewed by Hazlitt as attempting Balibar and Macherey's "active insert[ion]" of literary effect "within the reproduction of other ideological effects".³⁸ Baillie attempts a literary 'coup', a documentary on moral/textual "future determination"³⁹ without Hazlitt's "warrant for it".⁴⁰ Hazlitt's theoretical outline of the proper function of art does, however, reveal a philosophical accord with the "Introductory Discourse" of Joanna Baillie. It is her "Unitarian" methodology which he views as inviting a vulgar 'demystification of the poet's educative 'due-process'.

It is the ramifications of Baillie's self-styled authority which alert and concern Hazlitt. He represents the Dramatist as a graduate of the "School of affectation" in response to the aesthetic defiance' of her preface and title-page.⁴¹ The critic perhaps views an attempt to deprive the reader of the exercise of the "contemplative faculty", which Baillie herself stresses as essential for the development of, "the better judge, the better magistrate" (p.15). Hazlitt charts a desire to 'decline' an arbitrary

intertextual life for her plays, which foreshadows, perhaps, Byron's preparation of the 'legacy' of his dramatic writings.

In her discussion of the importance of directing the function of dramatic art, Baillie informs us of a truthful representation of nature. The contradictions arising from the implications of a dictatorial revision of the 'natural order' which so concern Hazlitt, are countered by the 'reasonable argument', the essential inaccessibility of the boundaries of pre-ordained event, whether evolutionary or divine. The "Discourse" actively involves itself in its position as the "terms of the contradiction".⁴² Baillie illustrates, from within her "language of compromise", the ultimate and decorous progression towards the conciliatory conclusion which will re-stabilise the edifice of critical authority.⁴³ Joanna Baillie's dramas employ a "unitarian" strategy partly in order to illustrate an unquestionably simple logical conclusion. The dramatist has not the vast armoury of circumstantial, scenic and prefatory detail, Baillie tells us, which is afforded to "the poet and the novelist",

They tell us what kind of people they intend their men and women to be, and as such we receive them ... But the characters of the drama must speak directly for themselves.
(p.24)

The force of this almost 'Zola-esque' contradiction merits the dramatist's display of intricate bravado, as Baillie aims to distance herself, in the above statement, from any subjective involvement in the evolution of the form in which the tragic presentation will be delivered. Her criticism of "the poet and novelist" clearly invites and illustrates Hazlitt's principal line of argument against the "Introductory Discourse" and its dramatic offspring. The question of an 'imposition' for Baillie, however, becomes devolved within the legal blueprint of her chosen genre. The machinery of tragedy is portrayed as self-regulating, discarding any representation of

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activity disproportionate to our shared universal template of a 'general truth'. Joanna Baillie challenges the alternative reading which implies that, not unlike the "poet and novelist", she does indeed "tell us what kind of men and women [she] inten[ds] her characters to be"; and therefore influences our reception of them. In so doing, however, the "Introductory Discourse" is actually refuted as contributing at any level to the educative dramatic conclusion of the *Plays on the Passions* themselves. This challenge then, risks the carefully constructed edifice of critical authority. The "compromise indeed, is expressed as a narrow self-congratulatory reply to the contradictions which her statement of non-involvement invokes."⁴⁴ The weakness of the rejoinder (the highlighting of her meritorious authorial objectivity) serves to underline the critical anxiety which underpins the unstable "fictional conciliation" offered to us.⁴⁵ The playwright's unease at the fragility of the conclusion, seems almost to appeal to us as contributory evidence for the trust we ought to place in "Characteristic truth" (p.25). Otherwise, we are left to rely on the mystification of a metaphor of substitution as the "inevitable conciliation".⁴⁶ Baillie shows us truth/nature asserting itself on various levels, infinite and harmonious as the Chinese box.

He who made us hath placed within our breast a judge that judges instantaneously of everything they [dramatic characters] say. We expect to find them creatures like ourselves; and if they are untrue to nature, we feel that we are imposed upon..

As in other works deficiency in characteristic truth may be compensated by excellencies of a different kind, in the drama characteristic truth will compensate every other defect. Nay, it will do what appears to be a contradiction; one strong genuine stroke of nature will cover a multitude of sins even against nature herself. (pp.24-5)

Baillie's representation of "contradiction" in this quotation is clearly very different from that to which Balibar and Macherey refer, but it is designed as a

'diversion from the ramifications of illustrating their theoretical treatise. The decorous 'rescue' of the philosophical outline on creative integrity, however, involves its dissolution as the purveyor of a new, healthy orientation in dramatic production. The terms by which the contradictions are subjected to the process of 'absolution' defer to the intervention of a, "strong genuine stroke of nature" (p.25). The latter's essentially 'anti-unitarian' properties, mythological and undocumented, threaten to swamp' and re-define Baillie's treatise as an unnecessary exercise in microcosm, for the playwright may well be accused of constructing a definitive outline of the function of "nature" which limits the original far-reaching universalist vision she presents us with. The dramatist implies that we need not indulge in theoretical debate with regard to the *Plays On the Passions*, for in so doing we are indulging in a form of sensory deprivation which divides our attention from the essential lessons to be learned from a display of "characteristic truth" (p.25). The "one strong genuine stroke of nature" (p.25) insists upon an act of faith in the ideological motivation of the dramatist, as she maps out her intention to set a precedent for a nationally beneficial instructive drama.

Although she reflects the effects of such a stroke of nature" as offering 'intoxical[ion in a "good play"]" (p.25), the morality of the lesson, owing to its opportunism, is not re-affirmed as outwith the limits of Hazlitt's heresy. Baillie, however, having once more involved us in a vision of the unforeseen excusable flaws which constitute truly original dramatic writing, offers us a palliative measure, should such flaws distress us into an outright rejection of the theoretical preface which upholds them. The "Introductory Discourse" clearly states its position as the correct, and corrective version of our instinctive "passions". This "stroke of nature", therefore, has an actual harmonious and fundamental relationship with 'original'

drama, for whose purgation it is held in reserve. Thus, by articulating, and addressing the contradictions which the treatise invokes, the "Discourse" directs our attention towards its self-contained interrogative 'dialogue', a willingness to contend with, and overcome, dissent. Baillie may be seen then, at this point in the "Introductory Discourse", as attempting to 're-route' the anxious "language of compromise" towards a 'language of confidence' reiterating the irreproachable mandate of the critical authority.⁴⁷ The "Discourse" then, may be seen to "thrive [up]on the very [ideological] risk which is the source of its power": the contradiction.⁴⁸

Baillie's tragic hero is ostensibly a liberal-humanist subject. The dramatist views herself as moving away from a reading of heroism and heroes which actually serves to limit their essential functional value for their audience. This limitation, she tells us, is particularly concentrated in non-dramatic modes of fiction. The 'general' fault, nevertheless, in describing heroic figures derives from a form of heightened admiration which ultimately leads to an intellectual/moral paralysis. The onlooker is denied access to the heroic figure as the metaphorical harbinger of an "example" (p.36) or "warning" (p.35) which the watcher might usefully internalize. In this way, tragedy conscripts its audience in the fulfilment of its essentialist cohesive purpose, as it serves to represent,

those small but distinguishing features of the mind which give
a certain individuality to such an infinite variety of similar
beings. (p.29)

Baillie's preface offers an illustration of Balibar and Macherey's hierarchial interrelationship of subjectivity. The medium of tragic drama is presented as fulfilling a synthesis of the 'essential effectiveness' of the tragic hero, denied to us by the obacurantist structures of alternative representative genres.

When accidental anecdote reveals to us any weakness or peculiarity belonging to them, we start upon it like a discovery. They are made known to us in history only, by the great events they are connected with, and the part they have taken in extraordinary or important transactions.... Even in poetry and romance, with the exception of some love story interwoven with the main events of their lives, they are seldom more intimately made known to us. To tragedy it belongs to lead them forward to our nearer regard". (p.29)

Balibar and Macherey discuss the creation of an impression of 'live' discourse. The quasi-real hallucinatory individuality" which is attributed to the 'subject' is wrought through a process of opposition:

To produce subjects ('persons' and 'characters') one must oppose them to objects, i.e. to things, outside it but always in relation to it ... [causing] readers [to] take up imaginary struggles as they would towards real ones, though undangerously.⁴⁹

Tragedy and the Tragic Subject

Joanna Baillie discusses tragedy at the most general and basic level as the means of recording the actions of legendary "great men" of every nation (p.29). The specific function of tragedy, as genre, however, is one of familiarizing the reader with the process through which the 'untouchable' becomes revised into the 'tragic subject'.

In *The Subject Of Tragedy*, Catherine Belsey argues that the liberal-humanist subject is, "born in the seventeenth-century with the emergence of the individual and the victory of constitutionalism in the consecutive English revolutions of the 1640's and 1688".(p.8) This individual subject is the, "free, unconstrained author of meaning and action, the origin of history. Unified, knowing and autonomous, the human being seeks a political system which guarantees freedom of choice" (p.8). Belsey draws attention to "conflict and contradictions" (p.9) which divide the

liberal-humanist subject and identify tragedy as one pertinent focus of the unstable forces involved in that subject's construction. Tragedy engages the precise areas of conflict which overtly moralistic, non-fictional texts attempt to disarm.

In addition, while a sermon or treatise on the same topic relies for its success on the elimination of difficulties, narrative depends on the contradictions which are often only implicit in other modes of writing. ... And if all narrative foregrounds problems, whilst comedy moves towards final re-conciliation, tragedy is subject to no such imperative. (pp.9-10)

Baillie, however, presents a form of prescriptive tragedy whose relationship to a form of essential justice mirrors the comments which Francis Bacon offers on the subject of "poesy",

because *true history* propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence.³⁰

Baillie may be seen to set up such a process of opposition in the form of a generic confrontation which highlights the definitive task of the tragic mandate, transcribed against the backdrop of the 'anti-essential' properties of "history" and "romance". This confrontation, then, is an "imaginary struggle"³¹ which serves to promote the ideological product of Baillie's 'tragic' reading of instinctive national morality. She introduces a version of 'debate' in order to divert the inherent tactical contradictions which such a 'unitarian' disapproval of intertextual influence gives rise to. The "Introductory Discourse" attempts to promote tragedy as a humanistic amendment, a means of 'updating' the myth-making processes which have distanced the admirable qualities of our past heroes from us. The repetitive monotony of the information offered by "the poet, the novelist, the historian, and the philosopher" (p.23) is descried as 'anti-essential' precisely because we are denied anecdotal reference which

will heighten our perception of the most meritorious means of channelling our perfectibility. Outwith this tragic framework, the "great men" are beheld by us,

at a distance, ... appear[ing] ... from this view like distant mountains, whose dark outlines we trace in a clear horizon, but the varieties of whose roughened sides ... we perceive not. (p.29)

Baillie's passage pre-dates Coleridge's vision of the distant figure of Shakespeare.⁵² Coleridge sustains his metaphorical landscape of Shakespeare's 'forbidding' genius, by invoking the 'mystery' of Elizabethan intellectual and spiritual excellence, and thus focusing the weary critical pilgrim as the 'tragic subject'. Our impecunious state of non-comprehension, however, forms a necessary element of the mythological reading of Shakespeare as an intellectual/moral force which is strictly self-contained. As a source of intellectual/moral achievement, Shakespeare is defined within the orthodox 'rites' by which he may be approached by future generations. Baillie sets out to revise our vision of the "great men" (p.29) through a form of successful close reading of nature's grandeur. Her definition of Shakespearean perfection in the arena of tragic construction may be viewed as a theoretical foundation for future critics and writers. In this she anticipates Coleridge's writing on Shakespeare which, involves a romantic gesture of submission before the 'smoked glass' through which Shakespeare may be 'indistinctly' viewed.

The 'subject' Joanna Baillie, however, is actively involved in Balibar and Macherey's 'production of the subject' in relation to the object confronted by history and romance. The resulting "realistic effect of ... live discourse" is readily sought by Baillie; indeed, it is the worthy compromise which we reach through the 'achievement' of her deliverance of the 'tragic story'.⁵³ Baillie's text is a 'story' within which the reader acts out the process of "compromise".⁵⁴ As Machereyan

"mediator", the playwright invokes a communal investigation of her philosophical 'imposition'.⁵³ The 'contradiction' is thus 'deprived' of its provocative liberty within the text. The reader, as subject, is involved in 'distancing' the process of the fabrication of the tragic subject. Joanna Baillie demands acknowledgement of the "compromise" as culpable.

To tragedy it belongs to lead them [the "great men"] forward to our nearer regard, in all the distinguishing varieties which nearer inspection discovers ... in a way which the poet, the novelist, and the historian can but imperfectly attempt. But above all, to her ["Tragedy"] and to her only it belongs to unveil to us the human mind under the dominion of those strong and fixed passions, which, seemingly unprovoked by outward circumstances, will from small beginnings brood within the breast, till all the better dispositions, all the fair gifts of nature are borne down before them. (pp.29-31)

Baillie's treatise on the function of tragedy clearly emphasises the singular and specialised elements which establish the genre as the most superior of all literary forms. The dramatist insists upon the Aristotelian priority of "poetry" over history. Aristotle considers poetry as,

more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts.⁵⁴

Aristotelian theory however, does not limit the potential representation of such "universal truths" solely to the province of tragic drama. Joanna Baillie may be seen to echo the Aristotelian principle of the nobility of the tragic protagonist, yet she introduces an emphasis on individual culpability in order to provide a political arena for the *Plays On The Passions*.

Raymond Williams discusses the issue of "rank" in Classical Drama, and the sense in which the Aristotelian definition of status is transposed within the modern reading of the authority of the tragic hero.

In Greek tragedy the action was of ruling families, though normally these were 'heroic' in the sense of belonging to a past legendary age, intermediate between gods and men. Rank and heroic stature were then conditions of the general importance of the action; at once public and metaphysical. The eminence of what we would now call the tragic hero is in this sense an involving and representative eminence; the action embodies a whole view of life.

(*Modern Tragedy*, p.22)

He also cites the classical definition of the individual as representative.

Tragedy involves individuals, in this work, only in the sense of the first historical meaning of 'individual', a member of a group or kind rather than a separable and unique being.

(*Modern Tragedy*, p.20)

Baillie aims to engender a sense of tragic continuity in her representation of an Aristotelian decorum in her tragic protagonist. The playwright describes her tragic subject as, "distinguish[ing] an individual of that class" (p.30). The question of the individual as representative in the *Plays On The Passions* highlights damaging contradictions in relation to the issue, raised in the "Introductory Discourse", regarding the acceptance of individual responsibility. The public display of such an 'acceptance', Baillie has impressed upon us, leads to the generalisation of the moral lesson, assimilated by the audience as an irrefutable expression of "characteristic truth" (p.25). If Baillie's philosophical strategy is to hinge upon this form of empathic generalisation, it must take account of the possibility derived from the actions of the protagonist, that the writer may intend that the latter's behaviour is to be viewed as distinctly pathological. 'In other words the protagonist's behaviour is displayed as the result of a particular obsession, or "passion". The contradiction of Baillie's representative misfit has its roots in her conception of the tragic protagonist as inherently noble. The moral and sociological lesson is to be underlined, but at the same time, the value which the writer wishes to embellish for us must be seen, if not

exactly to 'emanate' from the faulty protagonist, then to crystallise in our minds as the formulation of a set of experiences we may learn from.

The dramatist sets herself the delicate task of constructing a relationship between protagonist and audience which will result in the unopposed receipt of the prescriptive message of the drama in question. This relationship, then, if *Count Basil* and *De Montfort* are taken as examples, is based on the social position of the individual within the play-society. The 'lessons' are more readily absorbed if the audience is prepared to consider the character as of at least an equal social rank. The issue of nobility and rank is thus employed to mask the contradiction which isolates any group who identify on a social level with the protagonist as equally susceptible to his or her disruptive and anti-social behaviour. The dramatist, in referring to a secure class-based image of decorum and control still runs the risk of displaying unorthodox activity as potentially widespread amongst the governing classes. Even when presented in the form of a warning, such an inference may serve to alienate the very audience she wishes to address. Margaret S. Carhart describes the *Plays On The Passions* as employing, "the language of middle-class Englishmen about middle-class characters".⁵⁷ Paradoxically, however, the risk of Baillie alienating her audience is lessened and obscured by the very fact that the anti-social behaviour is not shown as permeating downwards towards those who are incapable of ultimate heroic restraint, which takes the form of aristocratic self-murder. The "uncultivated" (p.63) do not figure as tragic protagonists in Baillie's plays. Social unrest, then, as a tragic outcome, is distinctly contained and 'managed' within the relevant cultural and political institutions which have chosen to recognise the 'membership' of the protagonist.

The discord which the plays simultaneously illustrate and limit serves to maintain an impression of an almost class-conscious decorum on the part of the playwright. Baillie presents us with a strategic scenario: the consequences of a powerful individual exercising the priority of his own wishes. The extent to which Count Basil has been schooled for such an eventuality, considering his timely, yet unnecessary reaction to his purely personal failure, could in effect be seen as a recipe for complacency in her audience. Joanna Baillie's tragic protagonists are the authors of their 'own fate', experiencing the product of their denial of the very universal abstractions which found the national conscience; our "sympathetic curiosity" (p.4). In this sense, then, Basil reveals himself as 'anti-representative' of the values which the dramatist sketches as common to the cultivated audience in receipt of the moral lesson. Basil's actions may indeed expose him as unrepresentative of successful generals, yet he exercises the authority vested in him in order to punish himself for his diversion from duty. The 'universal' implications of a nationally approved solution to Basil's "passion" reveal an individual pre-programmed to accept the priority of the power-base which he represents. The decline of the tragic protagonist is to be construed as both idealistically independent, and inherently unthreatening. This moral high ground in terms of national security is never seriously compromised.

The 'individual' is presented as misguided; perhaps spiritually, intellectually (and in the case of Orra, physically) set apart from the system of authority which s/he jeopardises, but is never wholly abandoned by. It is the function of tragedy, for Baillie, to disarm the malcontented protagonist by rendering him/her distinctly identifiable. The genre is designed, after all, to "exhibit" the "appropriate characteristics" (p.30). The tragic complement of the *Plays On The Passions* must

be seen to display the elements of tragic structure laid out in the "Introductory Discourse". Only in this way are the tragedies able to uphold the overtly contrary elements of a defensive 'early-warning system', which permits the assault in order to underline extent of its impotence by the act of prophecy itself. Tragedy is explained both as a means of alerting society to an erroneous individual, and as a safe platform form which the protagonist may act out the decisions which secure his/her downfall.

The role of tragedy is to isolate the worthy from the unworthy "passions". It allows us to recognise that the extreme reactions which the dramatist wishes to portray outline the boundaries of our civilised cultural and legal institutions. Those "base and depraved" reactions which do not ally themselves with the "strong and fixed passions" (p.30) to illustrate human fortitude are not only confirmed as anti-tragic, but as a crude threat to the social order which tragedy represents. Anti-social behaviour is to be recognised as behaviour which cannot be classified as "essentially" human.

Tragedy, then, for Baillie, is the process and subject of explanation. Its mandate is thoroughly set out, in the form, almost, of a precise definition of the function of a branch of science. The 'explanation' is justified as a cultural 'rule', a formulaic 'truth', reaffirming the "category" within which the process chooses to define, and describe itself,

It is for her [tragedy] to exhibit to us the daring and ambitious man, planning his dark designs, and executing his bloody purposes, mark'd with those appropriate characteristics, which distinguish an individual of that class. (p.30)

After all, tragedy, as transcribed by Baillie, has taken steps to ensure that it reveals itself as the only realistically secure medium for 'confining' the disruptive potential of the, "bloody purposes" and "dark designs" (p.30).

The limitations of 'original' tragedy (a reference, at this point in the discourse, to the imitation of the artistic form of Classical tragedy) mirrors the essential failure of the historian.

They have been more occupied in considering the works of the great Dramatists who have gone before them, and the effects produced by their writings, than the varieties of human character which first furnished materials for those works, or those principles in the mind of man by means of which such effects were produced. (p.32)

The criticism of tragic imitation mirrors Hazlitt's criticism in relation to her own works. The material attempt to inculcate particular effects involves the recognition of an artistic representation of 'order and disorder' which exists outside of 'faithfully delineated nature'.⁵⁸ Baillie indicates the danger of the creation of a false national consciousness as the result. Tragic redemption is the reward for an individual compromise, the recognition of the individual burden of sin. Nature's role within the "Introductory Discourse" is that of egalitarian leveller, assuming the mantle of educative detail previously ascribed exclusively to 'non-imitative' tragedy. Nature's role within the "Introductory Discourse" is that of egalitarian leveller. It provides us with both the universalist and abstract lessons previously ascribed to 'non-imitative' tragedy. Tragedy and history meet at the level of the distancing, 'pastoralising' process, when the former transcribes itself within a self-displaying regulatory format. Propaganda, Baillie has instructed us, is the 'natural' product of our belief in the benefits to be gained from a particular course of moral instruction.

The emulation of Classical dramas involves us in an amoral process, an invocation, almost, of Hazlitt's troubled vision of a piece-meal nineteenth-century approach to literary creativity. This will ultimately lead to a detrimental "future determination"⁵⁹ on two levels: an irksome, but justifiable comment on the state of

the contemporary intellectual conscience: and the more distressing result, a creation of a flawed springboard for the 'questing spirit' of future generations. Baillie appears to impress upon her audience the meritorious construction of the "Introductory Discourse" as an overtly 'material project, defining the cultural dynamics of a reading of tragedy which addresses the development of social controls as a natural, 'instinctive' process. The dramatist invites the collusion of her readers with regard to the propriety of her philosophical mandate to instruct, through a representation of humanistic communion of authorial motivation, and the 'spiritual' requirements of those in receipt of the lesson. This 'instinctive' collusion is wrought through an appeal for a resurgence of a code of belief which asserts a particular nationalistic sense of 'self'. The means by which Baillie provokes the desired reaction in her audience, however, stresses the treatise as a direct appeal to a very particular section of the reading public. Baillie's nationalism is the product of a vision of hierarchal entrenchment as the means of securing existing social divisions. We are to gain our sense of nationhood from a concurrence with the profoundly contradictory existence of the distancing 'sub-culture'. We are like unto ourselves only by being recognisably 'other' than those by whom our socio-political/moral position is rendered distinct.

it is only from creatures like ourselves that we feel, and
therefore, only from creatures like ourselves that we receive
the instruction of example. (p.33)

This description of our inability as a species to extrapolate from that which is outwith our socio-cultural frame of reference, is presented as illustrating the figurative distance between what nature has to offer us, and the indulgent opulence of 'high' tragic art. Nature's essential grandeur must be redeemed from any inherent notion

of inadequacy, as a suggestion of a flaw in 'the natural order' brings seriously into question its philosophical position of omnipotence. Nature, then, must be firmly placed outwith the necessity of having to provide a behavioral blueprint which will serve to reform anti-social elements described in relation to "the passions". It is the function of tragedy, Baillie's text argues, to assume the ideological mandate of revelation and reform. The "Introductory Discourse", however, is distanced from an interventionist involvement with what is essentially 'fixed' as the 'ideal form' of educative tragic representation. The philosophical redemption offered by the "Introductory Discourse" employs the metaphor of Christ as the essential tragic hero. He has been made accessible to us as 'God made man', the perfect rendition of human imperfection which allows us an understanding of the 'Divine principle' which he represents. Christ, then, for Baillie, becomes the mystic evasive conciliation which offers an 'intermediary' explanation of something which is otherwise beyond our human comprehension. Baillie assumes, in relation to her theory of tragic production, the mantle of textual authority vindicated in the figure of Biblical Christ.

To a being perfectly free from all human infirmity our sympathy refuses to extend. Our saviour himself, whose character ... is so harmoniously consistent; in whom, with outward proofs of his mission less strong than those that are offered to us, I should still be impelled to believe, from being utterly unable to conceive how the idea of such a character could enter into the imagination of man, never touches the heart more than when he says, "Father, let this cup pass from me." Had he been represented to us in all the unshakeable strength of these tragick nerves, his disciples would have made fewer converts ... Plays in which heroes of this kind are held forth, and whose aim is, indeed, honourable and praise-worthy, have been admired by the cultivated and the refined, but the tears of the simple and young have been wanting.

(footnote, p.33)

Baillie's Christ is involved in a complex network of contradictions, whilst attempting

a thematic cohesive textual compromise. Christ cannot be conceived of as "like ourselves" (p.33), yet a point of contact must exist in order that we may receive instruction. This contact is curious and subtle: it takes the form of a Biblical/historical account of the figure of Christ. In so doing, the dramatist refers to Christ in history as a tragic figure, in order to impress upon her audience that the moral lessons to be achieved through the tragic medium must not be entirely construed as a product of a work of fiction. Such an inference allows the playwright to 'diversify' from general comments on tragic performance, which indicate that the dramatic text is effectively a stylistic representation of ideologically pre-selected episodes. Christ, then, appropriates a version of 'historical/textual' authority within the "Introductory Discourse". His appearance is designed to tap into a long-established and shared conceptual reservoir, even 'race-memory' of the great events which identify him for us. This means of recognition, Baillie remarks, is the sole and stark achievement of the otherwise soul-less historical genre. The dramatist offers Christ as an obscurantist point of reference whose range of influence may be inferred to include the partial unification of generic categories; history and tragedy, whose philosophical outlook are displayed at the outset of the "Discourse" as diametrically opposed.

The figure of Christ also provides the "Discourse" with a point of contact with certain elements of Classical dramatic authority. He is a victim of the authorities who view him as a threat. This almost Aristotelian priority of the tragic action clearly comes into conflict with the decorous directives for social stability which the playwright describes in the character of Christ. Baillie may be seen to be engaged in an ongoing amorphous relationship with her various and often oppositional

mythological sources of textual authority. The extent to which she draws upon one source rather than another is dependent upon the means of support she wishes to engender for a particular argument laid out in the "Discourse". The decorum with which Christ meets his fate, then, may invoke disruptive ripples regarding the previous weighting which she has given to the role of character-expression in the forging of the tragic denouement. The *Plays On The Passions* alert us to the socio-political outcome of the uncontrolled obsessive personality trait. Christ is indirectly and inadvertently placed in this position, owing to the nature of the fate which is imposed upon him, in spite of his perfection. The literary/historical figure of Christ is primarily engendered in order to sublimate the conflict which exists within a theory which promotes tragic explorations as 'unaffected by outside forces', yet which is designed to underline the universal results of the protagonist's desires in a precise socio-political context. The Saviour is presented as a fundamental civilising influence at work within her readers/audience. His tragedy is, in a sense, open to us in the objective terms of a classical protagonist, in that we are privy to the prophecy of his tragic decline. In this way, Baillie allows us to benefit from Christ's benevolent influence, by viewing it as an inbuilt mechanism for an instinctive decorous control over our more 'unruly' passions. Placed as a tragic individual, however, as someone through whose actions we are to receive a moral lesson, there is a sense in which Baillie seeks to excise Christ in the "Discourse" from his 'Biblical/historical context'. He has become the objective universalising focus of the tragic spectacle which is to draw us together in "sympathetick curiosity" (p.4), much in the manner of the powerless victim of the roadside hanging.

A representation of Christ must be seen to avoid what the dramatist views as the "polished and admired" heroic portraits given in the "Original tragedies" (p.28).

The formulaic "cultivated" form of Greek dramas are considered obstructive to the "produc[ti]on of a free and unbridled imagination" (p.28). "Greecian drama" is seen as a specialised and almost indolent exposition of the tragic genre, wholly inappropriate to the development of a form suitably "congenial" (p.28) to the "sympathetick curiosity" of the contemporary national audience. The moral lessons offered in the *Plays On The Passions* are engineered, in effect, to re-route the maladaptive effects of Classical imitation. The cultural/historical distance of such works renders it impossible to extrapolate from their alien texts in the construction of a distinct and rational moral code for an English middle-class audience. Not until the arrival of Shakespeare's plays does Baillie view the lack of moral purpose in the national and international drama as being successfully interrogated.

I mean not, however, in any degree, to depreciate the works of the ancients; a great deal we have gained by those beautiful compositions, and what we have lost by them is impossible to compute. Very strong genius will sometimes break through every disadvantage of circumstances: Shakespeare has arisen in this country, and we ought not to complain. (p.28)

Christ and Shakespeare share a common mythology in transcribing the flawless portrait of human imperfection. Biblical Christ is, Baillie implies, less available to an audience than the 'essential' persona of William Shakespeare. Christ's authoritative blueprint laying out an egalitarian mandate for us to follow may indeed reflect divine approval: yet we must be prepared to recognise the editorial vagaries of his particular reporter. The dramatist refers to the character of Christ, and whilst Shakespearean authority benefits from the orthodoxy of a Christian-humanistic, universalist allusion, his Elizabethan and Jacobean texts express a form of authority more pertinent to her contemporary audience. The persona of biblical Christ is ultimately presented as a passive exponent of the art of spiritual growth and moral

vision. Paradoxically, he is perhaps construed as too open to interpretation, as Baillie's involvement in the Unitarian debate serves to illustrate.

Baillie's 1831 pamphlet, *A View Of The General Tenour Of The New Testamens Regarding The Nature And Dignity Of Jesus Christ* is constructed as an investigation of the various doctrines involved in the 'Unitarian debate'. These doctrines diverged in relation to the nature of the divine authority which the scriptural accounts of Christ lay claim to. The playwright lays out the position of "the high church doctrine of the Trinity [which] makes Jesus Christ God, equal in power to the supreme God".⁶⁰ She then moves on to describe the "Arian" position, which "supposes [Christ] to be a most highly exalted being, who was with God before the creation of the world", and offers a discussion of Socinian belief, which "regards [Christ] as the great missioned prophet of God, sent into the world to reveal his will to men; to set them an example of perfect virtue".⁶¹ The "high Church" view of Christ, then, places him as part of a divine whole, whilst, for the "Arians", he is to be seen as a partner of the supreme being at the moment of Creation. Socinian belief presents Christ as an 'agent' of "God the father".

The *View* takes the form of a painstaking collation of every pertinent reference to Christ and his activities in all the apostolic accounts of his life and works. This is the only way, Baillie argues, in which the reader can approach a relatively 'balanced' and 'objective' conclusion with regards to this divisive debate on Christ's authority as divine redeemer. This diligent and overtly 'scholarly' strategy of trawling each and every reference not only allows us to circumvent the dubious leanings of particular clergymen; but also infers an overview of the apostolic accounts which will even out the editorial vagaries which the saviour is undoubtedly subjected to.

Now, the most liberal and judicious clergyman, in preaching upon such subjects, can only support the doctrine which he advocates by a partial production of scriptural evidence, and can scarcely be supposed to offer his audience the opinions of an unbiased mind. In proportion to the importance of a doctrine, it is required that the whole scriptural passages regarding it should be given to the consideration of the sincere Christian; and, if he be really sincere, the tediousness and monotony of the task will not deter him from undertaking it, and going through it thoroughly. Indeed, there is no other way of coming to clear and satisfactory conclusions.⁶²

In this way, Baillie evades the deliberate choice of 'extracts' from the Bible which will lead to the processes of generalisation and abstraction, and thus a misreading of "the plain and general tenour of the whole".

To form decided opinions on particular insulated portions of any work, without regarding their agreement with the plain general tenour of the whole, would be unwise and unfair; but more especially so, should that work, like our Sacred Writ, abound in metaphorical expressions.⁶³

The dramatist offers a criticism of selected 'extracts' as founding a secure body of evidence to support a particular theory. The trap of metaphorical insecurity which incites Baillie's clergymen to do battle may be seen as something which she has attempted to counter in her earlier, *Plays On The Passions*. These tragic and comic works are specifically designed to fulfil theoretical demands, both presenting and representing the "general tenour of the whole".

The opening remarks offered in the *View* reflect considerable anxiety, not in relation to a misappropriation of the "character of Christ", but as regards the potential charge of a prescriptive textual authority lifting the saviour from metaphorical surroundings which she considers inappropriate and redundant. Baillie takes great pains to prove her academic scrupulousness. This is reinforced by the pervasive implication of the pursuit of scholastic guidelines laid down for 'pure' research.

I have set down, likewise, passages which may appear to bear upon my subject very dubiously; but this will at least be admitted as an error on the safe side. It is better to be redundant in testimony, where the subject is of great importance, than to be deficient. ... I do not mean, however, to insinuate that the following collection of texts is free from deficiency; and should be much better pleased with a reader who searches for himself, to see whether I have omitted any thing which ought to have been produced, than he who takes for granted that it is complete. ... Yet even were this the case, there would be great difficulty, when reading the Bible with this intention, to recollect what [has] already passed, and consequently, in perceiving how one passage relates to another; for the perusal of intervening passages, not connected with the object in view, would necessarily create confusion, by exciting other interests, and dividing the attention. It is to save the diligent and well-intentioned, as well as the impatient and indolent, a salutary task, which they would never, perhaps, execute in this way to their own satisfaction, that I offer to the public the following pages. Taking the common version ... printed by authority at Cambridge for my guide, no injury at least, can be done to the established doctrine of the church.⁶⁴

We will, however, of 'necessity', be perusing a series of 'extracts', but as the means to a valiant end; a clearer vision of a 'unified' Christ. Baillie here presents her audience with a concentration of anecdotal references, rather than a markedly edited version of the New Testament. In diverting the reader from "dividing the attention", she is 'reducing' the text to a form of biblical shorthand. Consequently, the resulting "View" will be more morally and intellectually digestible than her source, owing to the plethora of "other interests" which the latter is seen to harbour. The pamphlet, then, commits the technical 'unitarian' sin which Hazlitt traces within her dramas. Like the "passions", the Saviour is summarily decontextualised. Once more, however, Baillie appears to have considered this criticism in relation to the work in question. She shifts from the position of biblical scholar to that of novice, unwilling to impose a 'version' of Christ, but to offer herself as a means by which he may be revealed to us.

I am no scholar; but when I admit this to be the case, I would not be understood to consider want of learning as any disqualification for a task like the present. On the contrary, it is perhaps an advantage, by suppressing all presumptuous desires which learning might create to correct the established translations of particular texts, and thereby attempt to bias the opinions of others from slight and inconclusive differences. Good intentions, a clear common understanding, and the absence of those acquirements which naturally impose an authority over the judgements of men, are the best qualifications for such an understanding.⁶⁵

Even the notion of humility becomes 'objectivised'. Baillie invokes the 'authority-innocence' of the biblical babe, to whom glories are revealed.

It is to an unlearned lay person of no authority to whom a task of this nature reasonably belongs; and as far as these qualifications go, there is surely no vanity implied in supposing myself in some degree competent to it.⁶⁶

The garb of innocence and simplicity serves several ends. Firstly, the writer will evade the criticism hurled at the "liberal clergyman" whose "purest intentions ... in collecting portions of scripture" may be misconstrued by "the community to which he belong[s]".⁶⁷ The unfortunate outcome (and Baillie may be seen to enlist a noticeably comic metaphor) is for the pastor's "useful[ness] to his parochial flock to be greatly abridged".⁶⁸ Baillie underlines her lack of socio-political status as a divine interpreter, which allows her to evade the charge of misappropriation levelled at the pastor. As things stand, and the tone of innocence is extremely important here, such ordained mouthpieces of revealed religion do not always translate for us in an unbiased and 'perfect' manner. There is a clear danger in the reliance upon the 'unreliable narrator', but Baillie does not go so far as to reveal the Christian scholar as a false prophet.

We cannot, I should think, be far wrong in believing that the simplest and most obvious meaning of the words, when not inconsistent the general scope of the context, is the real

meaning of any passage of the Gospels or Epistles; for under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the writers were commissioned to instruct the simple and ignorant. Now this would have been very imperfectly done, had matters important to our faith been left by them to be only deduced by ingenious processes of reasoning, from their words, by Christian teachers who should follow them in succeeding ages, and teachers, too, not guided by divine inspiration.⁶⁹

The teaching methods espoused in the *View* are presented as innocent precisely in order to invalidate the charge of bias, which is an intellectual/political failing. Baillie wishes to be seen as inherently worthy of the task of 'mass instruction' which the Christian mandate, she tells us, is designed to address. It is not for the "simple and ignorant" to be inspired by "ingenious processes of reasoning", as they have their source in "teachers ... not guided by divine inspiration".⁷⁰

The audience which Baillie addresses, in this text, is precisely the same one to whom she appears in the *Introductory Discourse*. This audience subscribes to Coleridge's category of "law-enforcers" rather than "law-givers".⁷¹ Both Baillie's works circumscribe a theoretical blueprint which will equip her middle-class audience with the means by which the intellectual/moral potential of the "uncultivated" may be both liberated and restrained.⁷² The overt outcome, in the later work, of an indifference to such issues, is the chaos of Catholicism. With its interpretive and infallible figure-head, Catholicism reinforces the need for the 'objective alternative' presented to us by means of Baillie's ingenuous and scholarly Presbyterian insights.

The concluding remarks which follow the list of apostolic references to Christ transmit an understated approval of the "Arian" code of belief. In order to reinforce the 'unbiased' simplicity of the doctrine's accordance with the spiritual evidence which Baillie has extracted, we are given no analytical analysis. This is reserved for the discussion on "high church" and "Socinian" interpretations.

Of the second sect, whose opinions, as far as I am capable of judging, agree best with the whole tenour of scripture, I will say nothing.⁷⁹

This investigation of the versions of Christ's biblical authority reflects the playwrights's continuing interest in the structure and presentation of a particular argument or value system. Her preface to the *View* outlines the contemporary sources of "information and impressions" available to the young reader as "short works and periodical publications".⁸⁰ Although these outlets offer a diversion from "information found in the old", the 'concentrated' form of the periodical article interests Baillie as a means of reinforcing the point of view it chooses to express. These comments succeed the *Plays On The Passions* by seventeen years, and may be seen to acknowledge a theoretical weakness in the outcome of her most famous works in relation to the 'Discourse'. The theory itself may be sound, but the plays risk a discontinuous involvement with it owing to the very scale of the exercise.

It is from short works and periodical publications that our young people now receive their information and impressions; and what may be perused at one continued sitting, will often give the mind clearer ideas, and impulses more invigorating, than lengthened and recondite writings if far greater learning and ability. Nay, the very deficiencies and wants of a concise work will sometimes set a young person to think for himself, who might, perhaps, at the conclusion of what is called a *course* of reading, have only found his memory possessed of many confused, mutilated, contradictory ideas, with which he would have but little inclination to occupy his thoughts further.⁸¹

Christ's accessibility, then, becomes a form of compromise in itself, a representation of an exemplary model of the 'essence' of morality to which we must aspire, but which, in so doing, suggests a deliberate and disharmonious masking of the vision of divine perfection: Christ is presented by Baillie as 'con-descending' into our frame of reference. The disciples' search for "converts", then, is acknowledged as enacting

a 'material project', a negotiatory procedure involving the production of a tactical compromise. Christ's teachings become revealed by, and as, a process of distortion. Such a form of martyrdom, however, offers a similarity to Baillie's 'New-Testament' teachings as to the form and function of the 'originality' which in-forms the *Plays on the Passions*. Christ's 'condescension' is clearly displayed by Baillie as a means of securing a direct appeal to the mass audience, whose scriptural ignorance is deprived of its threatening potential in the pastoral title of "simple and young" (p.33). The "cultivated and refined", in contrast, are described as possessing the innate ability to synthesise an appreciation of the morality of the lesson in its pure and unadulterated form (p.33). Christ's egalitarian activities are thus presented by the nineteenth-century playwright as a means of reinforcing an uncompromising elitist reading of the spiritual redemptive potential of 'essential man'. Baillie's Saviour is endowed with a divine principle whose "unshaken strength" (p.33) is marshalled within the socio-cultural/ intellectual constructs of 'refinement'.

Unlike the Tamburlanian tragic hero, Christ's example is not enfeebled by "excee[ding] in courage and fire what the standard of humanity will agree to" (p.34). Christ restores a textual decorum to Baillie's philosophical principles of tragedy. His mandate being, 'beyond imagination', hints at the domain of the young Shelley's 'poetic principle' as active within the Discourse, which none but the 'essential artist' may tap into, and express/translate for our intellectual and moral benefit. The "Introductory Discourse" reveals a Romantic reading of feudal tragedy, and an elitist explanation of its merits. The hierarchial anatomy of tragic influence, being explained, assumes an authorial primacy over those upon whom instruction is to be imposed. The "Discourse", redeemed of self-justification through the Christian

mythos, returns to Old Testament revelation. "From this [imitative] regard to the works of preceding authors" (p.36), Baillie tells us that we become involved in the bastardisation of the 'truth' of the tragic mandate. Such a misguided creative somnolence, from the convenience of its chosen stylistic template, provokes a sub-text of disbelief. Any 'anti-essential' generalisation will result in tragic cliché; "sublime imagery, lofty thoughts and virtuous sentiments" constitute an intertextual quagmire to be encountered by the corrective *Series of Plays* to follow (p.36). Joanna Baillie assumes the right of purgation at the behest of the poetic principle:

but in striving so eagerly to excel in those things that belong to tragedy in common with many other compositions, they have very much neglected those that are particularly her own. As far as they have been led aside from the first labours of the tragic poet by a desire to communicate more perfect moral instruction, their motive has been respectable, and they merit our esteem. But this praise-worthy end has been injured instead of promoted by their mode of pursuing it. Every species of moral writing has its own way of conveying instruction, which it can never, but with disadvantage, exchange for any other. Tragedy brings to our view men placed in those elevated situations ... in which few of us are called upon to act. As examples applicable to ourselves, therefore, they can but feebly affect us. ... But if they are not represented to us as real and natural characters, the lessons ... will be no more to us than those which we receive from the pages of the poet or moralist. (pp.36-7)

Dramatic originality then, for this playwright, is achieved by regaining an exclusive accord with the principles which may achieve a 'true' description within a carefully supervised stage-representation. 'True' tragedy permits the individual dramatist to distinguish her/himself, whilst, and by, rejecting the danger inherent in the representation of, "complete similes of premeditated thought" (p.40).

Baillie refutes, similarly, the necessary representation of the rhetorical villain, the truly evil character with no redeeming qualities, for we are permitted no, "shelter

... from the coming blast" (p.42). Baillie's rejection of Classical imitation in tragedy may also be viewed, perhaps, as a comment on the contemporary upsurge of interest in Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, owing to her disapproval of the representation of the malcontented figure. This philosophical rejection of 'stage evil', when it refuses to reveal itself as part of a carefully drawn-up moral lesson illustrates, perhaps, the necessary search for a non-threatening originality.

above all, looking back to the first rise, and tracing the progress of passion, points out to us those stages in the approach of the enemy, when he might have been combatted most successfully; and where the suffering him to pass may be considered as occasioning all the misery that ensues. (p.43)

The theoretical self-justification of the "Introductory Discourse" is acknowledged and 'excused' almost exactly half-way through the text. The imperious tone of 'apology' to the reader, invokes an ingenious subliminal re-affirmation of a point which she has already firmly stressed. These very "imperfections" have been shown to be an indication of essential and 'democratic' individuality, as illustrated by Baillie's Christ, and the guardian of the 'poetic principle'.

There are many other things regarding the manner in which dramattick poets have generally brought forward the passions in tragedy, to the great prejudice of the effect they are naturally fitted to produce upon the mind, which I forebear to mention, lest they should too much increase the length of this discourse; and leave an impression on the mind of my reader, that I write more on the spirit of criticism, than becomes one who is about to bring before the public a work, with, doubtless, many faults and imperfections on its head. (pp.40-1)

The philosophical dramatist offers a perfunctory gesture of non-alliance with the 'spirit' of the critic, who becomes 'subjected to' a reading of intellectual hypocrisy. The text attempts to relieve itself, in this way, of a visible compromise of the 'poetic principle'. The dramatic and critical faculties retain their separate

material identities, avoiding the collusive accident of authorial intention to impose a reading of the plays to follow. The "spirit of criticism" introduces the *Plays on the Passions* as a worthy subject of scholarly interest, offering the first of 'future' works almost in terms of a share issue. The reader is encouraged to take an active part in the texts' "future determination".⁷⁴

Shakespeare, Comedy and the 'Ordering Symbol'.

Baillie's comments on comic artifice and instructive dramatic humour offer further insights into her distrust of non-Shakespearean dramatic revivals. The "different temptations which have led [comedy] aside from her best purposes" (p.45) circumscribe features of Renaissance tragedy within a less ostensibly dangerous genre.

[The] infinite variety of tricks and manoeuvres by which the ludicrous may be produced, and curiosity and laughter excited: the admiration we so generally bestow upon the satirical remark, pointed repartee ... have too often led her to forget the warmer interest we feel, and the more profitable lessons we receive from genuine representations of nature. ... Strong decided condemnation of vice is too weighty and material to dance upon the surface of the stream [of "witty comedy".]

(pp.45-7)

"Sentimental Comedy" illustrates an "insipid" account of the 'material of tragedy' (p.47), and "Busy of Circumstantial comedy" institutes the deception and torment of "unhappy mortals" (p.48), offering up a "faulty morality" to its audience (p.49). The pastoral "Characteristic Comedy", revealing, "some trait of undisguised nature" (p.50) is the legitimate 'sub-set' within the comic genre, presenting realistic moral instruction on a firmly anti-interrogative basis. "Characteristick Comedy" reveals a firm kinship with the 'essential morality' which, for Baillie, defines Shakespeare's tragedies as 'Shakespearean'.

Shakespeare more than any other of our poets, gives peculiar and appropriate distinction to the characters of his tragedies. The remark I have made, in regard to the little variety of character to be met with in tragedy, apply not to him. Neither has he, as other Dramatists generally do, bestowed pains on the chief persons of his drama only, leaving the second and inferior ones insignificant and spiritless. He never wears out our capacity to feel, by eternally pressing upon it. His tragedies are agreeably chequered with variety of scenes, enriched with good sense, nature, and vivacity, which relieve our minds from the fatigue of continued distress. If he sometimes carries this so far as to break in upon that serious tone of mind, which disposes us to listen with effect to the higher scenes of tragedy, he has done so chiefly in his historical plays, where the distresses set forth are commonly of the public kind, which does not, at any rate, make much impression on the feelings. (p.72)

Shakespeare's egalitarian "distinction" of the "inferior" and his well-balanced representation of nature's "varieties" are quoted as an ideal illustration of Baillie's dramatic philosophy regarding the 'true' function of tragic drama. This quotation closes the "Introductory Discourse" as the definitive eternal consummation. The Shakespeare mythos is invoked as, almost, a firmer foundation for moral 'literary/historical' identification, than the legacy of biblical Christ. Shakespeare's 'flaw' (which he must have in order that we may gain empathic access to him as teacher and moral guide) is represented as an occasional excess of the qualities which "relieve our minds from the fatigue of continued distress". The failing, then, is provocatively similar to that which characterises "witty" and "circumstantial" comedy. More spectacularly, perhaps, the necessary excesses recall the aphoristic amoral protagonists of Tourneur and Webster. The 'qualification' of Shakespeare's grandeur describes a concern over his representation of "distresses of the public kind." It is, Baillie stresses, the disruption of the, "serious tone of mind, which disposes us to listen with effect to the higher scenes of tragedy" which is threatened by a display of mass unrest. What Baillie views as Shakespeare's over-zealous attempt to relieve his

audience from the "fatigue of continued distress" illustrates the nature of the flaw which categorises the 'history plays' as inferior tragedies. The 'failure' of interrupting our tragic concentration is rooted within a genre which has been demoted and devalued, and is thus, for the most part, 'absolved' (of any "future determination"⁷⁷ of anti-tragic anti-establishment effects) by the universally acknowledged imperfections inherent in the designation of 'history' as a suitable vehicle for artistic representation. Baillie's careful criticism reveals a philosophical anxiety in relation to the disruptive potential of political drama. The result of Shakespeare's involvement with the historical subject reflects the unsuitability of such material as a focus for moral development in Baillie's contemporary audience. As she tells us that we do not "listen with effect" to "distresses of the public kind", the "historical plays" are presented as a morally and intellectually inferior category of drama. We may thus dismiss the representations of political unrest which are interrogated in these particular Shakespearean texts.

The historical genre, having compromised the tragic principle, becomes focused as the neat textual compromise in the face of critical contradiction. Public unrest is not to be considered a worthy petitioner of the educative mandate of 'true' tragic drama, and it is the 'scale' of these mass "distresses" which Baillie wishes to equate with the lack of "impression [they make] on the feelings". 'Public distresses' are shown, then, as sharing the anti-tragic obscurantism which afflicts the distant ineffectual hero of 'history' and romance. In offering the "Introductory Discourse" as the means of exposing historical subjects as essentially 'anti-tragic', Baillie involves Shakespeare in the process of 'conciliation' which aims to reconstruct the damage inflicted by the above passage in relation to the mythos of his artistic

perfection. Shakespeare is ultimately portrayed by Joanna Baillie as the quintessential homiletic oracle, never 'unnatural' unless it is natural for him to be so. Baillie's reading of the Shakespearean representation of historical events implies that Shakespeare has himself chosen to work within her categorical divisions of dramatic worth. His "historical plays" are a literary diversion into the lesser arena of "public" drama, an interesting 'aside', but one which must be viewed as distinct from the framework of tragic 'control' which leaves an audience susceptible to a particular instructive dramatic conclusion.

The representation of eccentricity in fiction, Baillie tells us, is to be "regard[ed] with suspicion" (p.52). Eccentricity is the illustration of disorder; anarchy. From within the comparative 'safety' of the discussion of comedy, the dramatist invokes, as the metaphor of social disruption, the Jacobean motif of the madhouse:

a still inferior class of poets ... believe, that by making men strange, and unlike the rest of the world, ... They will, therefore, distinguish one man from another by some strange whim or imagination, which is ever uppermost in his thoughts, and influences every action of his life; by some singular opinion, perhaps, about politicks, fashions, or the position of the stars, by some unaccountable love for one thing, or aversion from another; entirely forgetting, that such singularities, if they are to be found in nature, can no where be sought for, with such probability of success, as in Bedlam. (pp.52-3)

Such a display of eccentricity has been the most influential element in the decline in the standards of contemporary theatrical productions. "Above all", Baillie continues,

it is to be regretted that those adventitious distinctions amongst men, of age, fortune, rank, profession and country, are so often brought forward in preference to our great original distinctions of nature; and our scenes so often filled with courtiers, lawyers, citizens, Frenchmen ... This has introduced a great sameness into many of our plays, which all the changes of new fashions burlesqued, and new customs turned into ridicule, cannot conceal. (p.53)

Baillie embarks upon an obscurantist de-politicisation of displays of social unrest through its circumscription within a list of such peripheral and 'worldly' concerns as "fashion" and astrology (p.52). The dramatist indicates that the containment of such dangerous passions is no fit task for the comic genre. Comedy is denied, within the "Introductory Discourse", the radical interrogative portrayal of the role of the eccentric as cliché. Comic drama is to be brought to its audience in a form which represents, as does 'true' tragedy, an underwritten social contract of approved 'motivation' and behaviour. The 'dramatic principle' Baillie has already assured us, has been 'tested' to offer a comforting definition of public standards.

From this view of the Comick Drama I have been induced to believe that, as companions to the forementioned tragedies, a series of comedies on a different plan, in which bustle of plot, brilliancy of dialogue, and even the bold and striking in character, should, to the best of the author's judgement, be kept in due subordination to nature, might likewise be acceptable to the publick. (p.56)

The 'dramatic principle' is represented as an 'ordering symbol', which articulates its ideological mandate as a response to the dangers inherent in the 'devolution' of power in "publick life". "Strong passions" (p.56), if not "confined to the exalted and the mighty" consequently become the property of the "miserable being", outwith the "palaces and camps" (p.57). Although bound together by moral fibres which repel an 'active' threat to the power-base, the 'common man' reveals himself as the figure of the malcontent.

many a miserable being, whom firm principle, timidity of character, or the fear of shame keeps back from the actual commission of crimes, is tormented in obscurity, under the dominion of those passions which set the bold spoiler to wrong, and strengthen the arm of the murderer. (p.57)

Baillie's commoner's torment is almost akin to that which is embodied in Tourneur's *Vindice*. The Jacobean protagonist achieves social recognition only in the form of rewards given for amoral actions. His position is therefore tenuous, unstable, and inherently subservient. Joanna Baillie presents her vision of the malcontent within a controlled hierarchy of criminality; an attempt to present a reading of public morality which is, for the most part, stably based. Essentially, there are criminal elements for whom society need not hold itself responsible - the 'inevitable percentage'. At this point in the discussion, the 'dramatic principle' displays an unearned forgiveness towards those in a state of flux, the "less assured guests" (p.57) of the aberrant and violent "passions". The text displays its authoritative mandate as a redemptive form of 'crime prevention',

to those with whom such dangerous enemies have long found shelter, exposing them in an absurd and dangerous light, may be shooting a finely-pointed arrow against the hardened rock; yet to those with whom they are but new, and less assured guests, this may prove a more successful mode of attack than any other. (p.57)

Redemption, however, is a "compromise"⁷⁴ which is almost immediately allowed to subside when the sub-text of 'anarchy' is finally exposed to the mercies of the 'dramatic principle'. The "miserable being" has a threatening voice. Baillie tells us that she will avoid artistic representation within his frame of reference (the "ballad form") as she is afraid of inciting a revolt.

It was the saying of a sagacious Scotchman, 'let who will make the laws of a nation, If I have the writing of its ballads'. Something similar to this may be said in regard to the Drama. Its lessons reach not, indeed, to the lowest classes of the labouring people, who are the broad foundation of society, which can never be generally moved without endangering every thing that is constructed upon it, and who are our potent and formidable ballad readers; and who will always have over them no considerable influence. The impressions made by it are

communicated, at the same instant of time, to a greater number of individuals, than those made by any other species of writing; and they are strengthened in every spectator, by observing their effects upon those who surround them. (pp.57-8)

Drama offers itself as the vehicle for an "idealist mimesis" which transcribes itself as a call to arms to those under threat.⁷⁹ The teaching by example becomes directed towards a vision of the potential displacement of the social hierarchy, and thus a warning to those who are to assume the guardianship of the status quo. The playwright's originality has centred itself as a means of alerting, and documenting, the 'given' nature of socio-political relations. The 'educated classes' to whom she addresses her warning are matter-of-factly placed as law-enforcers, rather than law-givers. Tragedy is shown as a process of surveillance and control. Responsibility thus remains with the interpretive capacity of the critic/author in relation to the creed of a dramatic philosophy which is morally based. This evades the vagaries of "the theatre" in its unchecked and unlicensed form. Baillie's dramas set out to "improve the mode of its instruction" (p.58). This particular concluding section of the "Discourse" recalls once more Hazlitt's criticism of the "men and women" which followed, as, "moral puppets".⁸⁰

The function of drama is to be allotted a standard definition, with the *Plays on the Passions* acting as works of reference. The "Introductory Discourse", as a catalogue of "passion ... in all its varieties" (p.59) attempts to 'include' the malcontented figure as a version of extremity, contained within harmonious 'natural' and social bounds. The escape into respectability becomes almost a relief. After all, she tells us, "at the beginning of its career the Drama was employed to mislead and excite" (p.58). Joanna Baillie's plays and preface may be seen as aiming to provide the growing interest in Renaissance Drama with a less threatening 'intertextual'

modern prologue.

Baillie's malcontent is to undergo a naturalising process which will render him inoffensive. The success of this process depends upon a 'consensus' acceptance of his/her disruptive action as illustrating the unremarkable passion of "agitation", something manifestly agreed upon as 'predictably unpredictable' action borne of a recognisably 'universal' passion, the dramatist has informed us at the outset of the "Discourse", is the foundation of a national consciousness Baillie disputes our necessary inheritance of the speeches of a D'Amville or DeFlores,

Soliloquy ... as it naturally belongs to passion, ... will not be so offensive as it generally is in other plays, when a calm unagitated person tells over to himself all that has befallen him, and all his future schemes of advancement; yet to make speeches of this kind sufficiently natural or impressive, to excite no degree of weariness or distaste, will be found no easy task.
(pp.60-1)

The moral anxiety which sustains, whilst necessarily contradicting, her belief in the success of the crusade, reaches its most destabilising momentum in the prefatory discussion of Count Basil's suicide. In the paragraph which follows the observation of, "criticks ... not unfrequently writ[ing] in contradiction to their own rules" (p.62), Baillie apologises for including her final scene. Suicide, existing outwith any predisposition of respect towards the biblical/moral attitude to such behaviour, clearly exerts a contrary pull regarding the visible effectiveness of the teacher upon her own works. The "compromise"²¹ which confronts any accusation of disrespect to the "sacred rites" (p.63), however, is conceived at the expense of the "miserable beings": Basil's "uncultivated soldiers". In order to impress upon us the purity of the grief which the soldiers express, Baillie implies that the 'essential emotion' has no underlying significant role in the foundation of their unsophisticated intellectual/moral constitution.

Let it be considered, that whatever I have inserted there, which can at all raise any suspicion of this kind, is put into the mouths of rude uncultivated soldiers, who are roused with the loss of their beloved leader. (p.63)

The class-conscious alibi confirms the 'dramatic intention' which, Baillie tells us, is ultimately 'restraint' (p.64). The choice of 'genre' is thus justified on a 'universal/essential' plane, and stage-representation offers an effective means of securing the interests of those who require restraint;

Catch[ing] the attention of him who will not, and him who cannot read is a more valuable and useful production than one whose elegant harmonious pages are admired in the libraries of the refined. (p.66)

The achievement of securing the interest of the former group, however, ensures the undivided attention of the latter. The "plaudits of the rude and uncultivated" are firmly placed as peripheral in relation to textual appreciation. They are perceived as "offerings of no mean value", overshadowed by and excluded from (owing to their inherent threat) the ambiguous pastoral of the priceless, "tears from the simple and young" (p.66).

"Blind Men" and "Fair-Fac'd saints".

Donald H. Reiman, in his introduction to the Garland Edition of Joanna Baillie's plays (1977) reaches the conclusion that an essential democratic principle underpins their creation. The critic's praise of this 'democracy' is circumscribed within a veiled applause for her 'anti-Elizabethan' simplicity.

First, the blank verse in Baillie's early plays is, perhaps, the best dramatic blank verse of the age—simple and natural, supple and original. It lacks the Renaissance overtones of Coleridge's *Remorse* and Shelley's *Cenci* and the intellectual vitality of Byron's dramas, but it seems closer to natural speech—not of real people—but of real actors, given their roles and situations...

Second—and underlying her use of language—an egalitarian view of human psychology shines forth from Baillie's early plays, and from the long "Introductory Discourse" to her *Series of Plays* (1798). There she expressly affirms that the same motives that lead small people to petty actions and speeches of ordinary life form, when circumstances permit, the fabric and heroism of tragedy.²³

Reiman indicates Baillie's involvement in the construction of a philosophical view of human social relations drawn up within her 'innovative' theoretical template of tragedy. This does not, for him, offer a contradiction regarding the 'simplicity' which the 'egalitarian' commands, and with which the critic threatens Coleridge's *Remorse* and Shelley's *The Cenci*. This simplicity justifies the description of Baillie's plays as "supple and original", and gives due weight to the meritorious lack of Renaissance echoes. The portrayal of "natural speech", however, is defined with a 'double-edged sword' which serves to threaten the acclaimed place on the literary/historical continuum which Reiman wishes to secure for Joanna Baillie from her twentieth-century audience. The critic risks the invocation of Shakespeare's Macbeth and Webster's Bosola as 'a political' figures whose actions somehow illustrate and safeguard this particular reading of Baillie's dramatic philosophy.

Donald Reiman compares Baillie's "nearly rounded characters" with Macbeth and Bosola, omitting, however, a specific comparative reference. Baillie's characters are presented as homogenous, an emblematic wholesome generality which recalls Hazlitt's metaphor (in *Elizabethan Literature and Characters of Shakespeare*) of national treasures returned to their rightful place. Reiman's defensive pastoralism advertises itself as the justification for a contemporary re-appraisal of Joanna Baillie's contribution to the English literary tradition.

Baillie's moralistic bias ... is like Wordsworth's "simplicity"—more evident in her theory than in her dramas, where the

characters are more nearly rounded and vital than her theory would lead one to expect and do not differ greatly in motivation from the characters of other English Dramas written on different principles (e.g., Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* or *Macbeth*.)²³

Reiman's preface precedes Baillie's "Introductory Discourse", and assures us of a moralistic critical rendition both of the dramatist and her 'sources'. This investigation of character "motivation" assumes a collusive priority with what he views as the ideological mandate of Joanna Baillie, in the delineation of her tragic dramas. Reiman acknowledges that *Macbeth* and *Bosola* are "written on different principles", but omits to enlighten his audience as to the nature of these "principles", and what he sees them as attempting to convey. Clearly, the critic's obscurantist distinction between "motivation" and "principle" shields Baillie from the radical implications of any direct association with *Macbeth* and *Bosola*. Reiman allies the Jacobean characters with Baillie's protagonists, and in so doing, endows the former with a metaphorical existence alien to that which they may be seen to enact in *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Macbeth*. Reiman's *Bosola* is distanced from themes and issues which Webster raises, and the critic expands this view to encompass Baillie's "Discourse" and its theoretical relationship to the *Plays On The Passions*. These dramas need not necessarily be tainted by the powerful moralising principle expounded in the "Discourse", as such "principles" might seriously prejudice her claim to a place in the literary/historical canon of legitimate and worthy English drama. The twentieth-century critic attempts to 'rescue' Baillie's dramas from their dependence upon the artistic anatomy of the "Introductory Discourse", and the result of such dependence is the opposition of 'originality' to the rewarding reading of the plays to be gained through allowing a point of contact with the 'golden-age' of Elizabethan Drama.

Such contact, however, must be subject to deliberate selection and control. The theoretical introduction interferes with, and distracts us from, the "vitality" of the 'poetic principle' which the critic views as reflected within the texts of the plays themselves. Reiman charts an essential communion between the "motivation" of Baillie's unspecified tragic protagonists, and two examples of the Jacobean villain. The comparison becomes legitimate owing to the divergence which the critic detects between the playwright's attempt to 'place' her works and their 'true' literary/historical value, existing independently of any contemporary material consciousness on the part of both critic and dramatist. Joanna Baillie is to become the unconscious artist. Her attempt to categorise her drama (the much displayed cultural definition of her aims and desired audience) is construed as a philosophical contradiction. The artist is portrayed as having lost control of her place in history. Baillie is 'called upon', in Reiman's preface, to 'resign' the intricate edifice of the "Introductory Discourse" in favour of the 'new' prefatory introduction. In this way, the playwright will benefit from the ideological salvation of her dramatic future, the professed concern which underpins the critic's particular 're-instatement' of the *Plays On The Passions*.

Reiman represents any 'resistance' from Baillie, regarding her implied label of, 'tardy Elizabethan', as an admission of naivete which merits critical intervention. The twentieth-century critic thus aims to sidestep the transcription of a detailed 'misreading' of the "Introductory Discourse" in order to invoke an awareness of the dramatist as a writer of 'essential' literary/historical value. Baillie is shown as a blinkered dramatic repository and guardian of seventeenth-century creative energy. Reiman's compromise of Baillie's distinctly 'anti-Elizabethan' theoretical sub-text,

involves him in an anxious process of 'selecting' Elizabethan influences, in order to evade the destabilising influence which the comparisons serve to provoke. In this sense, Reiman's criticism reveals a kinship to the undercurrent of anxiety which accompanies Hazlitt's selective recovery of the Renaissance playwrights. Baillie's colourful proclamation of organisational authorial primacy is reconstituted within the boundaries of a process which actually pre-dates, and thus nullifies, her intellectual contribution to dramatic theory. Reiman's unstable map of historical kinship not only hypothesises Baillie's theories as anti-intellectual; he institutes a parallel de-politicisation of her supposed literary/historical inspiration (however 'unconscious' the critic hints this may be) from Webster and Shakespeare. The lack of an overt prefatory recognition and dramatic re-affirmation of such influence however, are presented as evidence for Baillie's purely artistic involvement with the Renaissance writers, an involvement at the obscurantist level of literary landmarks. Her failure to express this influence permits the twentieth-century critic to avoid an exploration of the political implications (as regards both Baillie's plays, and the works of the Elizabethan and Jacobean writers) which such a comparative gesture generates.

Bosola's position in society is superficially fluid within *The Duchess of Malfi*. He is the subject of designing forces, Duke Ferdinand and the Cardinal, and he is described at the outset of the play, by Antonio, as the, "court gall". The power-base has alerted itself to his parasitical presence, and protected itself, limiting his progress:

Here comes Bosola,

[Enter Bosola]

The only court-gall; yet I observe his railing
Is not for any simple love of piety;
Indeed, he rails at those things which he wants;
Would be lecherous, covetous, or proud,
Bloody or envious, as any man,
If he had means to be so.
(I. I. 22)¹⁴

Reiman, however, claims *Bosola* as one of Baillie's "miserable beings" (p.57), whose representation within the tragic framework is justified in relation to a specific poetic principle. The critic assumes a "language of compromise" in re-working the principle cited by the nineteenth-century dramatist as a fractured, but impulsive force for good; illustrated in the actions of Basil's "uncultivated soldiers" (p.57). For Joanna Baillie, motivation and principle are interdependent. Any self-interested blindness regarding our progress towards deliverance, and the recognition of principal truths about ourselves is constructed as a means of moral guidance. The frailties of the human species are performed as a function of the "Introductory Discourse" and within the dramatic denouement of the plays themselves. Baillie presents her introductory commentary as having access to an 'overview' of providential order, within the seemingly arbitrary and superficially individualistic cruelties practised, for example, in the spectacle of the roadside hanging. The dramatist 'grounds' the prevailing institutions of judicial/social control as the decorous foundation for the educative tragic blueprint of human misfortune. Reiman's arranged marriage of the Jacobean malcontented figure of *Bosola* with unnamed characters in Baillie's dramas, transcribes an essential reservoir of transhistorical inspiration. The critic thus assumes the role of authoritative critical instructor, a role which, Baillie has informed us, is reserved for the interpretive visionary. A universalist reading of the concept of "motivation" permits the critic to dismiss the "different principles" which underwrite Webster and Shakespeare's tragic protagonists as insignificant. The critic's 'insight' into a 'poetic principle which reveals a specific pattern of recognisably 'worthy' tragic exposition, allows the relatively unknown Joanna Baillie a literary/historical 'reference' from her seventeenth-century forebears.

Reiman, however, involves Shakespeare and Webster in an anxious and contradictory attempt to deflect the threat of a close reading of the terms of their involvement with the nineteenth century dramatist. The provocative proximity of the Jacobean protagonists to a ill-defined body of Baillie's characters, charts a mythological and obscurantist comparative reading on the part of the twentieth-century critic. The Jacobean becomes the focus of a compromise which, in turn, questions the 'legitimacy' of his subject, Joanna Baillie, as a worthy subject of scholarly interest. Reiman 'un-writes' Baillie's prodigious introduction, describing a theoretical wilderness in the consolatory intertextual figures of Macbeth and Bosola.

Auspiciously pared from the 'unprincipled' John Webster, to what extent does Bosola provoke this defensive critical mythology in relation to his supposed kinship with a 'universal' Joanna Baillie? Reiman's Bosola, as has been discussed, must be spared any association with Webster, and his radical interrogative function within *The Duchess of Malfi*. Bosola is cited, and employed, as evidence of Baillie's mere lip service to an unappealing charge of "moralistic bias" (p.viii). The 'silent' concurrence then, with Bosola as amoral and disruptive commentator upon any vision of a 'force for good' is implicit in his transplantation into the circle of "nearly rounded" characters (p.viii). His presence, however, threatens the critical foundations of the representation of both Baillie and Bosola, and institutes a misreading of the "Introductory Discourse". We are permitted to read Bosola in the same paragraph as the "rounded characters" in order to absorb a flavour of 'Gothic' closet machiavellianist in a non-threatening form. Bosola is offered as a spice whose proximity seems to bolster the particularly desperate and delicate balance which his presence has originally provoked. Justified as forebears with a legitimate place in the

literary/historical continuum, *Bosola* and *Macbeth* are simultaneously recognised as representative of forces which reveal themselves as more worthy, perhaps, of the repressive "simplicity" (p.viii) than the "moralistic bias" which they are invoked to contradict. *Bosola's* response to *Ferdinand's* plot might be read as a suitable comment upon the compromising critical position which is the result, for *Reiman*, of the reincarnation of the Jacobean Character as an indeterminate villain, legitimised by temporal distance.

... oh, that to avoid ingratitude
For the good deed you have done me, I must do
All the ill man can invent. ...
(*The Duchess of Malfi*, I.2.194)

Count Basil is endowed with a prophetic moral solidity in the "Introductory Discourse". Although *Baillie* tells us that, "love is the chief groundwork of almost (all our tragedies and comedies" (p.62), her dramas purport to delineate for us,

an unbroken view of the passion from the beginning ... I have
grafted this passion [love] on men of a firm, thoughtful turn of
mind, with whom it commonly makes the longest stay, and
maintains the hardest struggle. (p.63)

Basil, then, is to educate us from "those open communicative impetuous characters who have so long occupied the dramattick station of lovers" (p.63). The play is to represent a 'documentary' anatomy of actions which are provocative when unforeseen, and will thus aim to limit their disruptive potential. The "unbroken view" (p.63) which is to transcribe the inception and outcome of the particular "passion", is to focus upon an 'ideal' and legitimate vessel for its management and containment. "The firm [and thoughtful] frame of mind ... maintains the hardest struggle" (p.63), and thus displays a corrective code of behaviour, revealing the 'essential riches' of the 'human spirit': such riches as are undermined by 'non-tragic' forms of fictional

representation. The "different stages of progession" (p.63) which are part of this formula of understanding and achievement for the audience/reader, encourages 'restraint'. We are to be permitted to involve ourselves in the consequences of folly's first cause. Clearly, then, this ongoing process is designed to result, ideally, in the transcription of a homiletic providential judgement. Such an undertaking is necessarily precarious, as Baillie invokes the philosophical involvement of the Jacobean 'domino theory of immorality', best illustrated by Middleton's Deflores in *The Changeling*.¹⁵

Deflores lays no claim, however, to Baillie's "open communicative impetuosity" (p.63) which, she tells us, is a reflection of the 'old order' of dramatic representation, to be superseded by the educative decorum of the "Introductory Discourse". As the "common garden-bull" to be ever, "lugg'd again",¹⁶ Deflores presents himself to us as delivering notice of his passion within Joanna Baillie's legitimate "firm, thoughtful reserved turn of mind" (p.63). His bullish determination clearly "maintains the hardest struggle" which characterises the useful 'accessible' tragic hero (p.63). Baillie's texts aim at the ultimate disclosure of obsession, followed by individual penitence, penance, and an ultimate 'recovery' for the social institutions threatened by the dominance of the "passion" under investigation. The cognisant Deflores is a useful example of the disruptive 'by-product' which an attempt to select and sanitise certain elements in Renaissance texts ultimately instils within Baillie's own plays. Deflores disrupts the educative "example" (p.36) which the *Plays On The Passions* are intended to project, as the theoretical outline of this cohesive process which discloses the "example" does not exclude Deflores' strategic manoeuvre. The servant acknowledges with aplomb the very persistence which will

ensure a level of social disruption. When he is compared to the single-minded representation of an ongoing "passion", then, Deflores' adherence to his task brings him within the theoretical conditions which outline the meritorious 'educative principle' through which the "Discourse" promotes its moral authority.

Baillie outlines the most morally uplifting personality-type for the representation of the ongoing action of tragic passion. In so doing, the dramatist undermines the carefully constructed theoretical edifice, as Middleton's Deflores may justifiably present himself as an illustration of the 'harmonious' "unbroken view" of the outcome of 'passion' working within, and upon, establishment power-relations. Deflores' outlook is unitarian and linear. He dictates the prospective progression of anti-social activity which he sets out to initiate. The Jacobean man-servant follows the heroic guidelines of Presbyterian persistence which Baillie provides as the authoritative 'recommended version' of the impact of an obsessive preoccupation. Deflores prides himself upon the well-wrought progression of the murders and wedding-night duplicity, this assertiveness questioning the "shame" voiced by Beatrice.⁸⁷ The shame would be, perhaps, for them to remain to receive the institutional punishment for their 'indecent exposure' of the nature of morality in patriarchal society. The demonstration of their actions by those who remain acts as an insurance policy against their 're-occurrence' Alsemero expresses the shock which describes the ramifications of Beatrice and Deflores' disruptive liberty, "How should blind men know you from fair-fac'd saints?"⁸⁸ In Middleton's play, the remaining characters aim at a reconstruction of the comforting hierarchy of social relations which precede the tragic action, and the hopeful epilogue expresses a mood of convalescent despair.

The moral uncertainty which Middleton portrays at the close of *The Changeling* illustrates a dramatic scenario which Baillie attempts to revoke. Middleton's disruptive drama provides an example of the interrogative function of Jacobean texts which must not be seen to impinge upon the "originality" of the "Introductory Discourse". The Jacobean playwrights may be seen to 'underwrite' Baillie's discussion of the potential risks involved in unleashing literary texts upon the 'publick taste' which have not undergone a rigorous 'cross-matching' with the legitimate tragic principle. The moral danger which threatens the 'blind men' (Baillie's "ballad readers" (p.56) who constitute the impressionable recipients of staged passion) provokes the dramatist's categorisation and division of tragic heroes into the 'empty/obvious' and the 'sensitive/worthy'. This homiletic response is an attempt to ensure that the vulnerable elements in the audience do not become the recipients of an involuntary politicisation on the part of the dramatist. Baillie's theory of tragedy is construed as a warning to its potential administrators; providing an indication of the risk to the hierarchial constitution of the power-base which deviation from the "Discourse" may entail.

Baillie's 'Zola-esque' observation of the inevitable outcome of a particular "passion" involves the playwright in a philosophical recantation of Basil's fate. Baillie tells us in the "Introductory Discourse" that critical contradiction is not uncommon, and is, consequently, not a noteworthy occurrence. If she does happen to provide a "stick wherewith to break [her] own pate", then the dramatist hopes we will "use it with gentleness" (p.62). The discussion of Count Basil's suicide follows closely upon this appeal, and offers an evasive vulnerability.

The play opens with Basil, the proud soldier, proceeding through Mantua at

the head of a battalion of reinforcements, to join Charles V in battle with Francis I at the "battle of Pavia" (p.74). His procession meets that of Victoria and her train, bearing gifts in honour of Saint Francis. Their meeting is acted in dumb-show. Basil, previously bemoaning the time lost in traversing the city, interrupts his journey once he has witnessed Victoria. This results in his troops failing to appear in time to take part in the battle, so that although Charles is victorious, it is with grievous loss of life.

The loss of Basil from Baillie's play is acknowledged by the dramatist as a point of conflict which involves the drama in an interrogative reading of the ideological position of the tragic prescription. The death must be intimate as a 'virtus-suicide' in order to deflect a potential reading of Basil's action as a radical protest against the material/patriarchal authority which defines his social success in terms of military achievements. An indication of 'virtus-suicide', however, threatens to contradict the prescribed theoretical vision of an accessibly 'human' tragic hero. Such a reading of Basil circumscribes him within the purview of inaccessible heroic protagonists from classical tragedies, "the variety of whose ... sides ... we perceive not" (p.29). Baillie stresses the 'humanistic' theoretical perspective which underlines and dictates the "original" mythology she wishes to promote. An illustration of the essential recuperative powers of the human spirit may be productively channelled through a studious and scrupulously wrought version of poetic homily. Baillie's representation of critical authority in the "Introductory Discourse" is undermined, however, by the sub-text denoting essential human value as defined by a strict adherence to a biblical Christian code of ethics. In her prefatory disapproval of Basil's suicide, Baillie strives to induce an 'intertextual' harmonisation of the

contradiction which his actions bring to bear upon the nature of the moral lesson which the "Discourse" is to be seen to provide. The dramatist thus aims to guard against the potential damage which the reader may mistakenly inflict upon the future success of Count Basil, a misreading which views the dramatist as permitting Basil to commit a sacrilegious act. Baillie's description of the omnipresent threat of critical contradiction, the vulnerable "pate" (p. 63), may be read as a defensive reaction in the face of an impoverishing investigation which, nevertheless, the dramatist views as justified. Basil's death is, in a sense, undeserved. Firstly, he has displayed an exemplary subjection before the "Discourse", by acting-out the decorous and educative outline of 'heroic tragic man'. Basil represents his "passion", love, admirably, but the accuracy of his rendition becomes compromised in the ultimate fate which 'befalls' him. His suicide may be read as an act of theoretical hypocrisy, since this act is the means by which the dramatist excuses herself from the active solution which the drama embraces. The protagonist is shown as deserving death because he kills himself. Basil's anti-Christian act is punished, but in shifting from the observer of his on-going "passion" into the persona of the guardian of a biblical form a justice, the teacher obscures and even undermines the lesson she aims to convey. The original emphasis of Basil's act appears to hinge upon the military impotence which results from his excessive "love". The invocation of a Biblical 'reference' for the removal of the virtuous protagonist from the text may indeed indicate the extent of Basil's true guilt, and his healthy awareness of it. The ramifications of suicide are to be seen as extending far beyond the mutable earthly authority of the "Introductory Discourse". The act of execution must rest with a higher authority than Joanna Baillie, as Basil's downfall comes close to offending

against the liberal-humanist principles which she sets out in the "Discourse", and which involve bringing the distant hero into "nearer regard" (p.29). The invocation of biblical authority undermines the curious autonomy which binds Basil's expectations to the philosophical strategy which he is purported to represent and uphold. Here Baillie may be seen to have 'abandoned' Basil, and compromised the security of the "Discourse" itself since the combination of preface and plays can no longer be seen as a completely 'unified subject' in themselves. In this sense then, the "Introductory Discourse" prepares for a reading of the act of suicide which allows it to enact its own de-politicisation as an act of 'protest'. The breach of military ethics is circumscribed within the breach of the Christian code. The dramatist may thus present an authoritative 'alternative' morality, but one which nevertheless maintains a rigid version of socio/political and religious decorum.

If the text of Count Basil reveals other than that for which we have been prepared, it will be a revelation from the mouths of the "uncultivated" and overwrought, and thus from a position beneath the level of critical/moral investigation. The Count's friend and advisor Rosinberg clearly states the wishes of his military superior and social equal on the subject of the burial.

Ros. He has forbid it, and has charg'd me well
To leave his grave unknown: for that the church
All sacred rights to the self-slain denies.
He would not give offence.

1st Sol. What! shall our gen'ral, like a very
wretch,

Be laid unhonour'd in the common ground?
No salute to bid his soul farewell?
No warlike honours paid? it shall not be.

2nd Sol. Laid thus? no by the blessed light of
heav'n!

In the most holy spot in Mantua's walls,
He shall be laid; in face of day be laid;
And tho' black priests should curse us in the teeth,

we will fire o'er him while our hands have power
 To grasp a musket.
 (V.3)

Basil's wish, however, does work at the level of discontinuity. Basil, as I have argued, pays with his life for the mode of his death. As he has 'taken precautions' to belie the charge of an offence to sacred ground, he may be seen to occupy a constantly shifting, untenable position as regards the "example" (p.36) which is to be drawn from the conclusion of the play. If we are to applaud Basil's Christian foresight, we again face the problem which his foresight attempts to redress: the perception of a potential theoretical approval of the blasphemous act of self-murder. It represents its own solution to the theological threat. The discourse has become entangled within a 'double negative' within the play-text itself.

Baillie evades the 'blow of the stick' (p.62), the accusation of critical contradiction, through the careful inclusion of Basil's instructions as to his un consecrated grave. The 'compromise' which allows the Christian burial to be decided upon, actively supports the underlying philosophical position of tragic decorum, but must not be seen to be condoned as an instruction to those who are to implement the lessons of the *Plays on the Passions*. The proclamation of the Christian burial is thus 'blamed' upon the essential virtue which is somehow glimpsed within the misguided loyalty of the "uncultivated soldiers" (p.63).

Basil's fate involves a self-contained intellectual neatness, offending no-one, which distances him from the desired association with the 'essentially tragic'. The "Introductory Discourse" is forced to endow the "uncultivated" with greater than heroic imperfections in order to offset the radical self-sufficiency of Basil's 'ordering principle'. The focus of what constitutes tragedy is re-routed, the common man

bearing the burden of the 'blasphemy', which, as has been discussed, is an actual 'required element' in portraying a closing vision of divine temperance and restitution. The working through of the ethics of Basil's demise clearly describes a final and insurmountable contradiction. Basil's actions illustrate a mimetic response to the heroic mandate of the "Introductory Discourse". His 'disorderly' response (his suicide) is an attempt to describe the nature of the orderly procedure which he follows, in illustrating the growth and consequence of his "passion". Basil is a product of the 'essential example' which the "Discourse" provides, the outcome of an adherence to moral principles which restrict, control, and thus eventually absolve his actions within the world of the drama. The disaffection which the introduction displays towards Basil's 'choice' of death may perhaps be read as reviewing the necessity of providing a dramatic re-affirmation of its principles, in view of the damaging backlash which may result. The "Introductory Discourse" attempts a reversal of Donald Reiman's 'absolution' of her "moralistic bias", which the critic views as, "more evident in her theory than in her dramas" (p.viii). Any discordant note which might undermine the delivery of the tragic principle is subtly diverted from its source. In this sense, Baillie's philosophical introduction lays claim to a position of one of Reiman's "nearly rounded and vital" characters (p.viii).

We recall that Reiman tells us that Baillie's dramatic characters are "more nearly rounded and vital than her theory would lead one to expect", and goes on to make his 'motivational' comparison with Macbeth and Bosola. Baillie's theoretical conception of unity rests with her audience's recognition of "Discourse" and dramas as a unity of theory and practice which ultimately 'proves' itself. In this way she may be seen to seek such a title as Reiman attributes to her dramatic characters. The

plays are clearly engineered to fulfil the expectations engendered in their audience/readers, and Baillie may thus justifiably refute the critical necessity of searching outwith her own "extensive design" (Q.1) for literary/historical analogies/models with the partial exceptions of the Bible and 'Shakespeare'.

The 'tragic flaw' which makes Basil a morally acceptable tragic hero is voiced, early in the play, as distinctly 'other' than that for which we have been prepared. The passion of "love" imposes itself upon a foundation of a 'flaw' which is considered possessed of an 'intertextual' literary/historical legitimacy, the "too great love of military fame".

Ros. One fault he has, I know but only one;
His too great love of military fame
Destroys his thoughts, and makes him oft appear
Unsocial and severe.
(1.2)

Aristotle defines one of the "major requisites" of tragic reversal as the representation of "some great error [in a masculine protagonist] who is [neither] conspicuous for virtue and justice [nor] vice and depravity"⁸⁹. It is the single-mindedness of all Baillie's protagonists which is their "great error", a fault which, as we have seen, is firmly circumscribed within her theoretical and almost presbyterian concept of virtue. Their 'excess' is prevented from being viewed as too great a threat to the play-society by being overtly presented as a form of understandable 'over-achievement', rather than a poverty of action which may possible be generalised from the individual to encompass the state of the nation.

Rosinberg's speech displays an internalisation of this 'erroneous trait' in the tragic protagonist. Basil is displayed as suffering from a partial recognition of his own imperfection, and this spiritual unease is substituted for the tragic action in which

the Classical protagonist becomes the agent of his own reversal. Basil's suffering may be construed as a form of 'preemptive' absolution for his inaction later in the play. In this way, the internalisation of the error which renders him a legitimate tragic protagonist in the classical sense is the means by which Baillie upholds the idea of dramatic decorum prescribed in the "Introductory Discourse". Raymond Williams articulates this idea as part of his account of the rise of Romantic criticism.

The single response of pity and terror, within a whole action, was dissociated to pity and terror as opposed and substantive feelings, to be known and modulated within the spectator's mind. This essential detachment from the tragic action, through the figure of the hero, into the conscious spectator. We tend to think of this now as a Romantic excess, but the basis for it comes earlier, in the reduction of action to shared behaviour which is the essential consequence of the idea of decorum.

(Modern Tragedy, p.27)

The tragedy circumscribes an ideological illustration of an 'assault' by the 'unruly passion' (love) upon a 'virtuous irregularity' which the dramatist is prepared to view, with a degree of indulgence, the military questing spirit. This version of heroism is involved in re-engendering the 'essential' awareness of nationality and class-consciousness through the medium of a formulaic tragic representation.

The figure of Coriolanus is subtly invoked as a 'transhistorical' re-affirmation of the human desire to achieve an ultimate 'national' self-knowledge through the extremes of experience. The Shakespearean general is not discussed directly, as this would interfere with the benefits accruing to the audience from their proximity to the meritorious "originality". As a 'Shakespearean' text, Coriolanus may be alluded to as a moral foundation for the subject matter of Baillie's play. The interrogation of the military basis of social identity which Shakespeare's play is engaged in, becomes 'deflected' in Count Basil through the intervention of the 'essential' passion of "love".

Baillie's play is involved in a complex balancing act. The versions of extremity which illustrate the treatise as voicing an essential human willingness to suffer for transcendent spiritual 'revelation', in practice work to undermine the dramatist's version of a spiritual/moral common goal. A general acceptance of the attitudes which inform the organization of established institutions of punishment will, logically, only require the implementation of a carefully wrought "idealist mimesis"⁹⁰ as an authoritative response to a particular social dysfunction, or threat of active dissent. According to the observations which the dramatist offers on the nature of human motivation, the shared goal, such dissent is 'un-natural'. The representation of any outburst of social disaffection overturns the theoretical basis of the "Introductory Discourse".

Baillie cites her theory of tragedy as writing its own evidence for the need for a functional idealist mimesis, the forthcoming dramas. The dramatist upbraids the representation of vice, invoking a sub-text of disapproval of Jacobean tragedy. This disapproval, however, involves a contradiction in relation to the theory of exemplary tragedy expounded in the "Introductory Discourse". The Jacobean villain is unfit as a harbinger of the perils of committing crimes, owing to the carefully controlled progression of the deeds he has envisaged. We have become inured to such behaviour; it underpins all social institutions, and is therefore not worthy of attracting our moral attention as a cautionary tale.

Thus, also, tyrants are represented as monsters of cruelty, unmixed with any feelings of humanity; and villains as delighting in all manner of treachery and deceit, and acting upon many occasions for the very love of villainy itself; though the perfectly wicked are as ill-fitted for the purposes of warning, as are the perfectly virtuous are for those of example. (pp.35-6)

It is in relation to the moral function of characterisation that Baillie inserts her footnote (p.36) on the representation of women within the tragic genre. The paragraph describes a vision of "correspond[ence]", a harmonious equilibrium with the responses of the male characters in the dramas. In this way, Baillie aims to offer a critique which discusses an original 're-working' of the traditional role of the female character, which has been to support and define the position of the male in the patriarchal hierarchy. The authoritative status of the structural device which she employs, however, to express this understanding (the footnote) necessarily denotes an anxiety in relation to the extent to which the aims are implemented in the plays which follow. Baillie's intimation of the subordinate position of women when compared to the 'principal' tragic role, must assume a theoretical parity with the values which, she argues in the "Introductory Discourse" are those which agree are essential to upholding the status quo. A re-appraisal of the position of women, for the female dramatist, transcribes itself as a subliminal textual recognition and evasion of the conflicting interests she is attempting to promote and combine. The content of the footnote allows a further level of marginalisation in relation to the diminished population of 'virine' female characters. Although present in numbers meriting serious recognition, Baillie concludes, with decorum, that the proportions fall short of those required to advance a radical argument employing the medium of stage-representation.

I have said nothing here in regard to female character, though in many tragedies it is brought forward as the principal one in the piece, because what I have said of the above characters is likewise applicable to it. I believe that no man that ever lived, who has behaved in a certain manner, on a certain occasion, who has not had amongst women some corresponding spirit who on the like occasion, and in every way similarly circumstanced, would have behaved in the like manner. With some degree of suffering and refinement, each class of the tragick heroes I have mentioned has its corresponding one

amongst the heroines. The tender and pathetick no doubt has the most numerous, but the great and magnanimous is not without it, and the passionate and affectionate boasts of one by no means inconsiderable in numbers, and drawn sometimes to the full as passionate and impetuous as itself. (p.36)

The "self" which represents the male class of "passionate and impetuous" heroes (p.33) is focused as the 'quintessential' expression of human spiritual identity. The female heroic delegation is to be 'graded' in a comparative sense, with reference to its degree of success in emulating the behaviour patterns already firmly laid down as the preserve of the masculine tragic hero. Thus in an analysis of the role of Victoria in *Court Basil*, it is possible to view the results of the philosophical conflict between the awareness of the marginalisation of women in the interests of patriarchy, and the promotion of socio-political/moral values which the demonstration of the female is employed to uphold.

In entreating Basil to remain in Mantua rather than march into battle, Victoria is instrumental in employing the Duke's delaying tactics. The tactical manoeuvres put into practice by the authoritative patriarchal figure must also, however, serve to emphasise Victoria's indirect innocence of the role of sexual temptress, which her father engineers. Basil's acceptance of the invitation to stay in Mantua is, on one level, absolved of the anti-heroic charge of weakness through his appeal to the 'essential' passion of love. The 'weakness' is divested of its threat to the status of the masculine hero by reflecting his response as, partly, the required deferential condescension to feminine caprice. Basil's decision to stay is to be acknowledged partly at the level of chivalric response.

From their meeting, Victoria moves the discussion into the picture-gallery. Her chaperone/companion Albini is left behind, and Victoria is courteously led in by

Rosinberg. She is, however, still accompanied by Isabella, and, as the scene closes, is viewed departing "with her ladies" (II.2). Baillie's insistence upon Basil's failure to be represented as alone with Victoria in the "picture-gallery" of the Mantuan palace invokes a scenic comparison with the 'gallery scene' in Middleton's *Women Beware Women*.⁹¹ The conspicuous decorum of Baillie's scenic directions may be seen to describe a response to the threat of theoretical/moral reversal engendered by any allusion to the Jacobean text. In Middleton's famous scene, Livia the pandress and Bianca's mother-in-law play chess, whilst Bianca is led through the picture-gallery above where the Duke is waiting to seduce her, with or without her consent. Baillie's scene offers an 'explanation', perhaps, of the anxiety which Reiman displays in allowing her plays a kinship with an indistinct version of Jacobean character motivation. The nineteenth-century dramatist insists upon a similar distance between a disruptive allusive influence, and the impeccable 'principles' of the "Introductory Discourse". The twentieth-century critic, as has been discussed, praises Bosola's literary/historical presence, but pares him from collusion with John Webster. In insisting upon Victoria's attendants Baillie invokes an 'insurance' against an allusive comparison to Middleton's play. As the "Introductory Discourse" stresses *The Plays on the Passions* as the outcome of her theoretical/moral doctrine, any 'intertextual interference' from *Women Beware Women* threatens a reversal of the treatise which states that our moral/socio-political relationships are based on an essential code of shared 'instinctive belief'. Although it is possible for Baillie and Reiman to judge Bianca as innocent as she passes towards her reckoning, such an avowal is not to be extended to the dramatist Thomas Middleton. Victoria (as does Middleton's Bianca) admires the paintings, and the Count declares his love. The

moral position of the Countess Albini in Count Basil is the antithesis of that of Middleton's Livia, whilst mirroring the latter's role as witty mature commentator on human motivation. In the Countess Albini, Joanna Baillie re-writes Middleton's Livia in a legitimate role.

In *Radical Tragedy*, Jonathan Dollimore discusses the representation of passion in *Antonio's Revenge*.

Again, stoicism is in opposition to 'passion'. Pandulpho begins by rejecting the latter, together with its typically hyperbolic mode of expression:

Would'st have me cry, run raving up and down
 For my son's loss? Would'st have me turn rank mad,
 Or wring my face with mimic action,
 Stamp, curse, weep, rage and then my bosom strike?
 Away, 'tis apish action, player-like.

(I.ii.312-16)

Notably, it is the theatrical convention, as well as the experience, which is being repudiated: passion is a kind of dramatic posturing [as is, ultimately] stoicism. (pp.32-3)

Joanna Baillie circumscribes such a "posturing" within a nationally approved essentialism. The particular 'passion' under examination is to be defined with reference to specific conceptual boundaries. We are to recognise the active representation of the 'ideal' version of passion in the observations of those who possess the meritorious "contemplative character" (p.14). The measured outlook of such an individual is 'vindicated' by Baillie, as it offers an ideal response to events which the dramatist classifies as requiring 'prescriptive control': such control as *The Plays on the Passions* are designed to demonstrate. The "contemplative character" is promoted as representing a section of the potential audience for the above works. His/her response to such emotive events as the "publick execution" (p.5) is employed

as evidence that the dramatist is re-issuing an old and valued system of belief. The moral code of the "contemplative character" has receded from the "generality" of mankind, into restricted pockets of the population, but still remains as a potent and pristine example of the superior form of understanding which both our moral and legal institutions built upon (p.14). This "contemplative" individual provides the exception to the mass of humanity, and is employed by Baillie in order to acknowledge and support the purity of purpose which foregrounds her methodological approach to the "Discourse" and *Plays On The Passions*. The former is presented as both inviting and legitimising the dramatist's corrective solution to our current spiritual and dramatic failings. Without his approval, there is a danger that the prefatory treatise may be seen as unacceptably interventionist and prescriptive. The "sympathetick curiosity" (p.4) of the contemplative personality becomes elevated to the status of a "mode of instruction" (p.14). The mass receipt of the given lesson will supply the convenient 'connection' in the mind of the "general" reader, a connection with the harmonious outcome of the 'contemplative' character's relationship with theatrical exhibition. This individual,

partakes, in some degree, of the entertainment of the Gods, who were supposed to look down upon the world ... as we do upon theatrical exhibition; and if he is of a benevolent disposition, a good man struggling with, and triumphing over adversity, will be to him, also, the most delightful spectacle.
(p.14)

Baillie's philosophical treatise on the portrayal of passion pulls towards a recognition of character as 'fixed' and linear. In this way, the dramatist provides a 'general rule' for dramatic characterisation a rule which is designed to celebrate the harmonious material achievement of her own theory and its dramatic illustration. Discourse and dramas provide an interdependent expression of the "delightful

spectacle", the result of the "good man struggling with, and triumphing over adversity" (p. 14). Baillie offers a benevolent artistic re-appraisal of the contemporary institutions of punishment and reward. Count Basil is represented as a contemplative General, and may thus appreciate his spiritual superiority within the play-text as underwritten by the "Introductory Discourse". Basil's denial of reflection (the product of his passionate love for Victoria) also involves him in the opposite camp of those who require the instruction of a providential spectacle. This results in the heroic 'virtus-suicide'.

Baillie has told us that, "to be well exercised in [contemplative] study will fit a man more for the most important situations of life ... He will perceive the natural effect of every order that he issues on the minds of his soldiers, his subjects or his followers" (p. 15). Basil's death, then, reveals a harmonious final re-assertion of his "contemplative character" (p. 14). His self-sacrifice is to redeem the burden of 'sin' imposed on his soldiers through the deprivation of their participation in Charles' victory. Basil becomes the scape-goat who is punished for the 'non-event', the denial of a nationalistic expression of pride-in-might. His suicide, however, is subtly involved in redeeming the overtly authoritarian delivery of his 'punishment'. In this sense, the suicide, the result of a 'contemplative' military post-mortem, seeks to re-establish the concept of a humanistic transcendence. Basil is to be seen to transcend and thus obscure, the ideologically-based sentence imposed by the dramatist: a sentence which proclaims the extent of his 'disloyalty'. The contradictions involved in Basil's suicide may be seen to be 'resolved' by Baillie in the 'spectacle' of the act itself. In *Discipline And Punish*, Michel Foucault addresses the "spectacle" of the public execution as, "not only a judicial, but also ... a political

ritual" (p.47). Foucault continues,

"Besides its immediate victim, the crime attacks the sovereign; it attacks him personally, since the law represents the will of the sovereign; it attacks him physically, since the force of the law is the force of the prince. 'For a law to be in force in this kingdom, it must necessarily have emanated directly from the sovereign, or at least been confirmed by the seal of his authority' (Muyart de Vouglans, xxxiv). (p.47)

Basil is acting out the authority of the "Introductory Discourse", the authority which the-nature-of his crime has undermined. In the case of his particular crime, the sense of an "immediate victim" is distant and general. In view of the battle won, it is represented as, for the most part, a product of an empathic guilt. Basil's 'unruly Passion' is 'punished' as a direct assault upon the "law to be in force in this kingdom". The self-seeking blindness which characterises the excessive passion of love rejects the vision of an essential altruism, which the "Discourse" and dramas are designed to enforce.

The Duke of Milan and his minister plot Charles' defeat in delaying Basil. Gauriceio introduces himself in the garb of the malcontented figure. The grievances which he puts forward, in a country impoverished by the preparations for war, communicate an impersonal, distant, discontent. Gauriceio's position as advisor to the Duke invites an unusual reading of the Jacobean Dramatic malcontented figure. Baillie's minister is most reminiscent, indeed, of Sforza's minister in Massinger's *The Duke Of Milan*, a comparison of devastating proportions as regards the comprehensible 'unitarian' deviation from, and return to, a decorous vision of moral restraint.

Gauriceio reveals an impulse towards self-interested growth. His rise, however, is not employed as part of the interrogative tragic machinery of his corrupt Duke's decline. He does not, as does Webster's Bosola, attempt to gain access to a

self-rewarding socio-political hierarchy which employs him as a means of restraint. Indeed, Gauriceio reveals his rise to "higher things" (II.3) as mapped out, and aided by the Duke's anti-Christian assumption of self-worth. The Duke's greed and hypocrisy are construed by his minister as 'unnatural' only in relation to the crime he sees them commit against an aristocratic birthright, and not as a comment on his own position within the power structure. Gauriceio is 'licensed' by Joanna Baillie to enact the behaviour mapped out for the "uncultivated" within the "Introductory Discourse". The minister's metaphors of mercantilistic shady dealings reveal a Duke to whom he may be legitimately disloyal, owing to the traitorous implications of the latter's understanding of the principles involved in annexing land. According to Gauriceio the Duke believes, "his sordid wish for territory" to be, "the noblest passion of the soul, ambition" (II.3). Gauriceio views the Duke as threatening the mythology of the power-base through a methodological, rather than an ideological misinterpretation. The Duke fulfils, in one sense, the aristocratic mandate which serves to reinforce his sense of material identity/social position; the 'acquisition' of "territory". Gauriceio's anxiety relates to the 'arbitrary' impulse which the Duke chooses to reflect as the focus of his actions. This impulse is the passion of "ambition". Gauriceio views the Duke as having compromised the 'instinctive' element in the conquering process. He has chosen, instead, to threaten his birthright by analyzing and defining actions which need not be questioned, merely enacted.

Gauriceio's own rise, however, is construed as the prompting of "nature's passion in [his] breast". Baillie's division of spiritual worth into "contemplative" and "general" (p.14) reveals itself as dangerously open to 'unlicensed' decision-making processes. It is this very arbitrariness, of course, which permits Gauriceio his shifting contradictory role as 'natural' malcontent.

This creature now, with all his reptile cunning,
 Writhing and turning thro' a maze of wiles,
 Believes his genius form'd to rule mankind,
 And calls his sordid wish for territory,
 The noblest passion of the soul, ambition:
 Born had he been to follow some low trade,
 A petty tradesman had he still remain'd,
 And us'd the arts with which he rules a state,
 To circumvent the brothers of his craft,
 And yet he thinks, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!
 I am the tool and servant of his will.
 Well let it be; thro' all the maze of trouble
 I'll shape myself a way to higher things,
 And who will say 'tis wrong?
 A sordid being who expects no faith
 But as self-interest binds, who would not trust
 The strongest ties of nature and the soul,
 Deserves no faithful service. Perverse fate!
 Were I like him I would despise this dealing;
 But being as I am, born low in fortune,
 Yet with a mind aspiring to be great,
 I must not scorn the steps which lead to it:
 And if they are not right, no saint am I;
 I follow nature's passion in my breast,
 Which urges me to rise, in spite of fortune".

(*Count Basil*, II.3)

The Duke threatens his established role in society by indulging in overt displays of excess. Gauriceio may thus be seen to express his situation as a form of 'warning insight' to those who are "like" his employer. It is not the minister's place to "despise this dealing", that being the province of the law-givers and law-enforcers. Gauriceio's 'villainy' becomes progressively justified and palliated as his soliloquy unfolds. His role as informant to an essential 'natural' representation of establishment power-relations reflects upon the morality of his own desire for preferment. Gauriceio's ambition is 'naturalised', becoming a Boethian blind reaching towards a faulty rendition or supposed 'good'. Baillie invests him with his lack of 'sainthood' partly in order to 'explain' his disloyalty. It is, however, his "low fortune" which allows him the intellectual distance with which the Duke's failings may be clearly

attested. The minister describes the Duke as a quintessentially disruptive figure. Transposed within a bourgeois frame of reference (the world of the "petty tradesman") his anti-social means of achieving success threatens the outcome of mutual benefit which it is his duty to uphold. The service which Gauriceio renders to the Duke's contemporaries, then, is shown as relevant within the entire spectrum of the social hierarchy. The figure of the Duke becomes emblematic of an individual risking the values which underpin the foundations of the social 'category' with which he is identified. At this point in the drama it is the figure of the Duke which is politicised and castigated as a radical influence. The expression of 'loyalty' which Gauriceio shows towards the prevailing structures of authority serves to neutralise the interrogative role of the malcontented figure, which his position overtly recalls. The minister is focused as a legitimate social commentator, re-working the representative figure of the Jacobean malcontent, much as the position of Countess Albini is an attempt to re-route the social consequences of Middleton's promiscuous, but respectable, Livia.

Gauriceio's actions are not born of any desire to infiltrate the existing social order, as he is already firmly entrenched as the Duke's counsellor. The closing lines of the soliloquy offer an indirect comparison to those spoken by Middleton's Deflores,

Though my hard fate cast me out to servitude,
I tumbled into th' world a gentleman.

(The Changeling, II.1.49)

Gauriceio, however, is acting at the behest of "nature", making no claims upon a code of behaviour which identifies him with his social superiors. His "ties of nature" reveal the deformity behind the 'mask' as an individual crime against it (II.2). The

playwright avoids a discursive investigation of the power-base within her gothic rendition of Sixteenth-century aristocratic/military values. The ongoing dialogue maintains the educative principle of the "Introductory Discourse", which strives to maintain a sense of national cohesion. The "example" (p.36) or "warning" (p.35) which the play will leave us with will be directly related to Basil's individual actions within the play-society. Gauriceio an underling, cannot approach Basil's status as a tragic subject. His ambitions are not to be displayed as equalling the emotional and moral intensity which is associated with his master's "passion". More importantly, the socio-political ramifications of the hireling's ambitious qualities must not be seen to require detailed dramatic investigation. Spiritual and emotional equality between protagonists would detract from the overall vision of 'external' security within which Basil's internalised distress is worked, and which it is ultimately designed to uphold.

Gauriceio views the Duke as suffering from a misconception. The Noble reads his, "sordid wish for territory" as resulting from, "the noblest passion of the soul, ambition" (II.3). On one level, this criticism is tempered by the stress which is laid on the Duke's loyalty to the "Introductory Discourse". He does, after all, enact a faithful rendition of his allotted passion. From this point of view, the Duke's 'evil intent' towards Basil is shown as the product of an emotion which renders him essentially human accessible to us in the midst of his chicanery. We are not to lose sight of an explanation, however obscurantist, for the Duke's actions. The investigation of corruption is further distanced, as the Duke, for example, employs none of what Hazlitt views as the "extravagant" methods of John Ford's murderers, to detain their enemies.⁹² His guilt is diffused within the complex, shifting issues of innocence and blame which surround the success of his bait, the attractive persuasive

woman.

Gauriceio's presentation of the Duke's misreading of his motivation suggests a contradiction which undermines its basic accord with the philosophy of the "Introductory Discourse". A surface reading of the moral position of both characters, as expressed by the minister, does indeed contribute to the humanistic 'integrity' of the theoretical blueprint. Both uphold the essential 'value' of "ambition" as a moral, cultural, and spiritual asset. The lip-service which Baillie may be seen to pay towards an anti-militaristic criticism of the Duke's activities is constructed as a reprimand towards the 'unthinking' expression of force. Energy is wasted by being viewed apart from the moral/cultural source it is designed to uphold. The Duke is ultimately castigated for internalising his military forays. He is accused of the very sin of obscurantism which is perpetrated on the grand scale as a function of Baillie's "idealist mimesis".⁹³

Jonson's Macro's maxim on the public identity of established power relations remains unchallenged as an 'intertextual heckler' of Joanna Baillie's prescribed providentialism. Baillie may be seen to subscribe to Jonson's abrasive comment, however, in relation to the systems of justice and punishment whose merits the dramatist wishes to underline, "A prince's power makes all his actions virtue".⁹⁴

Jonson's maxim is abroad within the "Introductory Discourse" as an accepted function of the social hierarchy which the dramatist wishes to maintain, and applaud. Subsequently transplanted within the arena of prescriptive tragedy, the disruptive observation of the Roman General is employed as a morally irreproachable and intellectually satisfying rendition of 'poetic justice'. The Duke, for his pains, must endure the ignominious and fitting sentence of the "haughty conquering power" which

supersedes his own (V.2). Baillie's villainous Duke is silenced simply by being superannuated.

It is through Gauriceio himself, however, that the moral lesson is projected. He is the personification of one, "tormented in obscurity" (p.57), and the correct representation of dangerous "passions" will hopefully render them "absurd and ridiculous" (p.57). The disruptive potential of the minister's stance however, may account for the above soliloquy acting as his final noteworthy appearance within the play. He appears no more in the guise of the malcontented figure, and His disappearance may be read as a necessary silence. Gauriceio has exercised his function within the play-text of instituting the tragic action. He has influenced the Duke to detain Basil; "Gauriceio counselled well to keep him blind" (III.2). In this sense, the minister's anti-sociality is de-politicised on several levels. Firstly, his actions serve to undermine the culpability of the Duke. Gauriceio has achieved all he can hope to achieve, precisely because the social position with which Baillie endows him stands in contradiction to the role of detached social commentator. The revival of a version of the Jacobean malcontented figure involves Baillie in representations of authority which threaten the prescriptive equilibrium of Discourse and dramas. Gauriceio's disappearance from the play may be read as a necessary silence, as he threatens to exceed his ideological function within the 'gothic' tragedy of *Count Basil*. It is the Duke to whom is delegated the task of reeling him in.

Duke. My Governor I have severely punish'd
As a most daring traitor to my orders.
He cannot from his darksome dungeon tell,
Why then should they suspect?

Gaur. He must not live if Charles should prove
victorious.

Duke. He's done me service, say not so
Gauriceio.

(II.3)

The dramatist, then, may be seen to re-work the representative Jacobean figure within a conceptual framework which neuters his disruptive potential. At the close of the play, the minister's act of betrayal against the Duke is essentialised as a re-affirmation of social cohesion. Gauriceio enacts the re-stabilisation of the 'rightful' representation of justice, without affirming a conscious avowal of repentance.

Gauriceio, for some in'trest of his own,
His master's secret dealings with the foe
Has to Lanoy betrayed..

(V.3)

Gauriceio's 'silence' ensures the dramatist's portrayal of a 'natural-instinctive' leaning towards the 'rightful act'. The lack of an explanatory motive for his actions fuels the obscurantist solution of instinctive 'social conscience', an obscurantism which formulates this instinct as a 'general truth'. The minister's 'own interests' are to be seen as insignificant as he is motivated by a cohesive principle beneath the worldly surface of his conscious thought. At this point in *Count Basil*, the position in which Gauriceio is placed recalls the position of the "uncultivated soldiers" (p.63) within the "Introductory Discourse". Both soldiers and minister reveal an intrinsic potential for disruption, but also a visible expression of 'trainability'. They diverge from the acceptable behaviour which overtly mirrors and upholds the authority of the status quo. The soldiers' communal assertion of a common code of morality is involved in a process of revitalising the systems of authority to whom they appeal for the status of Basil's mythological renown. The crime which Basil has committed against the unquestioning action of the military ethos, is subtly redefined. He is ultimately submitted to the demands of the 'public body', who wish to install him as a celebration of the values he believes himself to have slighted. The wishes of the "uncultivated soldiers" (pp.63), then, are employed as an 'innocent' mouthpiece for

the prescriptive conservatism of the "Introductory Discourse", and their lack of cultivation is promoted by Baillie as illustrating the principle of certain latent universal human values which she outlines in the "Introductory Discourse".

Gauriceio diverges from the moral code which founds the 'ideal form' of social control. His actions, and the public broadcasting of his reversal, may be read with reference to Michel Foucault's discussion on the execution of punishment as the product of "not only ... a judicial, but also ... a political ritual". (*Discipline And Punish*, p.47). Foucault discusses the eighteenth-century practice of having the condemned individual publicly announce the list of his/her crimes, "thus attesting to the truth of what he had been charged with" (p.43). The "series of decipherable relations" (p.44) which such an act produced, serves to describe the, "dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength" (p.49). Isabella's announcement of Gauriceio's crime simultaneously introduces the idea of his remorse, as he betrays the Duke to a 'higher principle of moral authority'. Baillie, as Foucault's "sovereign", displays her strength in the inviolability of the 'essential' authority of the "introductory Discourse". This invocation of strength is furthered by its 'inbuilt' profession of compassionate values. This compassion takes a meritorious 'covert' form, as it is revealed as an individual self-censorship, or sense of guilt. The need for a more indecorous 'overt' display of force may be thus dispensed with.

Gauriceio's information confirms the Duke's actions as criminal, insisting that a Machiavellian amoral intellect has no legitimate role to play in the development of Baillie's authoritative due-process. The minister's plans for advancement according to his own desires, are purely a function of his displeasure at the Duke's imperfect

rendition of his social position. The malcontented figure is neutered, and transformed into the catalyst which results in the final "display [of] strength" discussed by Foucault.⁶⁵ Baillie invokes a sense of decorum in relation to the Duke's 'fall'. He suffers no public display of punishment, his fall from power is related as a morality tale. The punishment, then, is imbued with an immutable version of 'poetic justice', which may be seen to revive the tactics of the 'ballad form' (pp.57-8). Figurative descriptions of events whose outcome is informative, and yet firmly outwith the arena of discursive alteration, impress the dramatist as the generic medium with the greatest conceptual control over, 'the mass of mankind'. The sense of decorum which expresses the Duke's reversal, then, is involved in representing a fall which is pre-ordained. We are thus privy to a vision of Foucault's "dissymmetry", the result of the Duke's attempt to undermine the foundations upon which he himself is balanced.⁶⁶ The Duke's activities are revealed as an 'aside', a story, an event which has been simply and systematically dispatched, and does not merit the status of a 'spontaneous' stage-representation. The "set of decipherable relations" which Baillie wishes to reinforce, in *Count Basil*, is a providential strength in symmetry.⁶⁷ The news of the Duke's part in Basil's downfall, then, may be deliberately introduced by Baillie at a point in the play wherein it disrupts the flow of the narrative of Basil's death. The Duke's 'anti-linear' involvement in the final scene, is delivered as a reminder of his involvement in the tragic conclusion of the play. The punishment which the dramatist delivers to him takes the form of a subtle, confident display of the stylistic components at her disposal. The Duke is neatly despatched, for his literary faux-pas, by a cheerfully apt poetic justice. Baillie thus displays the intellectual armoury which is to underline the authority which the dramatist assumes in delineating the function of the "Introductory Discourse". The moral magnanimity

which shows our underlying sense of humanitarianism (the Duke is not killed, but may learn from his mistakes) reveals itself as the product of a sound material base. We may choose to share in the successful proposition of "Discourse" and dramas. Each "passion" is to be divested of its unlawful portent through its exposure to a prescriptive dramatic symmetry. Baillie offers a comic and tragic treatment of the "passion" under investigation as an artistic symmetry which is the product of a 'natural resource'.

In *Count Basil* (II.4), a further parallel with *Women Beware Women* suggests itself. The stage directions of Baillie's play reveal, "An Apartment in the palace: VICTORIA and ISABELLA are discovered playing at chess: the Countess Albini sitting by them, reading to herself". Baillie's chess game is very firmly distanced from the events which parallel Middleton's contest. The exchange between Victoria and Isabella does, however, invoke an echo of Middleton's protagonists' use of "the man" as double-entendre, commenting on their involvement in the progressive web of relationships within the play.⁹⁸ Middleton's couple do battle, enacting Bianca's ensnarement and resignation to defeat.

Mother. Y'are cunning at the game, I'll be sworn (Madam).

Livia. It will be found so, ere I give you over:

She that can place her man well—

Mother.

As you do (Madam).

(*Women Beware Women*, II.2.293)⁹⁹

Baillie's characters are involved in a discussion which appears to herald a critical investigation of the position of women in a patriarchal society. Victoria exalts in the power her looks and social position give her over potential suitors. The latter has allowed her to experience a broad spectrum of male response, none of which she considers 'genuine'. In order to obtain evidence of the intellectual/spiritual response which she desires, she tells us she must needs revoke her status as a Duke's daughter.

I'd put a white coif o'er my braided locks,
And be a plain, good, simple, fire-side dame.

(II.2)

The involvement with Middleton's text sharpens the focus of Baillie's rendition of the aristocratic female as an object of barter. Countess Albini, Victoria's worldly-wise confidante, upbraids her for the excellent description of her items of value in the bill of sale.

Alb. Yes, most unreal pow'r:
For she who only finds her self-esteem
In others' admiration, begs an alms,
Depends on others for its daily food,
And is the very servant of her slaves;
Tho' oftentimes, in a fantastick hour,
O'er men she may a childish power exert,
Which not ennobles, but degrades her state.

(II.4)

In relation to the "Introductory Discourse", however, Albini's rejoinder delineates the decorous re-routing of passion in its extreme and disharmonious form, rendering it, "baleful and unsexuctive" (p.59). In this sense, Albini's statement is robbed of its radical force. The dramatic effect of her speech, then, becomes re-routed into an evasive reproach for the disruptive reversal of the male-dominated status-quo, which is delivered by Victoria:

Ay all! and she who never has beheld
The polished courtier, or the tuneful sage,
Before the glances of her conqu'ring eye,
A very simple swain become,
has only vulgar charms.
To make the cunning artless, tame the rude,
Subdue the haughty, shake th' undaunted soul;
Yea, put a bridle in the lion's mouth
And lead him forth like a domestic cur,
These are the triumphs of all-powerful beauty!

(II.4)

Countess Albini's succinct social criticism is 'silenced' in a similar fashion to disruptive words of Gauriceio. Albini is displaced from an interrogative position

within the text by means of a 'palliative' invocation of the traditional female role. Albini becomes focused as a 'matron' figure, submitting her intellectual energies before the nurturing of the male child. The child in question, however, has no claims to an influential position within the social hierarchy. Albini is eclipsed by the display of strident coquetry from the orphan Mirando. His expression of an 'essential innocence' is couched in language which insists on Victoria's sexual attractiveness to a series of potential suitors. Mirando, indeed, attempts to carve out a position of importance in Victoria's esteem by investing in witty rejoinders promoting her worth as an object of male desire.

Mir. Nay, but I will not have a kiss of thee
Would I were tall! O were I but so tall!

Isab. And how tall would'st thou be?

Mir.

Thou dost not know?

Just tall enough to reach Victoria's lips.

Vict. (embracing him) O! I must bend to this,
thou little urchin.

Who taught thee all this wit, this childish wit?

Who does Mirando love? (*embraces him again.*)

Mir.

He loves Victoria.

Vict. And wherefore loves he her?

Mir.

Because she's pretty.

Isab. Hast thou no little prate to-day Mirando?

No tale to earn a sugar-plum withal?

Mir. Ay, that I have; I know who loves her
grace.

Vict. Who is it pray? thou shalt have comfits
for it.

Mir. (looking slyly at her.) It is—it is—it is the
count of Maldo.

Vict. Away thou little chit, that tale is old,

And was not worth a sugar-plum when new.

Mir. Well then, I know who loves her highness
well.

Vict. Who is it then? ...

Mir. It is the handsome marquis of Carlatzi.

Vict. No, no, Mirando, thou art naughty still;
Thou'st twice had comfits for that tale already.

Mir. Well then, indeed, I know who loves
Victoria. ...

It is Mirando's self .
 Vcr. Thou little imp! this story is not new,
 But thou shalt have thy comfits. Let us go.

(II.4)

The "Introductory Discourse" denies any attempt to revive any particular literary/historical source. The invocation of the position of women in Renaissance tragedy, nevertheless, has been firmly transplanted within *Count Basil*, (and within the tragedy of *Ethwald*, to be discussed later in this chapter). The latter play, set in the Dark Ages, defies any comparison with contemporary social relations. Baillie's originality appeals to a mythological vision of Elizabethan/Jacobean textual decorum, which is the product of a particular reading of literary-historical/temporal distance. Baillie's "originality", then, which denies any overt allusion to Renaissance Drama (other than the works of Shakespeare) may be read as 'sanitising' the effects of Jacobean sources, such as *Women Beware Women*.

Any threat to the providential denouement of *Count Basil* is invoked as evidence for metaphorical restraint. An early example of female representation in the drama illustrates this point. The discussion between Rosinberg and Valtomer on the merits of Victoria's female train gives the initial impression of an insistence upon the democratisation of the male ideal of female perfection. Rosinberg comments:

This is not the truth, and doth not please so well
 As the varieties of lib'ral nature,
 Where every kind of beauty charms the eye;
 Large and small featur'd, flat, and prominent,
 Av. by the mass! and snub-nosed beauties too.

(I.2)

Baillie attempts a reversal of the stereotypical recognition of female attractiveness as evidence of her social value. The means by which this is to be achieved, however, is self-defeating, as the dramatist resorts to an alternative list of qualities which are

no less recognisably physical. Rosinberg, with hearty aplomb, details the breadth of 'nature's bounty'. The function of this appraisal of 'nature's variety' is to redeem the excesses of the physical non-conformity he has listed. Rosinberg alters the traditional perception of such physical attributes into something which may now be perceived as essentially valuable.

The generalisation of female attributes, however, is clearly confined within a conventional and clichéd comic subject. As an attempt to re-route male prejudice, then, Baillie's tentative expression of 'fair-play' deprives itself of its potential radical force by means of the placatory comic display. The "varieties" which Rosinberg describes, assume a clichéd grotesqueness which effectively highlight the sacrifice he is ultimately making in finding them acceptable.

Ros 'Faith, ev'ry woman hath some witching charm,
If that she be not proud, or captious.
Valt Demure, or over wise, or giv'n to freaks.
Ros Or giv'n to freaks! hold, hold good
Valtomer!
Thou'lt leave no woman handsome under heav'n.

(II.2)

The denigration of women, for which Albini lectures Victoria, is once again transcribed within the comic portions of the drama. The female characters enact a respite from the serious emotional progression of Basil, and the Duke's military machinations. Such an infusion of 'light-hearted banter' as supplied by Rosinberg, is permissible within the tragic prescription of the "Introductory Discourse". Albini and Victoria express forceful opinions on the correct female behaviour within the version of patriarchal authority to which Baillie ascribes. The dialogue between the two women becomes representative of the function of Baillie's tragic genre. Victoria's proud and critical dismissal of the courtier as a "domestic cur" (p.II.4)

fulfils an educative function. An irrational female pride, and male adherence to statements of physical attraction denote the insurgence of an 'unruly' and dehumanising "passion". Baillie illustrates her conclusion outwith the boundaries of "Witty Comedy", which, she tells us, is unable to support such a "condemnation of vice" (p.47).

It is Valtomer's inclusion of a clichéd presentation of female emotional responses which results in Rosinberg's hearty laughter. Baillie's attempt to ensure a more equitable appreciation of the rights of women is based on a vision of their 'non-conformity' to a masculine ideal. The nature of this non-conformity, however, is to be viewed as a-political. Baillie appeals for women to be allocated equal status as subjects, endowed with the "uni[ty] know[ledge] and autonom[y] which Catherine Belsey views as defining the liberal humanist concept of "freedom".¹⁰⁰ Baillie's demand for female recognition clearly attempts to re-route such prejudicial statements as those made by Valtomer. This 'diversion' from the exclusivity of the masculine protagonist may, however, only remain within the theoretical remit of dramatic decorum by appealing to a form of essential justice which is beyond human interference (particularly masculine interference) and which is identified as the truth of "lib'ral nature" (1.2). The point which Baillie is trying to make is that although masculine discourse attempts to 'tamper' with the material reputation of women, their intrinsic essential purity of spirit remains unaffected. This transcendent vision of female suffering is the means by which Baillie aims to raise the debate in relation to the fictional representation of women, without being accused of implementing an 'unfeminine' and un-natural campaign in favour of rapid and extensive change. The exchange between Rosinberg and Valtomer, then, as an attempt to uphold liberal

humanist values, results in what Belsey describes as the liberal humanist "contradictory phenomenon".¹⁰⁸ The dramatist aims to represent a version of dramatic decorum by palliating the aggression which she hopes to resolve. In this way, she may be able to evade the literary fate of Mary Wollstonecraft, a subject I will return to later in this chapter. The outcome of these contrary representations, however, has its source in the predominance of the idea of resolution, which, in liberal humanist terms, appears to have forged a close philosophical alliance with the concept of absolution. Baillie's decorous strategy may be seen to compound the "naturalisation of inequality"¹⁰⁹ which Catherine Belsey views as the practical outcome of liberal humanism. Valtomer is shown as reacting against truths which are beyond question. Baillie's choice of mouthpiece for her implementation of change inevitably involves her in a complete and curious reversal. The pastoral perfection which the involvement of 'nature' upholds is breached by the indecorum of the male response. Valtomer and Rosinberg make judgements upon female attractiveness which are couched in terms of an act of voyeurism. Baillie aims to express their idea of female 'imperfection' as a misreading which results from viewing such attractiveness as an indication of social worth. Valtomer's list fragments into a comic-derogatory portrayal of woman which suggests that specific physical ideals and demands will ultimately result in confusion and contradiction. The 'warning', however, is addressed to the masculine recipient of potential social unrest. The lack of 'concern' expressed by the Officers reflects the 'delicacy' by which their lesson is outlined: and also, therefore, its ineffectuality.

Baillie's gentle educative jest, then, devolves the cultural position of women as decorative objects even further beneath the level of interrogative discussion.

Rosinberg's procession of diverse, but worthy women may illustrate a corrective rational response to Basil's infatuation; yet the ultimate effect is to objectify woman as a non-threatening, non-serious comic theme. Baillie's representation of the role of women at this point in the drama may be viewed as an indirect appearance of a legitimised Renaissance fool, whose jibings reflect upon the security of the structures of authority which cheerfully tolerate and contain them.

The dramatist's philosophy of mimetic "restrain[t]" (p.64) is directed towards the 'unremarkable' reader, who is unable to achieve the desired moral standards unaided. An essentialist reading of the Elizabethan portrayal of 'social justice' provides the mythological basis for Baillie's edifice of corrective dramatic decorum. The dramatist's 'treatment' of the most evident Jacobean source, *Women Beware Women*, and the re-writing of Livia's social frame of reference, provides an essentialist reading of any reference to a Jacobean heritage which the *Plays on the Passions* may inadvertently imply.

Middleton's Leantio and Bianca, in their desire for acceptability within the higher echelons of the play-society, enact the roles which will afford them the material identity they desire. These roles, however, impinge upon preconceptions which are equally deeply rooted in the notion of male identity. Leantio subscribes to the inviolate authority of husband over household and wife. His sense of identity as a successful and dignified merchant is bound up with his expression of control over his wife's fidelity. Bianca's display of the gains which she and her husband have acquired through adulterous liaisons, is an attempt to alleviate Leantio's confusion as to his social status. He is wealthier, yet stigmatised as a cuckold. The socio-cultural medium which produces Bianca and Leantio is expressed by Middleton, from the

play's outset, as an illustration of their potential to entertain the events which follow.

Joanna Baillie may be seen to evade the intertextual interrogation which any overt association with Middleton's play would undoubtedly entail. Baillie 'intercepts' and substitutes a 'new' version of the influential source by sanitising her 'art-gallery' scene with a chaperon. Thus 'surrounded', Victoria and Basil pose little threat to the prevailing social order, the greatest threat proving the stultifying and inactive "passion" of Romantic melancholy. A recognition of similarities with *Women Beware Women* demands, for Baillie, a reading of the Jacobean play through the 'original' package of *Count Basil*. Middleton's play then, becomes the an allusive 'by-product' of the moral stand enacted in the 'new' play. *Count Basil* 'supersedes' and may thus dictate the conceptual boundaries of any allusive reference to the Jacobean text. Any invocation of *Women Beware Women*, then, is marshalled as an obscurantist indication of a useful mythological basis for Baillie's edifice of dramatic decorum. The dramatist 'protects' the philosophical 'aim' of her works by maintaining any literary/historical reference to disruptive renaissance texts at the de-familiarising and malleable distance of 'myth'. In so doing, she benefits from a vague indication of the *Plays on the Passions* as taking their place in an ongoing literary tradition. Baillie, however, is much less concerned with the product of 'nostalgia' than is Hazlitt in *Elizabethan Literature And Characters Of Shakespeare*. For Joanna Baillie, the process of selective rediscovery and castigation of the Jacobean Dramatists might all too easily interfere with the prescriptive decorum of the "Introductory Discourse". Her blunt assertion of the necessity of a 'unitarian' methodology ensures that the "blind man" will recognise the "fair-fac'd saint".¹⁰⁹

In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Vindice tells us that, "when the bad bleed, then

is the tragedy good".¹⁰⁸ He offers a caustic comment upon the hackneyed homiletic re-ordering of the disruption which anti-social forces introduce. Sentenced to death, he vindicates, in his final speech, the fears of Alsemero and his "blind man".

This murder might have slept in tongueless brass
But for ourselves, and the world died an ass;
(*The Revenger's Tragedy*, V.3.115)

Antonio's speech, which closes the play, reveals a similar lack of belief in divine retribution and renewal;

How subtly was that murder clos'd! Bear up
Those tragic bodies, 'tis a heavy season:
Pray heaven their blood will wash away all treason
(V.3.129)

Count Basil's blood is employed both to redeem and uphold the ethics of tragedy set out in the "introductory Discourse". Expiating his own sin (his suicide) he upholds the piety of authorial motivation as something which is beyond reproach. The scenic directions for Basil's 'departure' (quoted on page three of this chapter) are suppressed in Baillie's play in relation to their indication of an 'uncontrolled' pastoral fantasy. Such a representation of nature is contrary to the 'essential function' of tragedy. The gothic splendour of the deathbed scene invokes David Punter's reading of 'self-censorship' (the rendering of intellectual dissent as indistinct, in relation to the cataclysmic, but non-threatening, outbursts of 'nature').

The harmonious recognition of the "fair fac'd saint" becomes distinctly problematic when considering the role of Gauciceio.¹⁰⁹ The villain who has advised the Duke to plot against Basil repents, and a humiliating retribution is forecast (the occupying military force). With the minister's 'reversal', it becomes impossible to distinguish him from one who is motivated towards good: the "saint". The figure changing masks distorts any vision of a linear representation of the 'course' of Basil's

particular tragic "passion". The 'mask of virtue' theme, which runs through Jacobean Drama, offers an allusive disruption of Baillie's 'truth', which requires an inexorable 'unitarian' documentation of "passion's" growth. Gauriceio's reversal invokes a kinship with Tourneur's Vindice, as the latter is employed to expose such a version of 'truth' as Baillie's minister is employed to uphold. A malcontented master of subterfuge such as Vindice introduces a contaminating undercurrent of 'anti-essential' possibility.

Tourneur's version of the 'mask of virtue' in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is the painted mask concealing the poisoned skull of the murdered Gloriana. The Jacobean writer displays an institutionalised corruption which reproduces itself by means of the 'false face'. This public mask is the homiletic socio-cultural framework which is based on the providential ordering symbol. Gauriceio is presented as a commentator upon, rather than an active 'catalyst' as regards the ongoing tragic action. He appears, then, early in the play in the guise of the malcontented figure, yet is made to 'fail' in re-applying any Jacobean 'ancestral vices'. The dramatic 'motive' which results in the minister's provocative liberty is clearly ascertainable. Firstly, in transforming the individualistic ambition which characterises the Jacobean malcontented figure, Baillie's 'villain' must evince some measure of a social conscience which is based on an unrecognised, but nevertheless expedient, 'common humanity'. The danger which faces the dramatist in exposing this 'spark of humanity' is the contradiction between the moral lesson and the means by which it is projected, as we are extorted to see ourselves as creatures with no innate motivation towards amorality and material gain. Baillie is forced to shift from a philosophical position promoting an internalised version of 'tragic truth', to an act of

contrition from Gauriceio which is disruptively 'externalised', by remaining unexplained. The hierarchial and decorous progression towards a conclusive rendition 'essential truth' is thus firmly halted, and the signposts withdrawn: Gauriceio for some in'trest of his own" (V.2) is clearly evasive.

Baillie may be seen to 'cut her losses' in the final analysis of her involvement with the representation of the malcontented figure.

The noble war veteran Geoffry is introduced in a similar episodic fashion to the minister. The "pain bestowed" on his particular peripheral characterisation may indicate his presentation as an indication of Shakespearean distinction (Introductory Discourse, p.72) yet his appearances create an element of confusion within the play-text. Geoffry has been passed over for a deserved promotion: he is the theological 'heap of burning coals' goading the consciences of those in military authority. His role as a moral emblem, nevertheless, is concentrated at the point when he receives his finest and most just praise. The complement is rendered at the expense of his ability to verbalise a clinical assessment of the aristocratic self-interest which has kept him unrecognised, and which he has fought to uphold. Basil, (III.1) rails at the vision of 'truth' and injustice which Geoffry represents,

Shame seize me if I would not rather be
The man thou art, than court-created chief,
Known only by the dates of his promotion.

The moral position which Geoffry represents ensures that he remains a social outcast. Others may aspire to achieve, on a spiritual level, the 'innocence' of his state of powerlessness, but only from within the security of these "court-created ... dates". As his treatment in the opening scenes shows, Geoffry holds no recognised social position and is therefore, for the most part, considered out of place. He flatly refuses

to accept the justifiable role of malcontent and social commentator. Geoffry is rendered intellectually immobile through others reporting, and praising, his reactions to his sorrows.

Basil leads Geoffry towards his mutinous battalion to rally the troops, and Valtomer reports the scene to Rosinberg. The former's lengthy speech clearly exposes the soldier to a distressing volume of patriotic bathos:

His arm he toss'd and heedless of respect,
 In Basil's bosom hid his aged face,
 Sobbing aloud. From the admiring ranks
 A cry arose; still louder shouts resound.
 I felt a sudden tightness grasp my throat
 As it would strangle me; such as I felt,
 I knew it well, some twenty years ago,
 When my good father shed his blessing on me.
 I hate to weep, and so I came away.

(III.1)

Geoffry subsides beneath not only the weight of his essential goodness, but beneath the hopeless burden of paternalistic godhead.

Victoria's participation in Basil's downfall illustrates the contradiction working within Baillie's dramatic representation of women in *Count Basil*. Victoria is simultaneously portrayed as both material object, and 'material failure', Albini describing her as, "like vapour" (p.166). As an ineffectual social entity, Victoria must wait to be 'acted upon'. Petulantly determined to arouse Basil's interest in her during the forest hunt, she succeeds, and then upbraids him by looking, "haughty and displeased" (III.5). The display of coquetry, however, is the outcome of an attempt to sustain a vision of dramatic decorum. Victoria must not be shown to encourage Basil's physical advances.

Victoria's interest in the Count is never described, before the final scene, as anything other than materially based.

Vict. For there is something strange in this man's love,
I never met before, and I must prove it.

Alb. Well, prove it then, be stricter to thyself,
And bid sweet peace of mind a sad farewell.

(IV.4)

Victoria declares a curious amorality in provoking Basil, which focuses her motivation as contrary to any unconscious 'essential'/innocent "passion". Such a reading of Victoria's involvement with Basil runs contrary to the dramatist's aim, footnoted in the "Discourse", to offer female characters a just representation within the realm of the 'tragic hero'. Victoria's speech, then, requires an extensive spectacle of reversal to expose her 'instinctive' feelings towards the Count. The ferocity demanded of this dramatic display of 'decorum' defies its acceptance as a legitimate representation of moral/spiritual conversion.

Oh! force me not away! by his cold corse
Let me lie down and weep. o! Basil, Basil!...
For he loved me in my thoughtless folly lost,
With all my faults, most worthless of his love;
And I'll love him in the low bed of death,
In horror and decay.
Near his tomb I'll spend my wretched days,...

(V.2)

Victoria's violent display of grief is to 'supersede' the discussions with Albini, wherein the former exposes the sense of pleasure she gains through expressing power within her own limited arena, that of physical attractiveness. The scenic 'reversal' of the materialistic detachment which she displays towards Basil, demands a vision of fevered repentance. This display however, quoted above, descends into an 'anxious' melodramatic bathos. This invites, perhaps, a reading of Victoria's outburst as distracting the audience/reader from the 'anti-linear' version of passion which her decorous change in behaviour is actually serving to underline. The outburst of 'sincerity' is to allay our experience of female "passion" as calculating, as opposed

to the 'purity of instinct' allotted to Count Basil.

This ending, of course, raises a further issue, in that Victoria is now to be 'included' within the ongoing documentary on passion. This, until this point in the play, has been solely ascribed to the General. Victoria is redefined as regards her part in the outcome of the tragic event. She is endowed with a conventional metaphor of grief - the woman prostrate and bereft of her sense of 'place' upon the death of the desired partner. Baillie attempts to chart a return to the linear progression of "passion" as something which we are 'essentially' capable of being taught by example. In order to retain an authoritative expression of 'control', the dramatist offers the male prejudicial generality of the woman as inferior, through her inconstancy. The task of expressing this reading of the 'inconstant' woman, involves the dramatist in a blatant contradiction, as it is allotted to the Countess Albini, the voice of mature good sense within the play. Albini describes Victoria as,

Shift[ing her] fleeting form with ev'ry breeze,
For ever varying, and forever graceful.
Endearing, gen'rous, bountiful and kind;
Vain, fanciful, and fond of worthless praise...

(IV.4)

Victoria thus becomes 'irrelevant' to the conclusion of Basil's dramatic "passion". He is not to be besmirched by the confusion which her presence generates. Victoria arrives on the scene only after Basil has made arrangements for his funeral. He states that he wishes to "give no offence" and "expires" in a dignified and understated manner (V.3).

Rosinberg and Victoria battle for supremacy, in view of the moral capital to be gained from Basil's death. It is Victoria, who is firmly entrenched within her personification as a 'symbol' who finally succeeds, owing to the superiority of the

metaphorical arsenal which circumscribes her, and which she chooses to employ.

Rosinberg assaults her with the mythos of female inconstancy.

But woman's grief is like the summer storm,
Short as it violent is; in gayer scenes,
Where thou shalt in giddy circles blaze
And play the airy goddess of the day,...

Vicr. No, never, never? thus it shall not be.
To the dark and shaded cloister wilt thou go
Where sad and lonely, thro' the dismal grate
Thou'lt spy my wasted form, and then upbraid me.

(V.2)

Rosinberg retreats into forgiveness, and their 'truce', which is to illustrate the final moral growth, the tragic moralities, serves to destabilise this conclusion. Rosinberg and Victoria have alerted us to the progressive construction of the process of mythologisation.

Basil suffers conscription into what amounts, to for those he leaves behind, a comfortably indistinct valhalla. Victoria, quoted above, initiates a brief description of her own potential dramatic future, the security and sanctity of the convent. Joanna Baillie lifts the metaphor of the convent from Renaissance Drama. It becomes employed, in *Count Basil*, to uphold two opposing points of view as regards the position of the disruptive woman. Victoria invokes the convent as an object of solemnity, a sacrifice which will prove the quality and status of her 'essential' morality. She presents herself as able to withstand the privations of the "dismal grate". The sense in which she will be "upbraided" for this act, however, remains dubious. It may be read as an excessive expression of cruelty from Rosinberg towards the "wasted" penitent, or, more likely, an expression of dismay at the rigours which she has undergone in order to prove the sincerity of her feelings towards Basil.

To read Victoria's speech as a scenario revealing Rosinberg's spitefulness the

loyal soldier robbed of his loved friend, is to read the convent motif as an object of ironic interrogation. The haven which Victoria represents, in the convent, is decidedly a repository for male anxiety, as it offers both a comforting vision of the female as sacrosanct, 'a-sexual', and as an anti-social force which is being deprived of exerting its disruptive sexuality. Baillie, then, implements the convent metaphor on two levels. Firstly, she may possibly be seen to reject the attempt to control and prevent the woman who is outwith the confines of marriage, from an expression of independence which may be seen to imply an alternative system of authority. The rejection, however, is couched in terms of gothic romanticism, and invokes a tableau of melodramatic horror. Any radical investigation of the institution of the convent as a form of female imprisonment is 'de-politicised' in the gothic rendition of the ghoulish extent of Victoria's imaginary sacrifice. That Rosinberg should "upbraid" her for this exercise, then, may hint at the disservice which her metaphorical outburst has inflicted upon the serious discussion of the position of women in patriarchal society. Rosinberg's criticism, however, and Victoria's previous awareness and acceptance of its value, denotes an essential belief in his masculine judgement, and thus in the system of morality which underpins the patriarchal authority.

Joanna Baillie's particular thematic association with the seventeenth-century dramatists' analysis of the convent as a material solution to the 'excessive' woman, arguably implements the educative failure of *Count Basil*. If gothic narrative insists upon the continuation of the status-quo as David Punter has argued, it serves to underline its motivation by appealing to its distinctive 're-creation' of the authoritative moral definition. We have the best example of this in Rosinberg's closing comments on Basil's death.

With gentle censure using but his faults
 As modest means to introduce his praise;
 For pity like the dewy twilight comes
 To close th' oppressive splendour of his day;
 And they who but admir'd him in his height,
 His altered state lament, and love him fall'n.

The tragedy of *De Montfort*, illustrating the 'passion of hatred', charts the result of a childhood rivalry. The play was first performed at Drury Lane in 1800 and ran for eleven nights, John Kemble and Mrs Siddons playing the leading roles.

There are two references in this play which may be seen to have been drawn from Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*. In (I.1), De Montfort dismisses his servant Manuel; "Take thine ill-favour'd visage from my sight," and in (IV.2), he desires the garb of the madman,

O that I had been form'd
 An idiot from birth! a senseless changeling,
 Who eats his glutton's meal with greedy haste,
 Nor knows the hand that feeds him.

The invocation of Middleton and Rowley's Antonio is, of course, damaging in relation to the sincerity of De Montfort's plea. Antonio madness is feigned, in order that he may gain access to Alibius' wife. Alibius' own moral position is also under examination in the sub-plot, in relation to the excessive fears over his wife's fidelity. Whilst he is afraid of her falling prey to the inmates' relatives, he acknowledges that caring for the lunatic relatives of the wealthy provides him with a lucrative opportunity within the asylum. Pedro pays Alibius for Antonio's kind treatment, which results in a representation of the "doctor" as inhabiting a grey area between petty criminality and his decision to view it as a form of customer service. Antonio, then, is ostensibly 'paying' for the privileges which he hopes will accrue to him during his stay. De Montfort sees madness as a Romantic escape into incognisance,

a fractured, but fairly positive representation of eternal happiness which yet ensures the nourishing of his individual material form. Baillie's "changeling" is deprived of Antonio's intellectual vitality. The position of madman for De Montfort is, almost, a means of circumventing the restitution demanded by the "Introductory Discourse". He dreams of distancing himself from moral accountability, which will deny him the punishment which his crime of murder demands. Baillie's metaphor of escape also recalls Beatrice's speech in *The Changeling*, (1.2.110)

<i>Beatrice.</i>	Would Creation—
<i>Deflores.</i> Ay, well said, that's it.	
<i>Beatrice.</i>	—had form'd me man.
<i>Deflores.</i> Nay, that's not it.	
<i>Beatrice.</i>	Oh, 'tis the soul of freedom,
I should not then be forc'd to marry one	
I hate beyond all depths, I should have power	
Then to oppose my loathings, nay remove 'em	
For ever from my sight.	

The representation of tragic event in *The Changeling* hinges upon the disclosure of the social fetters imposed upon Beatrice-Joanna as a woman, and her attempts to exert a version of autonomy while still remaining within the social and political role which her father prescribes for her. Baillie may be seen to instigate a subtle de-politicisation of her possible source by disclosing its status, primarily, as an accessible multifarious theme. Beatrice's powerful plea is inverted as it becomes displaced into De Montfort's frustrated wish for recognition as one who is outside the decision-making process: he wishes to be 'acted-upon'.

The crime of malicious gossip which precipitates De Montfort's hatred of Rezenvelt into a decision to murder him, has its source in a jealous female character, the Countess of Freberg. Her jealousy is not endowed with the status of deep-seated tragic passion, however, as is De Montfort's hatred. Lady Jane (De Montfort's

sister) gained higher praise from the men present at a ball than did the Countess, and whilst wearing a simpler gown. Revenge is required. The representation of revenge within a female character reflects, perhaps, the disinclination expressed by the dramatist towards its inclusion in the "plan as originally contemplated".

The first volume comprises a continuation of the series of plays on the stronger Passions of the Mind, and completes all that I intended to say on the subject: for envy and revenge are so frequently exposed in our Dramas,—the latter, particularly, has been powerfully delineated,—that I have thought myself at liberty to exclude them from my plan as originally contemplated.

(from the preface to the first vol. of *Dramas* (1836) quoted in the preface to the first ed. of *The Dramatic And Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie*, (1851).

Any evidence of a philosophical 'u-turn' is devolved within the conceptual force of the traditional cliché.

Lady Jane is endowed with the mythological characteristics of sainthood. She is, as the unmarried sister, the personification of a divine form. Countess Freberg articulates this version of divinity and will disrupt it by substituting an alternative, and equally generalistic motif in its place. The saint is to become the 'scheming wanton'. The act of betrayal is firmly placed within the bosom of female culture.

Lady That would reduce her in your eyes,
 mayhap,
 To woman's level.—Now I see my vengeance!
 I'll tell it round that she is hither come,
 Under pretence of finding out de Montfort,
 To meet with Rezenvelt. When Freberg hears it
 'Twill help, I ween, to break this magick charm.

(II.3)

In her wish to reduce Lady Jane to, "woman's level", Countess Freberg aims to destroy the image of divine virtue which allows her rival a level of social acceptance comparable with that which the male members of aristocratic German society enjoy.

The female malcontented figure which we may view in Beatrice-Joanna, for example, is distanced from Baillie's protagonist by an obscurantist temporal setting, firmly outwith the British Isles "*scene, a Town in Germany*". Furthermore, the voice which Jane inherits from her 'Jacobean ancestor' fails to articulate the issues surrounding her status as an independent wealthy woman, and is, therefore, deprived of its radical force. In *Lady Jane*, Baillie represents a version of ideal female perfection which is the 'essence' of femininity, encompassed within a form of righteous recognition which is beyond the wordly influence of masculine prejudice and control. In the final scene, Baillie perhaps acknowledges this misogynistic theme within her play, and invokes a palliative conclusion. Jane actively closes the scene's events within the walls of the convent, but, unlike the surplus single women of Massinger and Ford,¹⁰⁸ she is not enforced to become a permanent resident therein.

Lady Jane's role in *De Montfort* is, in structural terms, similar to that of Calantha in Ford's *The Broken Heart*. Both women attempt to organise the disparate social elements resulting from the tragic action of the play into a workable, rigid reaffirmation of the 'pre-tragic' social order. Calantha arranges high state appointments and marriages, a restitution through redistribution. Her death, of course, from a "broken heart" throws this fragile structure into disarray. Joanna Baillie's aristocrat employs Calantha's organising principle as a means of negotiating a space for her dead brother's mythological future. His actions, she argues, are no worse than those of many others who have become household symbols of the 'virtus-ideal'.

And now I have a sad request to make,
 Nor will these holy sisters scorn my boon;
 That I, within these sacred cloister walls
 May raise a humble, nameless tomb to him,

Who, but for one dark passion, one dire deed,
 Has claim'd a record of as noble worth,
 As e'er enrich'd the sculptor's pedestal.

(V.4)

De Montfort has, after all, in willing his own death, displayed an accordance with the divine will (he refrains from Count Basil's violent suicide) and his essential communion with the providential moral order is set out in the "Introductory Discourse". De Montfort nobly 'takes it upon himself' to reaffirm the moral lesson which the conclusion of his passion is to deliver to the audience.

Although geographically removed from thirteenth century England, Baillie's De Montfort recalls his medieval 'ancestor', the rebellious Simon De Montfort, who overthrew Henry III in the battle of Lewes in 1264. In his pamphlet *Simon De Montfort 1265-1965*¹⁰⁷, C.H. Knowles discusses the phenomenon of the De Montfort uprising. The Earl of Leicester, Knowles argues, is reproduced by subsequent historians as either emblematic hero, or traitorous usurper. The various representations of the De Montfort rebellion outline the ideological positions of those wishing to proclaim, or denounce him.

To later generations his contest with King Henry III seemed to epitomise either the glories of the perennial struggle for liberty and democracy, or the dangers of personal dictatorship. But equally important, Simon's name was associated with what has long been felt to be a critical period in the early history of our most distinctive and cherished institution: parliament. To a very special degree, therefore, the successive judgements of Simon's career reflect the changing pattern of English politics and opinion. (p.5)

Close upon Simon's death in 1265, came what Knowles describes as his "popular canonization".¹⁰⁸ Many miraculous events were credited to the Earl, as he was renowned for being "punctilious in his religious observances".¹⁰⁹ This expression of religious belief appears to fuel the process of 'naturalisation', the formation of a

pastoral reading of Simon's understanding of patriotism, which actively absolves his anti-monarchical activity from the charge of anarchy.

The chronicle of Melrose, for instance, asserted that no-one in his right mind ought to call Simon a traitor, but a most devoted adherent and faithful protector of the Church of God in England, a shield and defender of the kingdom of England. (p.7)

Knowles charts the progress of Simon's reputation in later historical accounts. Our sense of the Earl's 'historical present', the historian argues, is the result of an interpretive gleaning, based on the status we choose to accord the conflicting discourses which employ, or disregard, his exploits. Holinshed promotes De Montfort, but the Elizabethan dramatists do not play a part in constructing a mythological identity for him which will fuel his progression within the literary/historical canon. The lack of clarity surrounding De Montfort's post-seventeenth-century reputation is construed as the result of an arbitrary 'diversion' from a linear process of interaction, a debate between conflicting readings which would expand and refer back to the 'original' myth of his contemporary documented popularity. In Knowles' argument the Elizabethan dramatists are represented as a valid historical source in the production of our sense of historical event as in Holinshed. The historian, however, appears to infer that the Dramatists have somehow refused to 'play their part' in the myth-making process, by failing to signpost De Montfort's "future determination" for future generations.¹⁰

Holinshed, for example, depicts the earl as 'indowed with such virtue, good counsel, courteous discretion, and other amiable qualities, that he was highly favoured as was supposed, both of God and man'. Nevertheless, the playwrights of Elizabethan England totally ignored the dramatic possibilities of his career. This is puzzling, though no more perplexing than the fact that his life has never been adequately portrayed on the stage. Perhaps this neglect can be partly explained in purely literary

terms. Power and ambition, it is often claimed, are only artistically interesting when they are in decline. If so, Simon's record of fluctuating success followed by sudden and calamitous defeat gave little scope to the dramatist. It is more likely, however, that it was political objections that made his life an unrewarding subject to the Elizabethan playwright. By his resort to rebellion he contravened the Tudor doctrines that legitimate rulers must be obeyed and that civil war was amongst the worst of all evils. (p.7)

The historical controversies of the seventeenth century opened up the guiding lines of subsequent research into Simon's life. They had stimulated interest in his character and motives, and focused attention on his parliaments. The cumulative effect, however, has been to lower the earl's reputation. His motives had been called into question and his intervention in English politics had been portrayed as disastrous. The promising line of research into Simon's parliamentary activities had been blighted by a political revolution. (p.10)

Knowles cites Hume's criticism of De Montfort's hypocrisy in pursuing a crusade motivated by personal advancement (*The History of England*, 1762). This view began to erode at the close of the eighteenth-century, when accounts of the earl's activities were drawn up by "local historians" supporting a version of De Montfort as a scrupulous and democratic parliamentarian.¹¹¹

Hume's version of De Montfort draws attention to the earl's popularity, his "strong interest with the nation",¹¹² which is as much the outcome of a powerful personality as an indication of insurrection based on a just crusade. The historian points out the "levity and fickleness" of Henry, petulantly banishing and recalling De Montfort to and from court.¹¹³ Although he does not dismiss the validity of the injustices which Simon chose to represent, Hume paints an increasingly menacing picture of the Earl of Leicester's motivation for his opposition to Henry. The basis of this criticism is that Simon's support of 'public causes' is seen as a 'choice' rather than an instinctive reaction.

He filled every place with complaints against the infringement of the Great Charter, the acts of violence committed on the people, the combination between the Pope and the King in their tyranny and extortions, Henry's neglect of his native subjects an barons; and though himself a foreigner, was more loud than any in representing the indignity of submitting to the dominion of foreigners. By his hypocritical pretensions to devotion he gained the favour of the Zealots and the clergy: by his seeming concern for public good he acquired the affections of the public; and besides the private friendships which he had cultivated with the barons, his animosity against the favourites created a union of interests between him and that powerful order. A recent quarrel which broke out between Leicester and William de Valence, Henry's half-brother, and chief favourite, brought matters to an extremity, and determined the former to give full scope to his bold and unbounded ambition, which the laws and the King's authority had hitherto with difficulty restrained.¹¹⁴

Hume's De Montfort is an inherently ambiguous figure as a result of a conflicting definition of the function of patriotism. On one level, the earl is shown as rallying against monarchial absolutism in favour of the more 'liberal' values of the barons' ancestors, who had previously won "concession that famous from the crown".¹¹⁵ Despite the parliamentary reforms which De Montfort's insurrection initiated, the act of mutiny which provoked these changes is something which Hume is not prepared to sanction in his historical account. In his discussion of the 1259 parliament, which assumed the authority to summon the king to account, Hume tells us that,

this regulation was also submitted to; the whole government was overthrown, or fixed on new foundations; and the monarchy was totally subverted, without it being possible for the king to strike a single stroke in defence of the constitution against the newly-elected oligarchy.¹¹⁶

We may infer from this reading De Montfort's activities that the "liberal mind" and "scrupulous fidelity"¹¹⁷ of the young prince Edward, would, through time, supersede and overrule his father's statutory errors, and restore public opinion in

favour of the monarchy.¹¹⁸ Monarchical heredity, then, contains its own solution. Hume writes from the secure knowledge that Simon was defeated in battle in 1265, and he constructs, therefore, a moral outcome of events based upon an appreciation of the "future determination" (the present constitution) which is the long-term result of Edward's victory. Order is restored. In the same way, Hume's account promotes a "future determination" of such activities as De Montfort personifies, as a lesson for his own audience. Amongst Hume's concluding remarks on De Montfort's career is a list of his unwelcome and even dangerous qualities. Before we leave him, we are introduced to the "ingratitude, tyranny [and] rapacity of the Earl of Leicester".¹¹⁹

As Baillie would have had access to Hume's version of De Montfort, an interesting postscript to Hume's account suggests itself, in relation to the attitude to "foreigners" which the latter projects. The historian notes the "extraordinary ... justice and integrity" of the French king Louis IX, for "not taking advantage of divisions among the English".¹²⁰ De Montfort, then, "though himself a foreigner", brings with him the muted recognition of the 'threat from within' who is visible to us by the very fact of his 'other-ness': the fact that he is outwith our perception of what Englishness stands for on the straightforward level of country of origin, and a commonly held ideal of 'English' behaviour.¹²¹ Clearly, Hume's version of De Montfort accords very closely with the documentation of "passion" as "warning" (p.35) which Baillie offers in the "Introductory Discourse". Hume's depiction of the French king's attitude is described in language which indicates surprise as much as praiseworthiness. The overall impression which Hume's 'liberal xenophobia' leaves us with is the national vulnerability which such activities as De Montfort perpetrates can cause. Following the example of C.H. Knowles' Jacobean dramatists before her,

Baillie refrains from perpetrating a version of the history of the medieval parliamentarian. Her decision to employ his title, however, raises some fascinating questions in relation to the theoretical function of the Introductory Discourse. Baillie may be viewed as setting her own play outwith England in order that any disruptive elements perceived within the text are excluded from any reference to contemporary political institutions, and the nationally cohesive blueprint of the "Introductory Discourse".

The contemporary version of De Montfort experienced by Joanna Baillie leading up to the publication of the first volume of the *Series of Plays on the Passions* (1789) had not yet assumed the 'heroic' stamp of approval which Knowles documents as awarded by Sir James Mackintosh in 1830. What Baillie may be seen to project, in the choice of title for her 'Gothic' drama, is the "murky greatness" which C.H. Knowles quotes as the historical legacy of "the myth of Simon De Montfort".¹²² The Earl of Leicester, the historian observes,

had no new principles of statecraft or enlightened political aims. He accepted unquestioningly the social order of his day and most of his views were habitual to his class.

Baillie's De Montfort contravenes both social and divine law in committing murder, yet he does not contravene the educative principle of 'the "Introductory Discourse"'. The consequences of his act appear to instruct the audience, whilst the act itself has no stage presence. In willing his own death, De Montfort defers to the 'natural' law implicit in the social institution of punishment which awaits him. An indirect invocation of the medieval De Montfort, then, allows the dramatist an obscurantist decorous portrayal of a form of civil insurrection, legitimate both in its insurgency, and subsequent suppression. Baillie's text offers a 'gothic' rendition of values which

may appear to be ostensibly threatening, but are 'universally' recognisable as part of a natural progression towards national security: the foundation of the parliamentary constitution. The function of the "Discourse", then, becomes subtly allied with the undisputed function of parliament as the nationally approved law-giving institution. Joanna Baillie suggests Simon De Montfort as the subliminal metaphor of a national cry-to-arms as regards the state of the moral content of the nation's dramatic fare. The *Plays on the Passions* are the considered and effective response. Such a reading of the life of medieval earl as Baillie arguably subscribes to, may itself be involved in laying down the Victorian version of Simon De Montfort, as described by C.H. Knowles.

later in the century, the earl was presented not only as an early upholder of democracy and the people's rights, but as the personification of the middle class virtues that appealed to an increasingly large and influential element of Victorian society. (*Simon De Montfort*, 1265-1965, p.12)

Victorian historians plucked consolation from the defeat of their hero. They transferred their allegiance from Simon to Edward, the man largely responsible for his destruction, by envisaging Edward as his uncle's political heir. Edward, they argued, was so impressed by Simon's representative parliament that, when he ascended to the throne, he gave it a permanent place in his scheme of government. This idea had a powerful attraction for historians anxious to demonstrate the continuity of English history. (p.27)

Baillie's De Montfort, however, is removed, not merely on a geographical and temporal level, from the Earl of Leicester's career, he is also divested of any reference to a challenge to the hierarchial constitution of the play-text establishment. The adversaries De Montfort and Rezenvelt are schoolboy rivals and social equals. Their rivalry is a reaffirmation of their 'essential' parity. De Montfort ultimately punishes himself for his failure to exercise a 'continuity' in relation to the productive

learning process prescribed in the "Discourse". This death, however, ensures that the "one dire deed" (IV.4) described by Lady Jane, has 'informed' the necessity of punishment as the quintessential reaction to the unfortunate 'climactic' circumstance of murder. We have our inbuilt solution to individual 'faulty learning'.

Joanna Baillie thought very highly of her work, *Ethwald*, hoping it would be staged. According to the preface of the 1851 edition of her Collected Works, however, the play was considered "too diffuse" to be stageworthy.¹²³ Baillie tells us in her preface to the second volume of *Plays on the Passions* (1802) that she has employed a deliberate and useful distancing technique. The dramatist places *Ethwald* 'outside' of a clearly defined historical period.

The scene of these plays is laid in Britain, in the kingdom of Mercia, and the time towards the end of the Heptarchy. This was a period full of internal discord, usurpation; and change; the history of which is too perplexed, and too little connected with any very important or striking event in the affairs of men, to be familiarly known, not merely to common readers, but even to the more learned in history. ... In so doing, I run no risk of disturbing or deranging the recollection of any important truth, or of anything that deserves to be remembered. However, though I have not adhered to history, the incidents and events of the plays will be found, I hope, consistent with the character of the times; with which I have also endeavoured to make the representation I have given of manners, opinions, and persons, uniformly correspond.¹²⁴

The events encompassed by the play-text are to be viewed as isolated from clearly documented historically accepted "incidents and events" which are endowed with a definitive interpretation through their generic frame of reference. Baillie articulates "truth" as the outcome of a chronological, linear linguistic process. Placing *Ethwald* outside of history rescues the author from the notion of creative interference with what is already indisputably 'laid down'. The destabilising outcome of such an

interference is recognised by the dramatist as devastating Shakespeare's History Plays.

The dramatist insists upon a methodology of dramatisation for *Ethwald* which is overtly 'a-political'. The affairs of state to be represented, which include regicide, are to be divested of a provocative intertextuality (*Ethwald*, Baillie insists, is conceived outwith the 'influence' of predetermining ideological constructs). "Discord, usurpation and change" must not be perceived as part of the prescriptive edict of the "Introductory Discourse". A creative relationship with what is outside of a given historical 'truth' ("the unfamiliar") involves the "representation [of a] uniform ... correspond[ence]." *Ethwald* illustrates a cohesive process. The drama will not involve itself in an 'alteration' of events foregrounded in the literary/historical canon. The play will, therefore, uphold the foundations of the socio-cultural values Baillie wishes to defend. *Ethwald* is overtly designed as displaying an extension of such values into hitherto uncharted territory.

The play is to be encountered, however, at the level of gothic/horror romance. Such a genre is employed to celebrate the 'objectivity' which the dramatist explains as the result of a superficial involvement with the writing of history. The 'gothic' descriptions of *Ethwald*'s staged murders, for example, reaffirm the dramatist's intention to indulge in a tentative, and overtly 'fictional' exploration of the process of historicisation. Baillie insists that she is dealing with events "too little connected with any very important or striking event in the affairs of men". It is this very lack of "connection" with the unimpeachable canon of historical event which appears to describe a point of potential conflict, in relation to the prescriptive manifesto of the "Discourse". *Ethwald* does not threaten or challenge an established reading of

"important" events, precisely because it is constructed from the 'waste product' of the historicisation process: the "dark ages". The "originality", then, is borne, not of a potentially harmful re-cycling of texts which are already laid down, but of a "controlled and uniform" re-modelling of the not "familiarily known" into something which reflects a recognisable portrait of a legitimate providential chronology.

Baillie presents us, in the second volume of the *Plays on the Passions*, with a preface which offers a gothic rendition of disorder; gaining through temporal distance, the solidity of an imaginative reform. The playwright refutes the disturbance of 'truth' as we have little or no 'factual' data of 'Britain at the end of the Heptarchy'. What we do have access to is the 'essence' of the "character of the times",¹²⁵ an involvement in the myth-making process which Baillie intends to clarify a little. What Baillie is offering, then, is a version of history which both 'essentialises', and 'refuses' history in the same gesture. *Ethwald* is to become a play which will construct a historical relevance for its own textual authority. The assiduous application required of an author undergoing this task is acknowledged in the preface. For this endeavour alone, *Ethwald* "deserves to be remembered". Baillie's indistinct, and therefore unthreatening vision of the disorder of the Dark Ages is reminiscent of Donald Reiman's hesitant and contradictory association with *Macbeth* and *Bosola*. The dramatist wishes to offer a version of the 'Dark Ages' which prides itself on the principles which direct the imaginative content of the play. Donald Reiman employs a similar 'advertisement' for Joanna Baillie. She is to be introduced from a literary/historical void, but he endows her with a prefatory context which promotes the legitimacy of her inclusion in the respected canon of English drama. As I have previously argued, however, the emblematic focus of such a

process of contextualisation (Macbeth and Bosola) are themselves decontextualised in order to represent a yardstick by which Baillie's success in characterisation may be measured. Baillie's romanticisation of "discord and usurpation" carefully evades, nevertheless, the twentieth-century critic's display of authorial anxiety. If any doubt is to exist as to the security of the dramatist's ideological position, it is to be construed as firmly implanted in the 'false consciousness' of the reader, baulking at the edifice of moral reasoning. We are to benefit from the intellectual/spiritual purgative which she has wrought on our behalf:

I have indeed, given a very dark picture of the religion and the clergy of those days, but it is a true one: and I believe it will be perceived throughout the whole, that it is drawn by one, who would have touched it with a lighter hand, had the spirit of Christianity, and, above all, the superlatively beautiful character of its divine Founder, been more indifferent to her.¹²⁸

Ethwald, a tragedy on the passion of "ambition" in two parts, deals with the actions of a minor young noble who emerges as a fearless warrior. A gift of lands and titles from the king does nothing to diminish his desire for fame and preferment. In Part I, the king is killed by Ethwald's men, the heir to the throne is imprisoned, and Ethwald assumes the throne, marrying Elburga, the dead king's daughter. The second part of the tragedy charts the murder of the heir to the throne, Edward, and the ruin of Mercia through the grinding accumulation of the human and financial losses of war. Ethwald's bloody deeds escalate, culminating in the ritualised murder of his elder brother and the powerful Thane Ethelbert, who draw lots for the headsman's axe. Ethwald is finally overcome and killed by the surviving rebellious nobles.

The Elizabethan echoes in this play once again serve as a means to revise the 'given' moral implications of Baillie's "Discourse". The Marlovian references endow

Ethwald with a 'historically approved' tragic structure. The two-part drama charts the rise and fall of an individual who begins by serving the establishment, but who then usurps authority, exploring the full range of powers which identify the position which he now upholds. The consequences in relation to the philosophical security of the "Discourse" necessitates a re-writing of *Tamburlaine's* bold assertions, on his death-bed, of future conquests.

The first scene of *Ethwald* clearly reveals the results of the "diffuse" and "unrestrained" mythological recollection of *Tamburlaine*. Ethelbert, the mysterious 'gothic' representation of natural and spiritual justice, describes his noble ancestor to Edward:

A swabian shepherd's son, who in dark
times,
When ruin dire menaced his native land,
With all his native lordship in his grasp,
A simple maple spear and osier shield ...
 Around him gathered all the valiant youth;
And, after many a gallant enterprise,
Repell'd the foe and gave his country peace.
His grateful country bless'd him for the gift,
And offer'd him the regal crown.
 Ethw. And did they crown him then?
 Eth. No; with a mind above all selfish wrong;
He gen'rously the splendid gift refused;
And drawing from his distant low retreat
The only remnant of his royal race,
Fixed him on his father's seat;
Proving until his very latest breath
A true and loyal subject.

(1.1)

The "swabian shepherd's" textual forebear, the "Scythian *Tamburlaine*", is compromised in, and by, Baillie's portrayal. Jonathan Dollimore describes *Tamburlaine* as, "without the capacity to deceive".¹⁷ Baillie's *Tamburlaine* is 're-written' within legitimate boundaries of exemplary moral intention, as he is to

become the facet of the 'essential man' which Ethwald must experience, in order to commit the crime of his own disinheritance.

In his chapter 'Beyond Essentialist Humanism' (*Radical Tragedy*, pp.249-269)

Jonathan Dollimore outlines the theoretical framework of Enlightenment essentialist humanism.

Those forms of individualism ... premised on essentialism tend, obviously, to distinguish the individual from society and give absolute priority to the former. In effect the individual is understood in terms of a pre-social essence, nature, or identity and on that basis s/he is invested with a quasi-spiritual autonomy. The individual becomes the origin and focus of meaning—an individuated essence which precedes and in an idealist philosophy—transcends history and society. ... It is not only that (as Nietzsche contended) the entire counterfeit of transcendence and of the hereafter has grown up on the basis of an impoverished life, but that transcendence comes to constitute an ideological mystification of the conditions of impoverishment from which it grew: impoverishment shifts from being its cause to its necessary condition, that required to pressure one's true (spiritual) identity into its true transcendent realisation. ... Rebellious desire is either abdicated entirely, or tamed in service to the cultural reification of 'man', the human condition, the human spirit and so on. (pp.250-1)

Baillie's *Ethwald* illustrates the dramatic figure of the 'individual subject' who represents the 'universal essence of man'. Ethwald expresses his sense of self, the productive energy of the "human spirit" through transcending the poverty of indolence imposed upon him by his father's ban against his going to war. Ethwald's action, in transgressing against Mollo's edict, identifies Dollimore's "ideological mystification of the conditions of impoverishment". Ethwald promotes the individual freedom which is liberated through its paradoxical confrontation with a discourse of patriarchal decorum and restraint. His "true (spiritual) identity" is legitimately pressured into its "true transcendent realisation".

The individual consequence of Ethwald's actions, his death, is represented a

form of an essential 'egalitarian' martyrdom. It is part of man's nature to perform un-natural acts in order to re-define and clarify the truly cohesive function of the society which contains him. Ethwald forsee a Faustian hell;

Heaven warring o'er my head! there is in this
 Some fearful thing betoken'd.
 If that in truth, the awful term is come;
 The fearful bound'ry of my mortal reach;
 O'er which I must into those regions pass
 Of horror and despair, to take my place
 With those who do their blood earn'd crowns ex
 change
 For ruddy circles of devouring fire; where hope-
 less woe,
 And cursing rage, and gnashing agony,
 Writhe in the dens of torment; where things be,
 Yet never imagined in the thoughts of man,
 Dark, horrible, unknown
 I'll mantle o'er my head and think no more.
 (V.5)

What Baillie's text promotes is the "reification" of a natural cultural adherence to conventions which are, after all, the result of a universal correspondence 'laid down' in pre-history and thus beneath debate.¹²⁸ Ethwald serves his purpose in liberating the pastoral idyll which, upon his overthrow, becomes the emergent form of social order.

Let ev'ry heart bound at the joyful tidings!
 Thus from his frowning height the tyrant falls.
 Like a dark mountain, whose interior fires,
 raging in ceaseless tumult, have devour'd
 its own foundations...
 The joyful hinds, with grave and chasten'd joy,
 Point to the traveller the hollow vale
 Where once it stood, and now the sunned cots,
 Where, near its base, they and their little ones
 Dwelt trembling in its deep and fearful shade.
 (V.5)

Joanna Baillie presents her philosophy of tragic discourse as a means of confirming her humanist reading of the "sympathetick propensity of our minds" (p.4).

The act of public execution which she describes in the "Introductory Discourse", a hanging, becomes a focus for this discussion precisely because, as an act of 'cannibalism' it resists a democratic/humanist reading of an essential social charter. In *Discipline And Punish*, Foucault details documented cases of ritualised execution where the punishment was engineered to mirror the exact details of the original victim's fatal injuries. Although such punishments may have appeared overtly barbaric, Foucault observes that they reveal a scrupulous display of a concern over a 'minimalist' enactment of revenge. The sentencing authority offers an attempt to engender a 'universal understanding' of the nature of the specific punishment, a display of individual concern with the infinite which a fixed punishment would ignore. Such forms of punishment describe a similar sense of universal agreement with the pre-social foundations of order invoked by Baillie's defence of the roadside hanging. Like Ethwald, the individual nameless victim is a necessary sacrifice to remind us of our common humanity. Baillie's hanging, then, which Foucault describes in another context, becomes circumscribed within the discourse of punishment and revenge which reinforces the power struggle of the authority which prescribes the sentence.

Baillie's introduction to the *Plays on the Passions* maintains an essential priority over alternative generic categories purporting to document an understanding of social behaviour.

If unseasoned with any reference to this ["the sympathetic propensity of our nature"] the fairy bowers of the poet, with all his gay images of delight, will be admired and forgotten; the important relations of the historian, and even of the philosopher will make a less permanent impression. (p. 15)

The philosophical treatise on the remit of tragedy, and the plays which uphold the

principles upon which it is based are to be seen as a unified whole: Baillie's "extensive design" (p.1). Historical documentation, "the scientific in war" (p.16) does little to inspire such a sense of social cohesion. The "Discourse" outlines a general criticism of historical writing, it is a ritualised reproduction of non-sense. History is an anti-fable, essentially useless in that we are unable to learn its lessons by performing our own 'shared' contribution to the events described.

The historian points back to the men of other ages, and from the gradually clearing mist in which they are first discovered, like the mountains of a far distant land, the generations of the world are displayed to our mind's eye in grand and regular procession. But the transactions of men become interesting to us only as we are made acquainted with the men themselves. Great and bloody battles are to us battles fought in the moon, if it is not impressed upon our minds, by some circumstances attending them, that men subject to like weaknesses and passions with ourselves were the combatants. (pp.15-6)

It is in the footnote to this discussion of history, however, that the dramatist offers the colourful and contradictory illustration of the intellectual and creative superiority of the philosophical structure of the "Introductory Discourse". This fascinating explanation of the function of drama appears to approve of an interference with historical texts which are not 'destined' to achieve a productive intertextual future. Baillie's criticism of history accords with that described by Hume:

Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations.

(quoted by Dollimore, p.225)

Baillie goes further, however, in maintaining history's inability to distill the 'universal', owing to the generic limitations by which it is recognised.

Baillie's footnote (p.16) recognises a humanistic reading of "great battles" as

a functional strategic method of social control. The dramatist firmly supports an imaginative reproduction of events, which allows an audience a fictional rapport with an otherwise dim and distant historical figure. The invocation of meaning within the inanimate reconstruction of events is presented as an interactive process, something which the historical account alone consistently fails to provide. "History" provides us with a factual reproduction of the action of events in "grand and regular procession" (p.16), but denies us the representation of character from which the audience may internalise the 'lessons' to be learned from the protagonist's tragic conclusion. Such a statement clearly contradicts the linear illustration of the moral lesson extolled at the outset of the "Introductory Discourse". For Baillie, the poverty of historical linguistic expression falls below the level of interpretation, and thus fails to imbue its audience with the spiritual guiding emblem. We must have an authoritative version of the moral outcome of such "battles" which will, "stand forth in the imagination of the reader like a rock of the desert, which points out to the far-removed traveller the country through which he has passed" (p.16). This argument surfaces again in the preface to *Ethwald*, "I have therefore thought, that I might here, without offence, fix my story; give it a 'habitation and a name', and model it to my own fancy, as might best suit my design".¹²⁹ The dramatist advocates an interpretive code by which experiences may be measured and described. The "Introductory Discourse", then assumes an "originality" (p.69) of almost Biblical proportions. "There is nothing exactly similar to it in any language" (p.1) precisely because the playwright sets out to explain the ideological function of Discourse and dramas as constructions by which we will interpret the lessons the plays are to unfold. Baillie aims at a stylistic definition of the "order within us" which Jonathan Dollimore

describes, in his account of the materialist reading of what constitutes "the concept of ideology":

ideology becomes not a set of false beliefs capable of correction by perceiving properly, but the very terms in which we perceive the world, almost—and the Kantian emphasis is important here—the condition and grounds of consciousness itself. Additionally, if the beliefs which constitute ideology are understood as essentially true or naturally given, they are never likely to be consciously questioned. In short, our consciousness is in-formed by ideology and although we may experience ourselves as autonomous individuals within, yet essentially independent of the social order, in truth the order is within us.

(*Radical Tragedy* p.9)

Dollimore continues his discussion on essentialist humanism by remarking upon its inherent and contradictory exclusivity.

Hume's universal principles of human nature are not even, in his terms, universal after all, for he suspects 'negroes ... to be naturally inferior to whites'. (p.255)

Joanna Baillie's *Ethwald* exercises these "universal principles" on two levels. Firstly, he becomes the emblematic 'accessible' tragic hero, as we are party to his character 'flaws' at the play's outset. Ethwald is accessible, however, not simply because we "perceive the varieties of [his] roughened sides" (p.29), but because his humanity is defined 'against' that which is portrayed, for example, in the behaviour of Count basil's "uncultivated soldiers" (p.63). The humanitarian impulse is shown as 'working through' the soldiers, whilst Ethwald, as a minor noble, requires no individual prefatory justification for his anti-social activity, which, morally speaking is on a far more challenging scale. The second level at which the elitism may be seen to work is in the social 'promotion' and thus further exclusion of the unacknowledged source, the figure of Marlowe's shepherd Tamburlaine.

Marlowe's overreacher is 'written out' of the mythos of the Elizabethan text

which Baillie constructs within the text of *Eithwald*, and which she then proceeds to 'draw upon'. Tamburlaine is an anarchist only in the sense that his crime is commensurate with Dollimore's observation ("that he is without the capacity to deceive").¹³⁰ He has no interest in promoting a mythos of the divine right of monarchical succession.

I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove,
And yet a shepherd by my parentage.
(*Tamburlaine*, Part 1, 1.2.34)¹³¹

Prince Cosroe attempts to harness Tamburlaine to the military establishment which will protect his inheritance. He is, however, in turn, challenged for his assumption that the protective mythos of lineage is the subject of divine decree, outwith the relatively arbitrary arena of debate.

What means this devilish shepherd to aspire
With such a giantly presumption,
To cast up hills against the face of heaven,
And dare the force of angry Jupiter?...
So will I send this monstrous slave to hell,
Where flames shall ever feed upon his soul.

(II.6.1)

Since his first major declaration of his innate power: "I hold the fates fast bound in iron chains" Tamburlaine invests himself Cosroe's regal heightened metaphor.

The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown,
That caus'd the eldest son of heavenly Ops
To thrust his doting father from his chair,
Mov'd me to manage arms against thy state.
What better precedent than mighty Jove?
Nature, that framed us of the four elements,
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds.

(II.7.12)

Tamburlaine is an illegitimate claimant of the position of authority which he seeks within the play-society. He has no power invested in him by birthright, and so his

linguistic appeals enact the strategies through which the discourse of power functions as rhetoric.

Ethelbert's energetic ancestor, the "Swabian shepherd's son"¹³² illustrates a decorous rendition of the "noblest passion of the soul, ambition", which Gauriceio describes in *Count Basil*.¹³³ His actions, in refusing "the crown" and setting "the only remnant of the royal race" upon "his father's seat" contradict the moral priority which has permitted Baillie's Arcadian leader to assume the proper function of established military authority.

Baillie's shepherd may be seen to commit an unnatural act, in picking out an unknown individual to assume the reins of power which are 'naturally' his own. The metaphors which the dramatist employs to illustrate the 'natural' force with which Ethelbert's ancestor is endowed are clearly visible in the account of his weaponry, in (1.1). In this sense, the shepherd may be seen to commit an 'unnatural' act, in plucking an unknown individual to rule, from an anti-essential void. The "remnant" has shown no ruling qualities, endowed only with a "distant" appeal to a status which is socially and materially based. The loyal subjection which the liberator has shown illustrates Baillie's prescriptive version of a hierarchy of moral authority. 'Natural man' comes to his conclusion that his social superior is also endowed with an essential moral priority. He is shown as reaching this decision from within his pastoral arena ostensibly 'devoid' of cultural constraints. Ethelbert's ancestor offers an educative alternative to Marlowe's progressively disruptive and stylised rendition of hierarchial reversal.

Ethwald maintains an original course of ambitious gain and decline. The 're-writing' sets out to limit Tamburlaine's transgressive potential from within the

assumed safety of 'a-historical dark-Age Britain'. Baillie's shepherd is introduced to vindicate the universal purity of the "extensive design" (p.1), in refusing to transgress against the conceptual and material boundaries of Arcadian pastoral.

Marlowe's removal of his conqueror from escalating disorder and slaughter may be read as the result of the arbitrary intervention of the disease which disabled him, or the wrathful providential justice of "Mahomet". After all, the prologue tells us that we may "applaud his fortunes as [we] please". This interpretation is projected with equal weight to the conclusion that "Mahomet's" wrathful intervention has brought about his end. Ethwald's death is presented outwith the interrogative 'nobility' with which Tamburlaine articulates his fall. The young noble is killed by the sword of the murdered Ethelbert, the 'Second Chief' describing his ignoble departure.

No, he dies sullenly, and to the wall
Turns his with'd form and death-distorted visage.

(V.5)

Baillie construes Marlowe's play, perhaps, as an example of what Hazlitt was to define as exclusively English tragedy, offering contemporary writers a home-grown library for legitimate imitation. The dramatist's re-writing of *Tamburlaine* however falls into Hazlitt's category of the "restless candidate for praise".¹²⁴

This indeed, is one test of greatness of mind, whether a man can wait patiently and calmly for the award of posterity, satisfied with the unwearied exercise of his faculties, retired within the sanctuary of his own thoughts; or whether he is eager to forestall his own immortality, and mortgage it for a newspaper puff...he who is always trying to lay violent hands on reputation, will not secure the best and most lasting.¹²⁵

A direct invocation of the Elizabethan text, according to the above treatise on originality and 'decorum', presents Baillie as attempting to circumvent a contemporary poetical obscurity, with which, Hazlitt stresses, it is heretical for a

relation to Count Basil's demise. The form of justice meted out to Ethwald must invoke in the audience an awareness of an emblematic unity of crime and punishment. This idea, is encompassed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, as the means by which the established order reinforces the version of justice which it chooses to employ. The punishment which 'fits the crime' offers itself as a representation of a 'poetic justice' which almost encroaches upon the realm of the inviolate 'poetic principle' which is so visible in Baillie, Shelley, and Sir Philip Sidney. The form of 'punishment' which Baillie imposes on Ethwald, then, appeals to our universal accord with the 'fitting order' of something which we must also recognise as essentially shielded from potential criticism by its intrinsic superiority. The "Introductory Discourse" underlines this ethical superiority by rewarding Ethwald his death in return for his usurpation and cruelty.

The above quotation is clearly an echo of *Hamlet*, and this leads us directly into an apparent conflict between Ethwald's crime, and the means by which Hamlet's problematical death may be encountered as a consequence of the Shakespearean allusion. When subjected to the ethical/moral outline of the "Introductory Discourse", Hamlet is 'unjustly punished', as he suffers a fate which is indistinguishable, in principle, from the death of the villain Claudius. This outcome clearly obscures any providential conclusion to the tragic action, and thus provokes the 'necessity' of Baillie's "warning" (p.35), rather than acting as a legitimate "example" (p.36). It is possible to surmise that *Hamlet* is being alluded to as a legitimate encounter with an otherwise potentially 'unruly' "passion", as both Claudius and Ethwald express the passion of "ambition". Such a comparison, however, is clearly non-negotiable within the nationalistic decorum which underpins

the "Discourse", as the reference to Shakespeare's text are related to Hamlet's desire to redeem his country from the universal injustice committed by his uncle. *Hamlet* is, then, arguably sanitised in Ethwald, whilst serving to promote the latter play as a text worthy of inclusion within the literary/historical canon. In order to sustain a version of educative 'idealist mimesis', Baillie transforms the Romantic reading of *Hamlet*, which presents the prince as transcending, in death, the suffering imposed by his social sphere. Hamlet's death is problematical, in view of Baillie's educative edict, as the dramatist argues that punishment is to be seen, to echo Vindice's phrase, as the 'bad bleeding'.¹³⁷ The "universal desire", expressed in the "Discourse", "to behold man in every situation, putting forth his strength against the current of adversity" (p.7) absolves us, the audience at the metaphorical hanging, of the charge of voyeurism. Our reactions are emblematic of a common truth which defers to the authority of the "Introductory Discourse". These reactions, nevertheless, are only legitimised by a clear affirmation of the victim's guilt. In view of the "publick execution" (p.5), the essentialising cohesion which it engenders justifies the act. In order to underline this 'essential' common reaction within dramatic portrayal of retribution, Baillie invokes a heightened, stylised version of anti-sociality. Ethwald's crimes are of a gothic fearfulness, climaxing in the nightly execution of the imprisoned rebellious thanes. Such a portrayal, however, undermines the humanistic reading within which Baillie circumscribes the paternalistic conservatism of the "Introductory Discourse". The obscurantism which results from such a layering of references reveals an anxiety as to the philosophical conclusion (that punishment/ revenge is the social manifestation of pre-social fundamentally shared beliefs).

Ethwald is endowed with a monstrous 'debt' to be repaid to both play-society

and "Introductory Discourse". The extent of his crimes justify his death at the hands of the unknown swordsman. The means by which this justification is achieved, however, the catalogue of Ethwald's murders, comes into direct conflict with the 'positive' reading of the spectacle of punishment and revenge, the "universal desire to behold every man in every situation" (p.7). In order to reach sufficient heights to merit an intervention against the spiritual catharsis which the criminal is offering his audience, Ethwald's crimes become the mirror image of the expression of stage-violence and revenge which the dramatist orders us to turn from, because it presents a threat to our moral development. The gothic quality of Ethwald's misdemeanours serves to preserve and isolate our sense of our inherent 'national conscience' which, Baillie tells us, informs our reaction to roadside hanging and stage-play. The gruesome, almost 'Tamburlainian' list of atrocities which pile up in Ethwald's name endow him with an individual culpability for his actions. His death, then, follows as a form of punishment which is 'pre-judged'; we have an essential blueprint to countermand such gross disorder which reflects upon the security of this ideology of spiritual/social control. The punishment is beneath the level of debate, a show of a mass 'inner strength', rather than a version of an ill-considered statutory restraint. As David Punter's opening discussion of the generic 'ideology' of 'gothic' suggests, "excess and exaggeration" involves, in the case of Ethwald, a controlled expression of a stylised and productive nostalgia.¹³⁸

Baillie preaches a version of ritualised punishment which overtly promotes Foucault's interrogative conclusion on torture, ritual as the "eternal game".

The eternal game has already begun: the torture of the execution anticipates the punishments of the beyond; it shows what they are; it is the theatre of hell ... the cries of the condemned man ... already signify his irremediable destiny.

But the pains here below may also be counted as penitence, and so alleviate the punishments of the beyond: God will not fail to take such a martyrdom into account, providing it is borne with resignation.

(Discipline and Punish, p.46)

Ethwald's "destiny" raises no Marlovian haranguing of the fates and the onset of disease. The noble is despatched by a legitimate agent of revenge, an avenger of family loyalty which is 'patriotism in microcosm'. Ethwald's death is deprived of grounds for a Marlovian arbitrary conclusion. Baillie's tragedies are structurally similar to *Tamburlaine* (Part I plotting his rise, Part II his fall) but Ethwald is presented as bearing his fate "with resignation". Baillie's protagonist thus re-writes Marlowe's disruptive conclusion in order to claim a successful rendition of Foucault's humanistic "penitence" at work in the "theatre of hell". Ethwald, nevertheless, expires in silence, and does not die a dramatic and voluble death. The decorum of this act, however, absolves him of his disruptive actions to only a very limited extent. Baillie intends that Ethwald's fate should appear the product of what Foucault has called "irremediable destiny", whose roots are settled in a universalist representation of 'poetic justice'. This concept, nevertheless, must necessarily involve a recognisable 'distance' or separation, between the act of punishment and the "Introductory Discourse". The outcome of the 'poetic principle' and its association with the justice imposed by the establishment order must retain the purity which is the result of its detachment from prejudicial human bias. In this sense, then, it must be viewed as succeeding on its own merits, independent of the 'consultancy' which the "Discourse" sets out to provide.

This position is clearly untenable, as Ethwald bears his death wounds stolidly, precisely in order to conform to the rigid decorum prescribed in the "Discourse".

What her readers are ultimately privy to, then, is an author who takes a theoretical priority over her invocation of a biblical/providential conclusion. We must put our faith in the "Introductory Discourse", which, with its *Series Of Plays*, intends to provide proof of the spiritual returns for our initial investment of trust.

The intellectual complacency which results from such a philosophical certainty accords with the functional mythology of "sympathetick curiosity" (p.4) which leads us to witness violent death. The dramatic stage-death is remarkably understated, when taking into account the 'debt' which it is employed to recover. Baillie's version of idealist mimesis offers the 'decorum' which Foucault views as the strategic function of the 'mimetic' justice meted out in France "even as late in the eighteenth century as 1772".¹³⁹ *Ethwald* pays lip service to problematic issues, such as the morality of ambition. In order to endow the moral lesson with a sufficiently authoritative foundation for its intended audience, it is worked at the level of a fairly 'wide-spectrum' aristocratic culture. In the social hierarchy of the play-society, *Ethwald* is a relative bourgeois. His overreaching position is only threatening, however, insofar as his actions illustrate the extent to which his contemporaries are programmed to contain him. The lessons which we are taught from reading *Ethwald*, clearly devalue those to be learned from our attendance at the roadside hanging. This 'Foucauldian' "spectacle" of death which Baillie describes, ultimately focuses its unnamed victim as a disenfranchised pawn, who is employed to play only a very peripheral part in salving our national conscience and upholding the "eternal game".¹⁴⁰ His existence, nevertheless, offers a physical 'certainty' which is the secure 'base' for the dramatic representation of control which *Ethwald* describes. The mythology of an essential social conscience is built upon a comforting appreciation that, in coping with such as the roadside criminal, the lessons have already been 'glimpsed' and put

into practice.

As both *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are involved in an anti-providential reading of socio-political institutions, neither is permitted an individual existence as a linear authoritative motif in the tragedy of *Eithwald*. Baillie's invocation of the Shakespeare mythos is an attempt to absolve "displacements" within the *Plays on the Passions*.¹⁴¹ Such "displacements" are the result of 'resistance' from such texts as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* to their strategic representation within the *Series of Plays*. *Tamburlaine* suggests a foundation of creative vigour for Baillie's dramas, whilst, as an unacknowledged source, such plays are deprived of their interrogative intertextual voice. What Baillie views as the 'essential value' of *Tamburlaine* is confined to an obscurantist acknowledgement of dramatic excellence, as the political content of the play threatens the humanist code which underwrites the constitution of the "Introductory Discourse". In order to emphasise a 'legitimate' confirmation of her originality, the dramatist invokes the contradictory notion of a literary/historical foundation/source. The Elizabethan is inferred as an illustration of the essential 'poetic principle' which only true poets may tap into, from a secure position in the literary/historical canon. Baillie's involvement with *Tamburlaine*, then, entails a process of selection and containment, in that she re-defines the conceptual boundaries within which *Tamburlaine* is to be experienced.

On page 175 of my introduction to Baillie's dramatic theory I employ an analysis of Macherey and Balibar's 'On Literature As An Ideological Form', in relation to the insights which an application of their theory provides us with when investigating Joanna Baillie's "Discourse" and dramas. Macherey and Balibar present literature as an ongoing process of "compromise", as a reaction to it constitutive

contradiction. The acceptance of contradiction as a 'subject' within the work, results in the presentation of an "imaginary solution" to the contradictions which disturb the ideological form of the text.¹⁴² The act of acknowledging this instability, however, "redoub[es] the contradiction".¹⁴³

For there to be a literature, it must be the very terms of the contradiction ... enunciated in a language of 'compromise' realising in advance the fiction of a forthcoming conciliation—or better still it finds a language of 'compromise' which presents conciliation as both necessary and inevitable.¹⁴⁴

The invocation of references to Shakespearean tragedies, which, Baillie tells us, are beyond criticism, employs Balibar and Macherey's "conciliation" in the face of theoretical contradiction, a "conciliation" which is to appear, "both natural and inevitable". In this manner, the dramatist submits a plea for an intellectual halt to the process of debate which the drama *Ethwald* is conducting with the "Introductory Discourse". The particular Shakespearean references which Baillie chooses, however, refer once more to the process of "displacements and substitutions" in the pursuit of a stable expression of textual authority.¹⁴⁵ *Ethwald* echoes *Macbeth* in the first instance, seeking his vision of the future from the "female druids", who reveal to him, amidst visions of death and demons, an "illuminated crown and sceptre".¹⁴⁶ The representation of supernatural forces serves a problematical moralistic function in the play, as the impulse towards usurpation is fixed within the due-process of prophecy. The sisters' visions are overtly anti-social, but divested of malicious intent by working within a parallel, but wholly separate universe.

Arch.Sist. The varied voice of woe, of Mercia's
woe,

Of those who shall, beneath thine iron hand
The cup of misery drink...

Ethw. Forfend that e'er again I hear the like!
What didst they say? O, thou didst foully say!
Do I not know my own nature? heav'n and earth

As soon shall change —
(a voice above.) Swear not!
(a voice beneath.) Swear not!
(a voice on the same level but distant.) Swear not!

(I.3)

The second Shakespearean reference deployed within this quotation may be seen as a substitution of the 'moral voice' for the dubious vision of the "Arch Sister". Ethwald, who 'would be king hereafter', is tempered of his association with *Macbeth's* "weird sisters" through the timely intervention of old King Hamlet's ghost ("swear") the legitimate voice of spiritual manifestation.¹⁴⁷ This ghostly rejoinder is in direct response to Ethwald's metaphorical endangering of the order of "heav'n and earth" by employing them, as a 'fixed' universal state to underline his fundamental 'essential' social conscience. His actions have rendered our view of such a 'conscience' as distinctly problematical. In this sense, the supernatural voice is the voice of nature, the 'oracle in the glade' whose prophetic statements are not anti-social but pre-social. Errant elements in human social relations will always exert themselves. In the obscurantist 'figure' of nature, however, we are presented with the comforting knowledge that our eventual means of disarming such undesirable elements are informed by an all pervasive objective power, whose interests are removed from the charge of political self-interest. The Shakespearean mythos, then, may be seen to converge with, and enhance, this egalitarian version of 'nature'. This construction of a mythos of cohesion is necessarily covert, working at an obscurantist and understated level in order to camouflage the contradictions which such a comparison involves. 'Old King Hamlet', the Shakespearean character, is employed to endow this rather 'uncharted' force for good with a reassuring, measure of recognisably civilised cultural orientation. Shakespeare may be extolled as circumscribing an 'essential humanity'. This observation, however, does not preclude

the reading of Shakespeare's uniqueness which Baillie refers to in the "Discourse" - indeed, it is wholly dependent upon it. The dramatist tells us that, "Shakespeare, more than any of our poets, gives peculiar and appropriate distinction to the characters of his tragedies" (p.72). The Elizabethan dramatist, then, is not merely invoked as a focus for 'natural man'. He is a figure who personifies irrefutable powers of intellectual/artistic discrimination. Shakespeare, beyond criticism, is revealed as dictating the values which underpin contemporary structures of cultural authority. Once again, Baillie may be seen to initiate a particular "future determination" for her *Plays on the Passions* which involves a representation of the "order within us" which Jonathan Dollimore describes.¹⁴ Shakespeare's 'inspiration' is construed as the product of an ill-defined universal 'poetic principle' yet, for Baillie, such a reading provides the Elizabethan with his authoritative powers to 'dictate' both the nature and structure of such universals. This Shakespearean 'example' paves the way for, and validates the nineteenth-century writer's attempt to circumscribe the levels of interpretation which are to constitute the intertextual future of the *Plays on the Passions*. As Dollimore suggests, "if the beliefs which constitute ideology are understood as essentially true or naturally given, they are never likely to be consciously questioned" (*Radical Tragedy*, p.9).

It is in the presentation of Ethelbert that Baillie articulates the problematical arena of morality and the supernatural. Ethelbert describes a linear pattern of moral evolution from his original loyal "Swabian" ancestor. He illustrates a 'natural' rendition of justice and spirituality. Ethelbert is outside the bonds of 'received' codes of religious ritual.

Ethelbert expounds a version of Christ which has been supplanted by the political expediency of the priesthood. The priests have selected biblical extracts

which are calculated to reinforce their own power-base. This ostensibly 'secular' authority is being misrepresented as dispensing a valid interpretation of the 'true' Christ, and they are thus falsifying the nature and function of his divine authority.

These cunning priests full loudly blast my fame,
 Because that I, with diligence and cost,
 Have got myself instructed how to read
 Our sacred scriptures, which, they would maintain,
 No eye profane may dare to violate.
 If I am wrong they have themselves to blame.
 It was their hard extortions first impell'd me
 To search that precious book, from which they
 draw

Their right, as they pretend, to lord it thus.
 But what think'st thou, my Seldred, read I there?
 Of one sent down from heav'n in sov'reign pomp,
 To give into the hands of leagued priests
 All power to hold th' immortal soul of man
 In everlasting thralldom? O far otherwise!

(*Ethwald*, I.1)

The Thane rails at this deliberate exploitation of the production of meaning. Ethelbert purports to reveal the essential Christ through a universalising of humanity's pure desire for knowledge 'untainted' by temporal socio-political preconceptions and preconditions.

As a result of this discussion, Ethwald's ambition doesn't appear as the result of evil temptation, but as the hapless outcome of the 'common man' who does not heed both divine and 'natural' promptings. The confusion of Elizabethan supernatural references, may be actually employed to permit a reading of Ethwald's position which salvages the moral position of the "Introductory Discourse". He becomes, after all, the only point of contact we have with a display of elemental 'other-ness' (whilst we are aware that the legitimate source of the supernatural presents no theoretical threat.) Ethwald, as everyman, is incognisant, if not exactly innocent, before he chooses to enact the 'fall' which allows us our tragic communion with him.

Bertha's participation in *Ethwald* prefigures, perhaps, the role played by Beddoes' Floribel in *The Bride's Tragedy*, and to a lesser extent, is reminiscent of Beaumont and Fletcher's Aspatia in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Bertha's role is that of the innocent spurned maiden. She is imbued with a childish simplicity, aiming to impress her betrothed with her submissive obeisance. The legitimate suitor, however, soon disappears from the text. Ethwald's men kill the king, and he marries Elburga, Bertha only reappearing to extort a guilt-ridden remorse (which is short-lived) with a mad plaintive song.

Her death is reported by one of Elburga's maids later in the play, and she is denied any further stage-presence. Although reminiscent of the fate of the spurned Ophelia and Aspatia, and anticipating Beddoes' Floribel, Bertha's descent into madness and death-in-despair is presented in a particularly condensed and truncated form. Bertha is stylised as the focus for the 'traditional' female tragic role. In this way, she illustrates Baillie's debt to the historical 'legitimacy' of Ophelia, whilst conforming to the patriarchal code of silencing the discordant female voice. Baillie confirms Bertha's infirmity when deprived of the masculine, Ethwald, as he is her means of social and self-recognition. Bertha dies in no-man's-land. Her death, unlike that of Ophelia, Aspatia and Floribel, has no bearing upon future events leading to the tragic denouement. Bertha, the wronged woman, plays the role of legitimate tragic victim.

Elburga, the usurper, is given a more complex, yet equally emblematic female role. She becomes the predatory woman seeking a husband in a position of power, in order that she may continue to exert her own fractured and vindictive version of authority.

No, no! my sky is night! I was a princess,
 Almost a queen: in gorgeous pomp beheld,
 The public gaze was ever held on me;
 Proud was the haughtiest Thane or haughtiest dame
 To do my bidding, ev'ry count'nance watch'd
 Each changeful glance of my commanding eye

To read its meaning; now my state is changed;
 Scoffing and insult and degrading pity
 Abide the daughter of a murdered king.
 (IV.6)

Ethwald has recognised her as a personification of the ethos of the power-identity to which he aspires. Elburga (like Countess Freberg in *De Montfort*) is portrayed as expressing power within the intellectual limitations of spite and self-display. Ethwald's recognition, however, identifies Elburga's 'qualities' as the apex of achievement for woman in relation to a position of judicial influence. Elburga has a legitimate place at the head of the socio-political hierarchy of the play-society, yet is constrained within metaphors of fallible and corruptible 'exteriority' in Ethwald's speeches, as well as her own. She has become 'artificial', even 'anti-essential' in relation to the increasingly decadent, but 'intellectually expansive' concerns of Ethwald as king, and 'state'.

Ethw. I know thy haughty spirit, and I lov'd it,
 Even when I saw thee first in gorgeous state;
 When, bearing high thy stately form, thou stoodst
 Like a proud queen, and on the gazing crowd,
 Somewhat offended by some late neglect,
 Darted thy looks of anger and disdain.
 (IV.6)

Elburga's reversal (her decision to marry her father's murderer) is necessarily prefigured by her previous interest in him in Edward's presence. The reversal is thus feigned, and must be seen to be so, for the initial interest expressed in Ethwald's warlike deeds is to denote a 'material' essential kinship between them. Elburga's praise of Ethwald offers a faint invocation of Beatrice's admiration for De Flores in *The Changeling*,¹⁴⁹

Elb. Wonderful man!
 If hell or fortune fight for thee I know not,
 Nothing withstands thy power.
 (IV.6)

Elburga, however, has to do battle for a social and intellectual twinning with the social

inferior who has now become her lord and master. Baillie's treatment of Elburga transcribes *Ethwald* as a reactionary text. Ethwald is king, and the former princess is conceived of as a possession worthy of his present social status. His admiration for her pride disperses as he entrenches his position with regard to his entourage of nobles by attempting to inflict the traditional role of subservience upon her.

Retire Elburga:
 The leagued Thanes advance.
 Thou hast my leave.
 I give thee no command
 To join thy presence to this stern solemnity.
 Soft female grace adorns this festive hall,
 And sheds a brighter lustre on high days
 of pageant state; but in an hour like this,
 Destined for gravest audience, 'tis unmeet.
Qu. What, is thy queen an empty bauble, then,
 To gild thy state withal?
Ethw. The queens of Mercia, first of Mercian
 dames
 Still fair example give of meek obedience
 To their good Lords. This is their privilege.
 (Part II, II.3)

Ethwald upbraids Elburga for her amoral decision to marry him, for in so doing, she has confronted the traditional patriarchal values of filial piety (the creed of upholding values already laid down). Although he has contravened Oswal's legitimate position as king, Ethwald confirms his respect for his own masculine monarchical priority by relegating Elburga to a position of traditional 'imperfection'. This position, however, involves a representation of Elburga as an anti-social being. In marrying her, Ethwald has ensured that, as a queen, she may only exalt in a position which serves to degrade her further, and highlight her lack of judicial control.

And, whilst I list,
 thou flairst in men's eyes
 A gorgeous queen but unto me thou art—
 (Part II, V.4)

As a woman, she is denied the right to reply to this particular curse, as the reply would not only allow her an equal platform in the derisive exchange, but would threaten the expression of decorum prescribed in the "Introductory Discourse". The final scene once more displays the "expanded and aspiring soul" of the male in relation to the role of the woman as material possession. Baillie's representation of Elburga offers a curious and contradictory exploration of the position of the privileged woman in an early nineteenth-century 'version' of a Renaissance tragedy. The dramatist presents a vitriolic condemnation of Elburga's enforced submission beneath institutionalised male domination. Ethwald's verbal assault, nevertheless, reads as a punishment for her essential disloyalty: her invocation of a radical discontinuity within the royal lineage. Elburga chooses to ignore the legal heir to the throne, and marries the murdering usurper. It is this disloyalty, which is national, familial, and essential, which arguably remains as Baillie's version of Elburga, rather than a representation of injustice regarding her own potential socio-political expectations and ambitions.

Elburga's fate at the close of the play is also bound up with the "virtus-ideal".¹⁵⁰

Ay, ay, Elburga! 'tis enough for thee
To tower in senseless state and be a queen;
But to th' expanded and aspiring soul,
To be but still the thing it long has been
Is misery, e'en tho' enthron'd it were
Under the cops of high imperial state.
(Part II, V.5)

The impeaching Thanes consider her as, "beneath [their] vengeance". She is denied equal punishment with Ethwald; yet the danger she poses, now outwith the control of marriage, is recognised. She is constrained to "repent", "in some safe place/In holy privacy".¹⁵¹ In other words, she is banished to the proverbial convent, where she will exchange her disruptive emblematic role for its direct opposite, the vision of contemplative virtue. Having transgressed against the moral code of the "Introductory Discourse", she suffers the fate

which the 'innocent' Lady Jane De Montfort declines to entertain.

The moral distance between Elburga and her departed father, "good king Oswald", allows for the recognition of the 'first cause' of malicious action within the second part of the play. The justice meted out to Elburga, the woman who has, "so belied her gentle stock" both justifies the emblematic burden of the female as unclean, and revives the flagging "virtus-ideal". The remaining Thanes identify Elburga as the focus for Ethwald's usurpation. In this way she becomes the means through which they may identify themselves as a mutually cohesive group, and thus define their right to assume the reins of power. Elburga is, simultaneously, an "evil" overreacher, and a woman who is, paradoxically, "beneath [their] vengeance". She sustains two separate mythological strands of interpretation by which the Thanes may pool their resources in an essential 'mutual understanding'. Both positions, that of 'criminal other' and 'infirm villain beneath punishment' are, on the surface, mutually exclusive. What they do share, however, is an element of panic. The first implies an anti-social threat which a society run on the 'rational principles' professed by the "expanded.. souls" can never hope to contain and anticipate.¹⁵² The second understanding of Elburga's status reveals a disfunctional entity which cannot be ordered into an expression of acceptable behaviour in relation to a prescribed social position.

In holy privacy, may'st thou repent
The evil thou hast done: for know, proud dame,
Thou art beneath our vengeance.
(Part II, V.5)

'Orra', or the Woman as 'Other'.

The tragedy of *Orra* appeared in the third volume of the *Plays on the Passions* (1812). The play is one of two highly stylised 'gothic' tragedies on the subject of fear. *Orra*, an independent and imaginative young woman, is confined in a ruined castle for

refusing to marry the spoiled and egotistical son of her guardian, Count Hugobert. The punishment is envisaged by a villainous illegitimate noble who desires Orra for himself, and therefore engineers his role as her jailer. During their stay, he makes several advances to her, all of which she manages to avert through an expression of outraged decorum. The legend of the murdered huntsman with which Rudigere hopes to frighten Orra into his arms, is also employed as a means of her rescue by the worthy suitor Falkenstein. Loss of an explanatory letter, however, results in the impressionable Orra being permanently unbalanced by shock.

This play offers by far the most pronounced and deliberate examination not only of the position of women in relation to the Drama, but also in relation to contemporary society. The preface to the 'third volume' insists on the arbitrariness of Baillie's choice of female character for the role of one who is to be shown as unusually susceptible to fear. Indeed she takes precautions to absolve Orra from a show of indiscipline which is other than a universal manifestation of human behaviour. Firstly, the play is given a fourteenth-century setting, although the playwright tells us that under certain circumstances, "a brave man and wife of the nineteenth-century ... would feel the emotions of fear as intensely".¹⁵³ The historical distance from an age wherein "the returning dead" were allotted a conscious material existence permits a complacent 'gothic' representation of elemental forces.¹⁵⁴

Baillie's universalising of the emotion of "fear" (which Orra personifies) reflects several of the philosophical constructs which Raymond Williams charts in the development of neo-classical tragedy.

What we find in the new emphasis is an increasingly isolated interpretation of the character of the hero: the error is moral, a weakness in an otherwise good man, who can still be pitied. This progressive internalisation of the tragic cause is still held, however, within the concept of dignity. We can see, in this respect, why the formula of 'pity and terror' was often changed to the formula we have

seen in Sidney ... 'admiration and commiseration'. The 'nobility' of the new tragic hero, can be traced back, in a moral sense, to Seneca ... the greatness of man still carries in its very language a conception of aristocratic decorum. The way to handle suffering is now at least as important as the way to experience it or learn from it.

(*Modern Tragedy*, p.26)

This universalising technique is an attempt to divert a specific denunciation of the "passion" as a particularly female emotional response. In a more general sense, however, it becomes a necessary strategy in upholding a vision of dramatic decorum. A reminder of this universal response reiterates Baillie's authoritative theoretical control in relation to the potentially disruptive and anti-social forces which are, in the uncontrolled state of the passion of terror, articulated as the subject matter of the work itself.

Raymond Williams continues his discussion of the development of the definition of a tragic 'blueprint' with a comment on Dryden. This observation offers a useful insight into the elements of tragic definition which Joanna Baillie expounds as the basis for an effective prescription of a template of national morality. The results of this moral code are, of course, displayed in the spectacle before us. Dryden, Williams argues,

could still argue that exalted rank was necessary to show that no condition was exempt from the turns of fortune. But the moving force of tragedy was now quite clearly a matter of behaviour, rather than either a metaphysical condition or a metaphysical fault.

(*Modern Tragedy*, p.26)

Baillie deals with the issue of "rank" as foregrounding the "matter of behaviour", since it is the means through which we "experience it [and therefore] learn from it".¹⁵⁵ "Rank" denotes, within the *Plays On The Passions*, an aristocratic code of morality which is essentially given. Moreover, the dramatist insists that one of her practical reasons for constructing both "Discourse" and Dramas is to disseminate the elements of this exclusive morality within the "uncultivated". The *Plays On The Passions* may be seen to uphold an

'idealist mimesis' which both subscribes and appeals to an institutionalised hierarchical approval of the results of a dramatic attempt at 'behaviour modification'. In the specific example of *Orra*, it is her social rank which constitutes her redemption from the myth of feminine emotional instability, reinforcing the prefatory palliative of the 'universal' "man and wife of the nineteenth-century".¹⁵⁶ This prefatory address to the reader is to 'offset' the subject matter of the drama against the tragic dignity by which we are to measure our response to *Orra*.

This appeal to her audience reflects an insidious form of 'universalising', in that the dramatist appeals to a shared essential response which is dormant within us, as the chosen representatives for the moral lesson. The reader/audience are cajoled into a philosophical alliance with the morality which the playwright wishes to prescribe. Baillie's introductory comments on *Orra* illustrate William's remarks on the tragic "spectator" who is the ultimate focus for the behavioral response which the drama extorts us to learn from. "shared behaviour", William's argues, is the "essential consequence of the idea of decorum".¹⁵⁷

The emphasis on the 'noble' way to handle suffering, and on how to conduct oneself through it, appears again, in a very subtle way, in the widespread discussion of tragic effect. This, while apparently directed to a real moral question, becomes really a discussion of how the spectator of a tragedy should conduct himself. ... The moral question, of the nature and therefore the effect of a tragic action, becomes a question in abstracted human nature: that is to say, not an inquiry into a specific response which must then necessarily include the action to which the response is made, but an attempt to find reasons for an assumed general form of behaviour.

(*Modern Tragedy*, p.27)

The "internalisation of the tragic cause", *Orra*'s terror, is firmly circumscribed within the "concept of dignity".¹⁵⁸ The dramatist appeals to our sense of a "shared response", a universal understanding of the 'nightmare' which is the result of emotional energy which is 'dis-ordered'. In order to reflect the sense of "admiration and commiseration" which will reflect a vision of tragic decorum, however, Baillie projects *Orra* as laying down a challenge

to her unproductive anxiety.¹⁵⁹ It is this anxiety which partly constitutes the organising principle which foregrounds *Plays On The Passions* as we appreciate Orra's essential strength to interrogate her paranoia. The aggressive rejection of a complete submission before this 'error-in-fear' is formulated as Orra's outright rejection of the principles upon which the play-society is itself ordered, and which reflect its controlling principle of decorum in restraint. It is Orra's response to the potentially anti-Christian terrors which her superstition gives rise to which threatens the theoretical authority of the "Introductory Discourse". The dramatist's attempt to preserve the moral authority of her dramatic character may be seen to underpin the overt rejection of any interpretation of Orra's reactions indicating female intellectual/spiritual impotence. Baillie's universalising of the "passion of fear" insists upon a philosophical/moral framework of 'essential' tragedy.¹⁶⁰ Baillie avoids compromising her heroine by composing her as the representation of opposing forces (dark/light) as it is through her fear that Orra becomes the legitimate portrait of human imperfection.

I am persuaded that, could we suppose any person with a mind so constituted as to hold intercourse with such beings [ghosts] entirely devoid of Fear, we should turn from him with repugnance as something unnatural—as an instance of mental monstrosity. If I am right then in believing this impression on the mind to be so universal, I shall not be afraid of having so far infringed on the dignity of my heroine, as to make her an improper object to excite dramatic interest.
(Vol.III, p.iv)

Orra's gender, then, is not to be seen to bear upon the source of the plot; indeed, it is through her vigorous rational qualities of mind that she offers herself as a worthy specimen for serious dramatic discussion.

Those, I believe, who possess a strong imagination, quick fancy, and keen feeling, are most easily affected by this species of Fear: I have therefore, made Orra a lively, cheerful buoyant character, when not immediately under its influence; and even extracting from her superstitious propensity a kind of wild enjoyment, which tempts her to nourish and cultivate the enemy that destroys her.

(Vol.III, p.v)

Both as a subject within the play-text, and in relation to the "Introductory Discourse", Orra may be seen to play the part of Plato's "errant democrat", as described by Derrida in *Dissemination*.

swept off by every stream, ... he has no essence, no truth, no patronym, no constitution of his own. ... such degradation can always be explained in terms of a bad relationship between father and son.
(*Dissemination*, p.145)

Orra's rebellion is a statement of her 'other-ness', in that she has no "constitution of [her] own", to borrow Derrida's phrase, and is claiming a position which is outwith any patriarchal definition with the play-society. Baillie's prefatory and dramatic relationship to Orra assumes a tone of proprietorial supervision. The playwright, however, offers a defensive indication of the "bad relation" between the outcome of the text and its theoretical purpose. Orra illustrates the Platonic "random" force.¹⁶¹ She is an interpretive "signifier" which does not function as the restricted linear harbinger of a conclusive 'idealist mimesis'.

It has been thought that, in Tragedy at least, the principal character could not possibly be actuated by this passion, without becoming so far degraded as to be incapable of engaging the sympathy and interest of the spectator or reader.

(Vol.III, p.iii)

The potential subversion which an expression of unrestricted "fear" introduces within the play-text is to be countered by its conscription within its focus as a universal, general response. This is an expression of an essential truth, however, which the singular disruptive Orra interrogates. In presenting a discussion of "fear" in relation to the issue of tragic decorum, Baillie's rhetoric subscribes to the solution of obscurantism. Orra's rendition of the "passion" is de-politicised in the introductory comments on the play, and is de-contextualised in relation to the specific role which she plays within the play-society. In this way, the dramatist avoids contaminating the prescriptive "Introductory Discourse" in relation to the "degrad[ation]" which she construes as the traditional reading of the "passion of fear".

I am however, inclined to think, that even Fear, as it is under certain circumstances and to a certain degree a universal passion (for our very admiration of courage reflects upon this idea) is capable of being made into tragic drama, as it often is in real life, very interesting, and consequently not abject.

(Vol.III, p.iv)

The issue of the female tragic protagonist as a radical force is more explicit in this play than elsewhere in Baillie's tragedies. The expression of what William's describes as the "tragic cause" and our means of "experienc[ing] of learn[ing] from it",¹⁴² are worked at the level of contradiction, in relation to the retention of the "decorum" required for a successful invocation of dramatic "idealist mimesis". Female subversiveness in *Orra*, I have argued, is present on one level as the legitimate response to the essentially unproductive expression of fear. This disorienting 'gothic' passion thus includes a legitimate element within our experience of terror: the "admiration of courage".¹⁴³ The means by which this "courage" expresses itself institutes, however, as disabling a challenge to the functional development of the moral lesson, as the philosophical support it is designed to engender within an audience. The challenge is displayed in Orra's disruptive expression of the "wild enjoyment, which tempts her to nourish and cultivate the enemy that destroys her".¹⁴⁴

Baillie may be seen to approach *Orra* from an awareness of the contradictions upon which the drama is constructed. Whilst the preface aims to forestall a disruptive conclusion, the very concept of subversion is clearly focused in the choice of name for the tragic heroine.

The dramatist's choice of the name "Orra" for her heroine displays a curious and very direct reference to the conception of the woman as 'other', outside of the given doctrine of marriage. (Interestingly, Baillie herself never married.) The term "orra" is still in use in vernacular Scots to denote a casual 'extra' employee, or to describe an individual considered, "inferior... paltry, base, low, mean, worthless". In this sense one is said to keep "orra company".¹⁴⁵

The term "orra, orrey" is cited in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* as in use as early as 1597, denoting a person surplus to requirements, used most commonly in relation to single women and the unemployed. The term had very powerful derogatory implications, and included, in some cases, a description of a possible threat to law and order:

An act anent orray personis an single women ... that na orray person,
man or woman servants ... be sufferit to remane in the town unfeyit.
(Stirling Kirk document, 1597)

Isobell Dowgall quha is fund ane resctar of oray women and uther
vicious persones.

(Stirling Kirk document, 1623)¹⁶⁶

The Scottish National Dictionary offers several late eighteenth and early nineteenth century examples of "orra" as describing someone or something as "superfluous" or "odd." (The term is still widely used in Scots to denote anything extra or spare.)

Orra things bought and sold—which meant he dealt in odd articles.
(1856).¹⁶⁷

Scott, according to the *English Dialect Dictionary*, used the word "orra" in *The Antiquary* (1816) and in *Waverley* (1814). This term is not, according to the dictionary quoted above, entirely exclusive to Scotland, being a Western English dialect word meaning 'any' or 'either', but the implication of an "orra" individual as a social outcast does appear to be solely retained north of the border.

What then, are the linguistic prophetic definitions of Orra's fate? A reading of the name as an exclusive joke intended for her countrymen/women clearly suggests itself, but is belied by the serious tone of the preface, and the "Introductory Discourse" on the necessity of an unbroken vision of ongoing tragic decorum. The contradiction which is Orra remains unresolved, indeed, the name appears to maintain a constant and wry identification of the anomaly of Orra's position within the play-society.

The definition of the woman as 'other' is given a historical frame of reference by

Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*:

Roman law limiting the rights of woman cited the 'imbecility, the instability of the sex' just when the weakening of family ties seemed to threaten the interests of male heirs. And in the effort to keep the married woman under guardianship, appeal was made in the sixteenth century to St. Augustine, who declared that 'woman is a creature neither decisive nor constant' at a time when the single woman was thought capable of managing her property.

(*The Second Sex* p.22)¹⁴⁸

Orra's terrors reflect this mythological instability which De Beauvoir describes. Is Baillie, then, highlighting the unjust position of women, or is she presenting a form of dramatic complicity as regards the wishes of the patriarchy, in order to justify Orra's removal to Brunier's castle?

The issue of the metaphorical justice which the dramatist offers her female character is clearly articulated in the preface to *Orra*, "Fear" being explained as a universal passion. Orra's terrors however, realise a linear approbation of the incarceration which will follow. The haunted castle is the spiritual inverse of the convent, and contains an element of the meritorious poetic justice upheld in the "Introductory Discourse". The gothic ruin is Foucault's "theatre of hell", appropriate as a form of punitive seclusion as it mirrors the extent of Orra's subversion.¹⁴⁹ It is useful, at this point, to compare Orra's fate to that which awaits Elburga in *Ethwald*. The princess is motivated by ambition and a fear of losing the social status which allows her to exceed, albeit to a very limited extent, the disenfranchised position of women within the play-society. Elburga, as we have seen, is banished to a convent, a "safe place" where in "holy privacy" she may repent a marriage which reflects a usurpation of the exclusively masculine prerogative of an economic/spiritual choice of partner. Elburga's fate illustrates the comments which De Beauvoir was to offer on "Roman

law" (quoted above) as she exposes the contradiction in anatomizing the 'essential' contract.

In the later play, Orra's imposed retreat reflects the disequilibrium which her refusal to marry initiates. Her 'ideal' marriage involves an element of complicity with the patriarchal code, but only in so far as this leads to a means of avoiding the social pressures which remaining "orra" involve. The prospective 'chosen' husband, Falkenstein, is to endow Orra with the traditional "vassals" and "splendour" (II.1) which serve to indicate that his particular wealth and status within the drama has a basis in moral/spiritual virtue. These physical and material adornments are discussed by Simone de Beauvoir as a means by which masculine authority, identifies and defines the woman as 'other'. The woman is 'acted upon' within the mythological construct of protection. Falkenstein's protection, however, is a lesser evil - it yields to convention, and yet opens the way to a greater, if paradoxical, moral freedom. "If [a woman] wishes to take a lover" writes Simone de Beauvoir, "she must first get married".¹⁷⁰ This is an issue which is interrogated throughout the Jacobean texts which Baillie refuses to acknowledge directly within her treatise on the correct function of tragic representation.

The issue of adultery within marriage is most obviously interrogated, perhaps, in Middleton's *Women Beware Women*. The portrayal of masculine desire for the married woman concerns the sub-plot of *The Changeling*, and appears again in the figure of Ford's Orgilus in *The Broken Heart*, the 'legitimate' suitor thwarted by the economic status of Bassanes. Baillie's protagonist and her entourage are involved in an extremely subtle and precarious investigation of female sexual restrictions, as the question of an underlying sense of behavioral equality comes into direct conflict with the theoretical mandate of an instructive dramatic decorum. Clearly, the dramatist does not wish to implicate Orra in any adulterous 'anti-essential' dealings which will transgress against the function of the "Introductory

Discourse". Baillie does, however, appear to institute a powerful protest against marriages arranged and enforced on the basis of economic gain and social status. A form of dramatic 'passive resistance' which is sanctioned by the "Introductory Discourse" is insufficient as a means of articulating this issue in the form of an effective protest.

Al. And you did say, my lady,
It should not be a cold unsocial grandeur:
That you would keep, the while, a merry house.

Or. O doubt it not! I'll gather round my
board

All that heav'n sends to me of way-worn folks,
And noble travellers, and neighb'ring friends,
Both young and old. Within my ample hall,
The worn out man of arms, (of whom too many,
Nobly defended, rove like reckless vagrants
From one chieftain's castle to another,
half chid, half honour'd) shall O' tip-toe lead,
Tossing his grey locks from his wrinkled brow
With cheerful freedom, as he boasts his feats
Of days gone by.—Music we'll have; and oft
The bick'ring dance upon our oaken floors
Shall, thund'ring loud, strike on the distant ear
Of 'nighted travellers, who shall gladly bend
Their doubtful footsteps tow'rds the cheering
din.

Solemn and grave, cloister'd and demure
We shall not be. Will this content ye, damsels?

Al. O passing well! 'twill be a pleasant life;
Free from all subjection; blithe and fan-
ciful;

We'll do whate'er we list.

Cath. That right and prudent is, I hope thou
meanest.

Al. Why ever so suspicious and so strict?
(II.1)

Cathrina's moral stance is also expressed as a point of moral conflict within the play. Her interjection introduces "suspicion" precisely because she is presenting a social 'mask of virtue'. Rudigere threatens Cathrina with exposure of a sexual episode which he has knowledge of, (II.2) in order to gain access to information on Orra's behaviour. It is not until (III.3) that the reader is given further insight into this episode. The dialogue between

Rudigere and Cathrina suggests that Rudigere himself is the father of either an illegitimate child which has been concealed, or is yet to be born. The brevity of their exchange ensures that the situation is ill-defined, presenting Rudigere as the manipulative villain, yet preventing a disruption of the pervasive sense of tragic decorum. After all, the tragedy is, in part, Cathrina's. This dialogue between Rudigere and Cathrina does, however, invest the play with a sense of social debate as regards the situation of the single woman in early nineteenth-century society. As Eric J. Evans points out,

Pre-marital pregnancy spelt ruin for the respectable lady. Even the suspicion of illicit liaison might end the prospects of marriage to one of equal station. The 'fallen woman' was an extraordinarily powerful symbol.¹⁷¹

The 'mask of virtue' which Cathrina strives to sustain is involved in upholding the social code which projects her actions as immoral.

Rud Thou, whom concealed shame hath bound so
fast,—

My tool,—my instrument?—Fulfil thy charge
To thee full bent of thy commission, else
Thee, and thy bantling too, I'll from me cast
To want and infamy.

Cath. O Shameless man!
Thou art the son of a degraded mother
As low as I am, yet thou haft no pity.

Rud. Aye, and dost thou reproach my bas-
tardy,
To make more base the man who conquer'd thee,
With all thy virtue, rigid and demure?
Who would have thought less than a sovereign

Prince
Could e'er have compar'st such an achievement?

Mean
As he may be, thou'st given thyself a master,
And must obey him.—Dost thou yet resist?
(III.2)

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication Of The Rights Of Woman* was published in 1793, five years before the first volume of *Plays On The Passions*. In the 1891 edition of this

work Elizabeth Robins Pennel discusses the situation faced by the woman writer in the late eighteenth century.

Merely to write, even if necessity forced a woman to a literary life, was to defy public opinion—to step out of the bounds of female reserve, good Mrs Barbauld feared. But boldly and openly to question her social and moral position was to commit the unpardonable sin, and to be damned for indelicacy. Of both minor offence and deadly crime, Mary Wollstonecraft was guilty.

(Prefatory Note, p.vii)

The outspoken Wollstonecraft, Pennel continues, was "denounced as a social outcast—a 'hyena in petticoats', 'a philosophising serpent' Horace Wallpole called her".¹⁷² This literary notoriety was soon aired outwith the sphere of her social life, as she and Godwin lived together as a family with their illegitimate daughter before marrying.

Joanna Baillie mirrors Pennel's comments on Hannah More and Mrs Barbauld, who, "apologised for their work as if it was an indiscretion".¹⁷³ This is clearly borne out in the lengthy justification for the project of the *Plays On The Passions*. In her personal life, Baillie enacted a faultless rendition of a scrupulous morality, which when considered in relation to the contemporary criticisms against Mary Wollstonecraft, reveals an intriguing issue regarding the success of such a work as *Orra*. The play is launched from a position of sexual abstinence and exemplary social virtue. In such a social climate as Pennel describes, it is likely that the closeted existence which Baillie led with her mother and sister In Hampstead was the secure base from which such a potentially disruptive text, from a female dramatist, might hope to merit critical consideration and public acclaim. In relation to the position of Mary Wollstonecraft, Joanna Baillie is, "not guilty" of the "question[ing] of her social and moral position" which *Orra* transmits within the play-text.¹⁷⁴ The play reveals a fascinating network of contradictions which evolve from the conflict between the 'decorum' illustrating a seriousness of moral purpose, and the formulation of a 'vindication of the rights of woman' within the play.

The comparison with Wollstonecraft's stated 'principle', in her dedication to Talleyrand, is useful in outlining the fundamental theoretical contradiction within the tragedy of *Orra*. On one level, Baillie displays a wry imaginative portrait of the outcome of female intellectual suppression, described by Wollstonecraft as a "groping in the dark".¹⁷⁵ Orra's 'cure' for her hysterical reaction, in view of the corrective prescription of the "Introductory Discourse", would be an introduction into a critical conceptual arena which will allow her to rationalise her fears of the supernatural. The form which rationality takes within the play-society, however, is on offer to Orra only as a form of submission: silence. Her outbursts of terror do, however, refer back to a masculine version of the hysterical woman, and must be carefully prefaced.

Our first encounter with Orra brings the debate on the dramatic representation of women into sharp focus.

Orra is introduced in (1.3) of Baillie's play, (once we have met her rival suitors) and precedes to impose a disruptive note of hilarity within the tense atmosphere of the Ducal hall.

*El. Nay Orra; these wild fits of uncurb'd
laughter,
Athwart the gloomy tenor of your mind,
As it has low'r'd of late, so keenly cast,
Unsuited seem, and strange.
(1.3)*

Orra teases the Duke's son Glottenbal, over his embarrassing fall during a tournament. The Duke, already exasperated at the dishonour which the youth has brought to the military reputation of his house, is further frustrated by the good-humoured gibings of his ward; she continues to 'lessen' Glottenbal in relation to the "virtus-ideal" by considering any potential match with him as intellectually unequal.¹⁷⁶

*Hugh. (advancing angrily from the bottom of
the stage to Glottenbal.)
Hold thy peace!*

(*To Orra*) And Madam, be at least somewhat
restrained
In your unruly humour.
(I.3)

Hughobert refers to Orra as "richly dowried", which maintains her value as a wife for his son in spite of her poor opinion of him. He does, however, cast around for an alternative wife,

Surely for him some other virtuous
maid
Of high descent, tho' not so richly dowried,
May be obtain'd.
(I.3)

The attempt, however, is both despairing and rhetorical. Orra is wealthy, and so is to be coerced into marriage. The question of a woman's rights regarding property in the early nineteenth-century is summed up by Asa Briggs as follows,

In marriage, the dominating position of the husband was still buttressed by the law, and it was not until 1870 and 1822 that Married Women's Property Acts were passed, granting women rights to property whether secured before marriage or after.
(*A Social History Of England*, p.285)

Orra enlightens Hartman to the socio-economic and legal constraints which her identification as the 'other' involves.

And so, since fate has made me, woe the day!
That poor and good-for-nothing—helpless
being,
Woman yclept, I must consign myself
With all my lands and rights into the hands
Of some proud man, and say, "take all, I pray,
And do me in return the grace and favour
To be my master.
[Act II, Sc.i.]

Her enforcement into marriage has become a vital pressing problem to the leading authorities within the play-society. Unwed, her fortune is unclaimed, which is ultimately detrimental to the security of the state. Orra's legacy invites temptation and competition amongst suitors

who would be otherwise engaged in serving their country's national interests. It is considered essentially sinful for Orra, as 'other', to maintain even a moral control over her property. Her refusal to marry, then, is viewed as another facet of her propensity towards irrational behaviour. Orra's freedom, such as is offered, is actively enjoyed. She projects herself in mocking Glottenbal. This freedom, then, is sexually subversive, and 'Orra' may be taken to denote reversal. Following her speech to Hartman, the noble tries to console Orra by explaining marriage as an ideal 'essential' equality,

Hart. Nay, gentle lady! you constrain my
words

And load them with a meaning harsh and foreign
To what they truly bear.—A master! No:
A valiant gentle mate, who in the field,
Or in the council will maintain your right:
A noble, equal partner.

Or. (shaking her head) Well I know
In such a partnership, the share of power
Allotted to the wife. See, noble; Falkenstein
hath silent been the while, nor spoke one word
In aid of all your specious arguments.
(II.1)

Orra's preference for Falkenstein is based on the imaginative 'distance' with which he is presented to us. Orra insists upon the "equal[ity]" which such a match will ensure: they will become "co-burghers of [Hartman's] native city" (II.1). It is this virtue in relation to Falkenstein which appeals to Orra, rather than the proffered list of military metaphors proclaiming his soldierly loyalty to her. This elusive distance in relation to the virtue-ideal is echoed in Orra's discussion with Alice and Cathrina on her future "castle" (II.1). Baillie, then, articulates the contemporary issue of the positions of both the married and the single woman as regards property and sexual restraint. The cultural values which the dramatist may be seen to address in this play are described by Asa Briggs as echoing values which had spilled over from the previous century.

For Johnson himself, the 'chastity of women' was of 'all importance since property depends on it'. There were contradictions in male views. Some women were associated with property; and respectable unmarried women—the word 'spinster' was used to describe them in 1719—were associated with charity. It was enough for the great lawyer Blackstone that 'in marriage husband and wife are one person, and that person is the husband.

(*A Social History Of England*, p.209)

Middleton's representation of the virginity test which Alsemero inflicts upon Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling* examines the issues surrounding the chastity of the unmarried woman in Jacobean drama. The scene is overtly comic, but the interrogative sub-text which the "horrid laughter"¹⁷ exposes highlights the complexity and limitations of Beatrice-Joanna's situation. Middleton's representation of Beatrice-Joanna's aim to behave according to the cultural definition of chastity and decorum in public clearly offers a more disruptive analysis of the role of the single woman that that which Baillie offers in the plight of Cathrina.

Both women are held in subjection by an amoral masculine protagonist, her 'un-doer'. Cathrina, however experiences the theoretical punishment which the "Discourse" prescribes for his crime on our first acquaintance with her. She is abject and 'a-social', outwith the confines of the realm of the feminine 'other', as described by Catherine Belsey in *The Subject Of Tragedy*. The limitation of the code of behaviour and values mapped out for women within the play-society is clearly held up for questioning, but the essential representation of women as the keystone of familial security is never challenged as the basis for a culturally-imposed biologically determined suppression. Cathrina has a unique status within the play-society in terms of subjectivity. She is not only viewed as 'other' in relation to autonomy of the masculine subject, but is similarly rejected by her female contemporaries. She is viewed by the latter group as a non-woman: on one level, she is mocked for her chill reproof of activities which are seen by other women to simply promote friendship, and thus,

on a wider level, social cohesion. Cathrina's 'experience' in sexual matters is not known to her contemporaries, but it is clearly possible to argue that their rejection of her is the result of a theoretical disapproval of her act (even though the text implies that she was co-erced into sex with Rudigere) as much as a critical analysis of the stressful nun-like pose which she feels compelled to assume. It is Cathrina in *Orra* who plays the role of Briggs' spinster, desperate to mirror the role of a moral paragon in order to merit the employment/toleration which she receives in the Duke's circle. That she is regarded with a general sense of amusement, as irrelevant, is evident from the brief comments of Maurice (I.1) and Alice's reply chiding her "strict[ness]" (II.1).

Beatrice-Joanna, by contrast, is permitted her moment of triumph, cleverly circumventing discovery by supplanting Alsemero's medicinal deception with a deception of her own. The ludicrousness and ineffectuality of Alsemero's attempt to ensure the pristine value of his future asset serves to undermine the seriousness of the 'crime' which Beatrice-Joanna has committed. The implications of this scene clearly reverberate beyond the closet politics of the play-society to embrace a wider socio-cultural frame of reference.

Another aspect of 'virginity' as a form of material currency in Middleton's play is addressed in the opening scene. Beatrice-Joanna articulates her chastity as her only bargaining tool, a position from which she maintains a form of autonomous subjectivity. Her speech denotes, however, an understanding that her present status will not be tolerated in anything other than a temporary form. She is being 'held in reserve'. Her attraction to Alsemero highlights her anomalous situation within the play-society. Beatrice-Joanna recognises that her freedom in remaining chaste, and, therefore, marriageable, is only productive in terms of her own self-interest by the very fact that she is precipitating a disruptive situation. The solution to the unrest which her position as an unmarried daughter

inflicts upon the house of Vermandero and the suitors, marriage, is never in doubt. With regard to the issues which surround the idea of Beatrice-Joanna's virginity, Vermandero's reply to his daughter's speech is deeply ironic.

Beatrice. Nay good Sir, be not so violent, with speed
 I cannot render satisfaction
 Unto the dear companion of my soul,
 Virginity (whom I thus long have liv'd with),
 And part with it so rude and suddenly;
 Can such friends divide, never to meet again,
 Without a solemn farewell?
Vermandero. Tush, tush, there's a toy".
 (1.2.187)

Webster's female protagonist in *The Duchess of Malfi*, a widow, presents a loosely similar challenge to the patriarchal authority of her brothers to that which Baillie's Orra poses towards her guardian. The Duchess, however, has transgressed against established social values to an extent which could not possibly be sanctioned by the "Introductory Discourse". Ferdinand's horror at The Duchess' illegitimate child is expressed as a threat to the status and power of the family, and illustrates that the brothers' conception of their rank and social status is based solely upon a rigid protectionist strategy. The effect of the Duchess' disruptive action is to expose and define the myth which foregrounds the brothers' power-identity: the belief that the means to enact a particular representation of justice reinforces the wider understanding of the essential inviolate moral code which the law-giver is endowed with. As Jonson's Macro in *Sejanus* reflects, "a prince's power makes all his actions virtue".¹⁷⁸

What appears to be under examination at the outset of *The Duchess of Malfi* is the actual definition of the position which the Duchess is perceived as holding within the Ducal house. The play investigates the notion of the power-base under threat, as part of its tripartite foundation has ostensibly broken away to convene elsewhere. The Duchess,

however, is clearly viewed by the brothers as contributing only her wealth and 'feminine virtues' as a means of sustaining the security of the power-base, rather than being seen as a political equal. When she denies her siblings this contribution, their reaction is to repel her as a hostile force. Baillie's Orra is subject of a very much muted form of such a reaction in the spectre of Brunier's castle, and banishment. Her position of importance within the play-society is wholly attributable to wealth, however, as she in no blood relation to the Duke. Orra's position as a material asset is clearly defined.

The metaphors of material destruction which Webster's Ferdinand employs indicate the extent of his loss.

Ferdinand. Would I could be one [a tempest]
That I might toss her palace 'bout her ears,
And lay her general territory as waste
As she has done her honours.
(II.5.17)

The Duchess' subservience has hitherto remained beyond question, that is, beneath consideration. The Duchess and Antonio, by implication, are not circumscribed within the code of values by which the brothers strive to uphold their position of power. Ferdinand's threatened mode of punishment is clearly self-defeating, and is thus visible to his audience as an excuse for the action which he does take. If he were a "tempest", a natural force with no material connection to that which it happens to destroy, then it would be the Duchess' property which he would sacrifice. As he must respond in 'human' terms, however, the punishment which Antonio and the Duchess receive for setting themselves in a passive opposition to Ferdinand and the Cardinal manifests itself as a form of emblematic genocide. The Duchess produces children at an unrealistic rate: they may be seen to act as a metaphor for the success of an alternative to the authoritarian absolutism which Ferdinand and the Cardinal defend.

As in Middleton's later play, the establishment power-base has no priority in any 'essential' sense, other than the strength behind the sword. As Alsemero remains a doubtful champion of the dispossessed husband, so Webster's Cardinal, in his attempts to seduce Julia, implies that the concept of morality itself is ideologically based. The corrupt society represented in Webster's play offers no indication of a universal consent underpinning the laws by which it is policed.

As Baillie appears to be recalling issues addressed in the content and structure of Jacobean texts (albeit to recover a praiseworthy historical legitimacy which her audience will at once recognise and applaud) the ramifications of such parallels are problematical in relation to the reception which it is hoped that *Orra* will receive. *Orra* rails against her 'captors' in a wider sense within the play-society than in her scenes in Brunier's castle. Her rejection of the establishment values of female containment includes, by implication, a rejection of the right to impose such a set of socio-political restraints. In this sense, *Orra* comes close to being read as a radical text, and, as I will go on to discuss later in this section, this may be seen to have a bearing upon the 'inconclusion' which the drama offers to its audience/readers.

When considering the role of the woman as material pawn, another possible reference for *Orra*'s name suggests itself. *O.E.D.* cites the term, "ora", with its source in the Latin 'aure-us' (golden). This word became used to describe a denomination of gold coinage "introduced into England with the Danish invasion".¹⁷⁹ A further example of this term is given from an entry in the 1838 Edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, "in the Doomsday book, the ora is used for the ounce, or the twelfth part of the Saxon pound".¹⁸⁰

This monetary reference gains credence in relation to *Orra*'s prescribed fate, her dying father having entrusted her into Hughobert's hands in the hope that one day she might

marry his son. Orra is, then, the interest on the loan! She may irritate her guardian's conscience by her moral freedom to choose the husband she wishes, or not to choose one at all; yet the bonds of wealth and power exert a more immediate rational hold upon the potential construction of a "future determination" of financial security.¹¹¹ Faced with Orra's decision to choose banishment in the 'gothic' ruin of Brunier's castle, rather than marry him, Glottenbal appeals to an 'essential' vision of the truth as materially based,

We are linked together
As 'twere by right and natural property.
(II.3)

In Act II, Orra resumes her challenge to the authority of the male dominated society, and the conception that she must display the expected natural and modest action in making a choice from amongst the nobles, whose rivalry threatens the fabric of the established social code. She wishes instead to apply herself to the task of "improv[ing] the low condition of [her] peasants" (II.1). Eric Evans' observation illustrates the extent to which even this aim of Orra's would have been a subversive statement with regard to Baillie's "cultivated" audience.

Most careers were considered inappropriate for females and as late as
1870 a highly educated woman tended to be the object of suspicion.
(*The Forging Of The Modern State*, p.281)

Baillie's voluble female protagonist, however, is presented to her audience outwith the condescension which accompanies Eliot's delineation of Dorothea Brooke's plans for rural improvement in *Middlemarch*, (1871-2) fifty-nine years after *Orra's* publication.

Baillie's Orra circumscribes herself within the role of the "unfeyit" woman, who is not constrained to carry out any distinctly formulated social role.¹¹² Her intellectual and spiritual decline in Act IV describe a progressive 'gothic' bathos which invokes another, though less definite, source for her name; the Latin term 'aura', or breeze, and its French derivation 'orage', or storm. The reference to a storm would indicate the disruptive

influence which Orra exerts within the play-text, as well as fuelling the motif of spiritual disorder which is the focus of the heightened 'gothic' display of the "passion" of "fear". In the final scene, Orra is led forth from a dark cavern into the daylight by the noble Falkenstein, a Euridyce whose tragedy is an inability to function within the 'Orphic' outer-world. A reference to the Orpheus legend may indeed be implied, as Orra's terrors relate visions of the dead hordes;

See! from all points they come; earth calls them
 up!
 In grave clothes swath'd are those but new in
 death;
 And there be some half bone, half cased in shreds
 Of that which flesh hath been; and there be
 some
 With wickered ribs, thro' which the darkness
 scowls.
 Back, back!—They close upon us.—Oh the
 void
 (V.2)

Orra's metaphors of death and decay illustrate the extent to which she is a displaced subject, 'orra', and therefore otherworldly. This heightened language may be seen, once again, to have recourse to the dramatic source which Baillie turns to, in her espousal of the wealthy single woman as a threat to patriarchy. This linguistic 'echoing' of texts which she shies from acknowledging in the "Introductory Discourse", is clearly far less amenable to transcription within a version of strategic decorum, as is the purely thematic echo. The dispossessed woman may be presented as an emblem of the purity of suffering for an essential vision of truth and justice, but the overtly indecorous, 'un-ladylike' and therefore anti-social language in which Orra proclaims her other-ness, demands a more radical form of interrogation of her plight. The following examples taken from Jacobean and Caroline Tragedies (Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (which are contained in Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*) indicate Orra's metaphorical

relationship with Renaissance texts. Tourneur's Vindice remarks,

Have I not fitted the old surfeiter
 With a quaint piece of beauty? Age and bare bone
 Are e'er allied in action; here's an eye,
 Able to tempt a greatman—to serve God,
 A pretty hanging lip, that has forgot now to dissemble:
 Methinks this mouth should make a swearer tremble,
 A drunkard clasp his teeth, and not undo 'em
 To suffer wet damnation to run through 'em.
 Here's a cheek keeps her colour, let the wind go whistle;
 Spout rain, we fear thee not, be hot or cold, ...
 (*The Revenger's Tragedy*, III.5.52)

Friar. Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched,
 Almost condemned alive. There is a place—
 List, daughter!— in a black and hollow vault,
 Where day is never seen; there shines no sun,
 But flaming horror of consuming fires,
 A lightless sulphur, chok'd with smoky fogs
 Of an infected darkness: in this place
 Dwell many thousand sundry sorts
 Of never-dying deaths: there damned souls
 Roar without pity; there are gluttons fed
 With toads and adders; there is burning oil
 Poured down the drunkard's throat...
 (*'Tis Pity She's A Whore*, III.6.9)³³

Bosola. Why fare thee well:
 Your brother and yourself are worthy men;
 You have a pair of hearts are hollow graves,
 Rotten, and rotting others; and your vengeance,
 Like two chain'd bullets, still goes arm in arm:
 You may be brothers; for treason, like the plague,
 Doth take much in blood. ...
 (*The Duchess of Malfi*, IV.2.311)

Once again, Baillie's seeming interest in the tragedies which she disavows results in the construction of conflicting interpretations as to why these plays appear to be acknowledged in *Orra*. On the most obvious level, Baillie is clearly laying herself open to the judgemental principle which she employs in the "Discourse". This we recall, categorises the Jacobean Tragedians beneath the banner of 'irresponsible' tragedy which incites the 'unruly' passions. Whilst these "passions" are presented as inartistic, and socially/spiritually

dangerous, it is perhaps possible to hypothesise that Baillie is recalling, in the Jacobean texts, a formal historical basis for a language of complaint: a perhaps usefully distant (in terms of the content of the "Discourse") acknowledgement of the dramatic form as a 'legitimate' means of interrogating social and judicial issues. This is especially pertinent in the case of *Orra*, since the very issue of her 'other-ness' cannot disassociate itself from the discordant situation she gives a name to. Baillie, then, may be seen to be implementing a selective re-working of issues raised in Jacobean Drama; issues which she appears to view as either a justifiable 'campaign' in favour of a dispossessed individual or group, or an anti-social form of dissent which is 're-convened' and sanitised. *De Montfort*, as we have seen, falls into this latter category. Underpinning this discussion, however, is the wider argument which opens the critical analysis of Joanna Baillie's plays. David Punter includes the Jacobean playwrights' recovery within what he sees as the contrary appeal to disorder which is implicit within the rise of gothic fiction. The Dramatists are employed at the behest of an aristocratic unease at the rising middle-class, market economy, in order to re-familiarise an audience with the essential inviolate form of Englishness which is becoming progressively threatened. Joanna Baillie's relationship with these Renaissance texts is, nevertheless, conducted within a deeply problematical arena which appears to offer a subtle recognition, especially in the later works, of the more radical aspects of the Jacobean plays she purports to shun.

The 'inconclusion' of the tragedy of *Orra*, then, suggests the experimental diversion from the linear tragic discovery expounded in the "Introductory Discourse". The confusion of references suggested by 'Orra' as name effects an abstraction of this particular protagonist as a conclusively radical force, yet the disruptive reading is perhaps finally reaffirmed in the subtly humorous imaginative potential for *Orra's* cure. Baillie acknowledges that a recovery may never, indeed, be affected within the confines of the play itself, for, in order to uphold

the dramatic prophecy of her given name, her mental state must retain her as the 'other'. Recovery would lead to marriage, yet only to the virtuous suitor, as Glottenbal is dead. Orra has danced with death and re-appeared in a form which suggests no readily available means of comprehension, or altercation, to those who have sought to place her within a given role, as the final stage directions illustrate:

*(Catching hold of Hughobert and Theobald, and dragging them back with her in a the wild strength of frantic horror, whist the curtain drops.)*¹⁸⁴

This drama, then, offers an intellectual challenge with no overtly proffered moralistic conclusion.

In the section 'Distances' in his work, *Spurs, Nietzsche's Styles*, Jaques Derrida discusses the idea of a particular "style" as "some pointed object", "imprint[ing]" upon an audience in the form of an aggressive action, or defensive reaction.

Such objects might be used in a vicious attack against what philosophy appeals to in the name of matter or matrix, an attack whose thrust could not but leave its mark, could not but inscribe some imprint or form. But they might also be used as protection against the threat of such an attack, in order to keep it at a distance, to repel it - as one bends or recoils before its force, in flight, behind veils and sails (des voiles.)¹⁸⁵

Derrida's passage offers a theoretical framework from which it is possible to formulate a useful 'conclusion' to the phenomenon of Baillie's *Orra*. *Orra's* 'distance' as a work by a female dramatist, expresses its muted form of "attack" in relation to the male dominated society to whom it must also appeal for recognition. Within the play-text itself, it is *Orra's* 'distance' in relation to the patriarchy which confirms the stylistic "spur" by which the drama is presented.¹⁸⁶ *Orra* is an aggressive object, Derrida's "attack[ing]" force as regards "what philosophy appeals to in the name of matter or matrix" (for Baillie, in this play, the patriarchal definition of the 'essential-ideal of marriage, as supplied in the speech of

Hartman, quoted above.) Her 'distance', "unfeyit", is also defensive, in that Orra protects her sense of values by an 'escape' into madness. Orra, however, is in a sense exceeding the limits of such a compromise, which in its most obvious form, would be marriage to Falkenstein at the close of the play. Instead, she remains 'other-worldly' and thus 'gains time' as regards the future fate of the "castle". *Orra* may be read as a drama wherein the force of social criticism is transcribed within our awareness and analysis of the contradictions upon which the play appears to be founded.

Orra interrogates the social position of women as intellectually restricted and frustrated. Her hysteria, as I have previously discussed, is symptomatic of this fundamental de-politicisation of women. Orra's 'madness' may approach an echo of the Jacobean emphasis on madness as a thematic protest against institutionalised corruption, a means of withdrawal which preserves a moral sanity. Baillie, then, as we have seen, takes steps to avoid superimposing the radical reading of *Orra* entirely within the establishment version of the woman which labels her as, "given to freaks".¹⁷ This echo of the Jacobean motif of madness (perhaps most obvious in *The Duchess of Malfi*) is submerged, however, as any reference to radical texts which display staged violence are deplored by the dramatist as alien to the function of the *Plays On The Passions*. It is for this reason, that Baillie may arguably be seen to articulate and refute the obvious cliché which presents itself in relation to the 'hysterical woman', obscuring any indirect reference to Jacobean Drama. Baillie, in one sense, employs a conceptual framework of providential justice which accords with the establishment view of the 'hysterical woman', as Orra does not gain by her actions, but is sentenced to an indeterminate imprisonment with the terrors which are drawn up from her own imagination. Within this punishment, then, is the unquestioned idea that these terrors are partly drawn from the social conscience of the outwardly unpenitent protagonist.

Any firm conclusion of providential prescriptive justice which we, as an audience may learn from, and modify our behaviour in accordance, is tempered by the dramatist, as the subservient conclusion which would support such a dramatic outcome, is clearly missing in this play. The representatives of the power base are 'out of control' as the curtain falls, retained in the clutches of the raving Orra. Orra complains of the lot of woman much as Bosola does, for example, at his position as an outsider in *The Duchess Of Malfi*, and as Vindice rails against state corruption in *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Orra is definitely not satisfied with her place as one of the righteous meek: her's is not the fate of the shunned legitimate Bertha who dies insane and alone in *Ethwald*. She is a 'diluted', but arguably recognisable malcontented figure. Orra is diluted by her relationship to the "Introductory Discourse", whose prescriptive conservatism 'struggles' in the prefatory note to the play to maintain a theoretical contact with her.

Orra interrogates, then, the misogynistic reading which Nietzsche offers, with woman as an "effect at a distance" (*Spurs* p.47) distant and de-politicised because 'other'. The prefatory note, however, directs its argument by presenting Orra as the 'true' essentially human reaction to the onset of terror. "Intercourse with beings entirely devoid of fear" would cause us to "turn from [them] with repugnance as from something unnatural—an instance of mental monstrosity" (Vol.III, p.iv). It is in this way, as a representative of a truth which is 'pre-social', that Orra retains a kinship with the "Introductory Discourse". The dramatist may be seen, in the introductory note to *Orra*, to invoke an 'essential' reading of the distance which she constructs between Orra and the cultural restraints within the play-society. Orra is firmly set apart from those who are plotting against her. She only partly inhabits their material world. Her radical position within the play society is thus infused with an overriding sense of theoretical decorum. The dramatist aims, in this way,

to 'recover the rewards of the 'passive resistance' which Orra volubly rejects. Baillie's interrogative analysis of the position of women, illustrate, in microcosm, a palliative re-working of the 'principles' which underpin the establishment legislation which confirms Orra as 'other'. This decorum, however, is perhaps the only means by which the dramatist may hope to transcribe the radical statements which Orra forcefully employs, and achieve positive literary acclaim. The playwright reaffirms, in her construction of a controlling prescriptive 'backdrop' to her works, that the "Discourse" has legitimised the procedure for dissent.

Orra's 'power', then, is inherently problematic. She strives to maintain an independent and assertive social position, but can only realistically hope to fulfil a form of De Beauvoir's "complicity": the limited freedom on offer within a marriage where she has chosen her partner, but still forfeits all legal rights to her inheritance.¹²⁸ As Derrida notes,

the woman's appearance takes shape according to the already formalised law.

(*Spurs*, p.109)

Derrida also notes that the masculine conception of the "power" of "woman" is to articulate the defensive uncertainty borne of identifying the woman as 'other':

a woman seduces from a distance. In fact, distance is the very element of her power. Yet one must be aware to keep one's own distance from her beguiling enchantment. ... There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property.

(*Spurs*, pp.49-51)

Nietzsche's woman is "no-where".¹²⁹ Baillie presents Orra as an exponent of such a "disort[ion]" of 'essentiality', "identity" and "property" as regards the authority of the patriarchal hierarchy. This is clearly expressed in Glottenbal's defensive remonstrance against Orra's desire to embrace the perils of disorder rather than marry him. Baillie's woman is the means by which we may 'come together' in breaching the tyranny, which is

the result of an ideological dissimulation, a version of machismo which is the product of a 'fear of fear'. The dramatist declaims the denial of fear as a legitimate human response as 'anti-essential'. The logical conclusion of this statement is arguably inferred within the concept of a mental tyranny which Baillie opposes. A fear of fear is a means of displacing and de-politicising the 'other': the conventional dismissal of the instability of the 'weaker sex'. The playwright, in her character Orra, and Elburga in *Ethwald*, attempts an investigation of such an observation on the "history of women" as Nietzsche supplies: Orra both complies with and employs hysteria to her own advantage, and Elburga suffers the consequences of the role of the "actress" which allows her the limited power which she achieves as Ethwald's queen.

If we consider the whole history of women [that history which oscillates between histrionics and hysterics will come to be read a little later as a chapter in the history of truth] are they not obliged first of all, and above all, to be actresses?

(*Spurs*, p.69)

The means by which the dramatist reveals Orra's universal "passion" involves the inevitable contradiction at the level of the essential. Baillie's 'gothic' speeches detailing Orra's supernatural visions threatens to subscribe her within the 'mystery' of the 'other' which Nietzsche's dismissive statement involves. The dramatist, after all, insists that her heroine is not intrinsically 'orra', in her fear: that is the prescriptive lesson to the patriarchy. The nature of her "passion" nevertheless, involves a perhaps inevitable 'phallogocentric' description of intellectual/spiritual instability. Her violent 'inconclusion', then, identifies the contradiction which being viewed as 'orra' involves, for both writer and dramatic protagonist Baillie, in this play, reflects a clinical awareness of the position of women as underpinned by a refusal by the male-dominated authority to grant a political and legal identity. In the light of the example set by the reception of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, the conservative Joanna Baillie may be seen to construct an edifice of theoretical and dramatic

decorum which will by-pass the lack of a political identity which would allow her to assert the social criticisms which are undeniably voiced in this play.

Orra remains radical and unsubdued, but also as a warning against the consequences of the freedoms which she claims. After all, she may be a trailblazer, but she is, as her name proclaims, singular: 'out on her own'. An amusing postscript to the concept of the woman as 'other', surplus and excess, may be read in the closing scenic directions of the final act. There is a sense in which the noble Falkenstein, the heroic but rather pallid suitor, is forced into an understanding of the consequence of remaining 'orra' within the play society. Orra retains him in her grasp as the curtain falls.

"Revenge" and the 'Dispossessed Miranda'.

As we have seen in the "Introductory Discourse", Joanna Baillie offers a historically vague declamation of tragedy which displays extremes of behaviour in its main protagonist. This may take the form of either a pure virtue, or a perfection of malevolence. The former fault leads to an example which is outwith our frame of reference, and this limits our capacity to form the correct response. With reference to this observation, Christ is shown as the 'considered response' to such human frailties, as he is presented as an accessible tragic figure. At the opposite end of the scale, we are given an outline of the unadulterated villain as a dramatic folly which has no practical purpose. As a sub-set of the species of "moral writing" (p.37) tragedy has a duty to function both as an "example" to a particular section of its audience, and as a "warning" to another. This section will examine the issues and questions raised in relation to the dramatist's representation of "villainy itself", focusing upon the extent to which this becomes a similar mediatory process to that enacted on behalf of the moral "example".

Thus, also, tyrants are represented as monsters of cruelty, unmixed with any feelings of humanity; and villains as delighting in all manner of treachery and deceit, and acting upon many occasions for the very love of villainy itself; though the perfectly wicked are as ill fitted for the purposes of warning as the perfectly virtuous are for those of example. (pp.35-6)

The function of the *Plays On The Passions*, then, as regards the dramatic expression of 'villainy and vice', is to institute a pseudo-scholarly documentation of its growth. This allows us to approach the particular "passion" from the point of view of our "sympathetic curiosity", something which is only possible if we recognise that 'essentially human emotions' are being portrayed. Our recognition of particular emotional states implies the capacity to bring them under control. The dramatic conclusion of a reassertion of order is thus inherent in the body of the text, and is reaffirmed as the plot progresses. By emphasising the plays as providing a contextual justification of the theoretical basis of the "Introductory Discourse", Baillie instigates a closeted form of Tony Bennett's observation that texts are "fix[ed] in the present by the future determination of their pasts". (*Post-Structuralism And The Question of History*, p. 41) The dramatist claims a position of contemporary cultural authority by illustrating the rewards to be gained from admitting her works into the legitimate canon of historically 'productive' literature. Baillie wishes to be seen as promoting and upholding a theoretical basis for this issue of "future determination", as she views it as constitutive in maintaining a particular means of reconstituting what has been given a 'past value' in a dual sense. Baillie's "Discourse" defines the ideological basis for sustaining a version of mythological nostalgic deference towards her major tragic forebear. The version of cultural continuity which results from this pragmatic literary/historical assessment has been previously, and legitimately, endorsed by a

'national audience'. By the very fact that it is laid out within the moral framework of the "Introductory Discourse", the validity of sustaining this literary/historical continuity is confirmed and reconstituted for a contemporary and "future" audience. As we have seen, the *Plays On The Passions* themselves display a socio-cultural blueprint for a form of social control; as such, they are the successful outcome of adhering to values set out in the "Discourse".

Recognition, Baillie emphasises, is the first step in constructing a controlled response to a particular form of behaviour. She makes a clear hierarchial distinction between the "passions" which she is able to isolate for her readers/audience.

The impassioned character is generally brought into view under those irresistible attacks of their [more "powerful traits"] which it is impossible for them to repel; whilst those gradual steps that led him to this state, in some of which a stand might have been made against the foe, are left entirely in the shade. These passions that may be suddenly excited, and are of short duration, as anger, fear, and often times jealousy, may in this manner be fully represented; but those great masters of the soul, ambition, hatred, love, every passion that is permanent in nature, and varied in progress, is represented to us but in one stage of its course, is represented imperfectly. (p.39)

In contrast to the detailed and rigorous representation required to illustrate the growth of the "great masters of the soul", "ambition, hatred [and] love", Baillie responds to the presumably 'lesser' passions as subjects of emotional curiosity. "Anger, fear, and often times jealousy" are transient outbursts, and cannot be harnessed within a decorous process of dramatic explanation and example. "A stand [cannot be realistically taken] against [this] foe," owing to its spontaneous generation. These lesser passions cannot be easily represented in the form of warning which we should expect to be educated into recognising. These limited passions, Baillie implies, are not fit subjects for tragedy, and are thus given a very marginal status. What might

be seen as an imperfect analysis, in relation to passions which offer a positive self-image in a national/international arena, will suffice as a means of documenting "anger, fear, and ... jealousy".

This process of marginalisation permits the dramatist to express the full range of her powers of characterisation, yet implies a very particular form of evasion. With the exception of the problematic text of *Orra*, these peripheral passions are not specifically addressed within the three complete volumes of the *Plays On The Passions*. By representing the unadulterated villainous response as a form of inartistic dramatic cliché, Baillie indicates that it retains the status of an emotional cliché. These passions are unworthy and irrational in a social context, and are thus denied the status of an instinctive 'human' response. As the literary/historical context of the tragedies which Baillie upbraids remains vague, the political implications of the 'genre' are abstracted and devolved, and thus the issue of their suppression is dispensed with.

The issue of Revenge Tragedy is re-addressed, however, in 1836. Baillie included three dramas in the first volume of her *Dramas, In Three Volumes*, which are to be read as a continuation of, and conclusion to, the *Plays On The Passions*. *Romero*, described in the first collected edition of Baillie's works as "a tragedy on jealousy", was followed by *The Alienated Manor*, "a comedy on the same subject", and *Henriquez*, "a tragedy on remorse".¹⁹⁰ Baillie's preface to the first volume of *Dramas, In Three Volumes* sets out her expectations for the success of these works.

It was my intention not to have them published in my lifetime; but that, after my death, they should have been offered to some smaller theatrea of our metropolis, and thereby given a chance, at least, of being produced to the public with the advantages of action and scenic decorations, which naturally belong to dramatic compositions. But the present circumstances

connected with our English theatres are not encouraging for such an attempt; any promise of their soon becoming so is very doubtful; and I am induced to relinquish what was at one time my earnest wish. This being the case, to keep them unpublished would serve no good purpose ...

The first volume comprises a continuation of the series of Plays on the stronger Passions of the Mind, and completes all that I intended to write on that subject: for envy and revenge are so frequently exposed in our dramas,—the latter particularly, has been so powerfully delineated,—that I have thought myself at liberty to exclude them from my plan as originally contemplated.¹⁹¹

The form which this 'original plan' was intended to take is inherently obscure within the "Introductory Discourse". There is no direct reference to the sequence of "passions" to be reviewed, and, indeed, she does not profess a desire to encompass a portrait of "envy" and "revenge" at any level, other than that which may be seen as a national expression of "sympathetic curiosity", a "universal desire in the human mind to behold man in every situation" (p.7).

The above passage can clearly be read as two oppositional statements. Baillie is suggesting either that she is "at liberty" to endorse an earlier decision to exclude "revenge", or that she has decided to overturn an earlier decision to include a dramatic portrayal of these "passions". The latter interpretation permits a greater emphasis to be placed upon the issue of maintaining our perception of the originality of her dramatic approach. The absence of a comma after "plan" does, however, suggest that, thirty-eight years after the publication of the "Introductory Discourse", the dividing lines between the socially instructive and purely destructive passions have become slightly blurred.

"Revenge" is still outwith the bounds of 'civilised' dramatic representation. "Jealousy", however, is recovered from the void of the transitory passions in the tragedy of *Romero*. The form which this representation takes, may be justifiably

construed as a reworking of the issue of 'revenge' the concept which engenders the unstable and cautious justification of capital punishment at the outset of the "Discourse". Jealousy may be inertistic owing to its "short duration". Its status as a marginal passion, nevertheless, an irrational outburst, may be employed to sublimate the threat which a linear representation of "revenge" may pose to a harmonious vision of social order.

The tragedy of *Romero* opens with a group of shipwrecked sailors coming ashore on an unknown part of the Spanish coast. One of the passengers, Don Sebastian, is shocked to hear that he is close to his married daughter's castle. The sailors are given shelter at the castle, and Zorada, Sebastian's daughter, hears his story. Sebastian has fled from court owing to the intervention of false rumour, which has destroyed the favourable position he held in the eyes of the king. The sovereign is known for his ruthless deeds, and, once reviled, Sebastian has attempted to impeach his king, replacing him in a bloodless coup with a more just ruler.

Sebastian was betrayed in his attempt, and set out to sea to escape. He warns Zorada that many nobles, including her husband Romero have sworn an oath of allegiance in response to the king's suspicious wrath. This oath involves the capture of the conspirators. Romero, returning from court, hears of his wife's secret visits outside the castle grounds, and suspects her of having an affair. At the same time, Zorada's friend Beatrice is planning to elope with a young noble, Don Maurice. Romero and his servants confuse the couple's comings and goings with Zorada's secret visits to her hidden father. Suspecting his wife of adultery with Don Maurice, Romero lies in wait to surprise them, only to discover the young pair eloping. His suspicions are aroused once more, however, as Zorada's old nurse is discovered leaving with a basket of food which contains a portrait of her mistress. The nurse

and Zorada meet to bid farewell to Sebastian who has secured a means of escape, but they are surprised by Romiero. The enraged husband stabs Zorada in attempting to strike her veiled father, whom he takes to be her lover. Realising his mistake, Romiero makes his challenge, in response to his oath. Sebastian is victorious in the subsequent duel, and, in his dying speech, Romiero asks his men to spare Sebastian's life.

The scenic directions which open the tragedy of *Romiero* invoke a comparison with the opening scenes of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.¹⁹⁵

The sea-shore after a storm, with the masts of a wrecked vessel seen above the water at a distance, and casks and various chests, boards, &c., floating on the waves. Enter shipwrecked mariners and passengers, followed by SEBASTIAN, who keeps apart from the others.
(*Romiero*, I.1, *The Dramatic And Poetical Works Of Joanna Baillie*, p.312)

The comparison is maintained in the following dialogue, on reaching shore. Baillie's mariners display a similar droll familiarity with the presence of death, as does Gonzalo upon reaching land in II. I of *The Tempest*.

1st Pass. Well sirs! to tread on firm dry earth
again

Makes the heart glad and thankful.

1st Mar.

With good cause;

For a dry grave at home is, after all,
The secret wish and prayer of every seaman,
Ay, even the boldest of us.
None hath so long or roughly lived at sea
As to be careless where his bones are laid,—
In sacred ground, or in the gulfy deep.
And thou, too, thinks so, if I read thee right.

[*To 2d passenger*

2d pass. Ay, so in truth thou dost; I said my
prayers

Devout as the tempest louder wax'd
Nor am ashamed to own it.

2nd Mar. Nor need to be so; seaman as I am,
 Let me, as oft fortune beckons me,
 On summer seas or rough december's waves,
 Career it boldly with my jolly mates;
 But let me die at last in mine own cot,
 With all my kinsfolk round me. My poor wife!
 She listens to the winds when others sleep,
 And thinks—Well, well! we are all safe on shore.
 (*Romiero*, I.1)

Gon. Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,
 So have we all, of joy; for our escape
 Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe
 Is common; every day, some sailor's wife,
 The masters of some merchant, and the merchant,
 Have just our theme of woe; but for the miracle,
 I mean our preservation, few in millions
 Can speak like us: then wisely, good sir, weigh
 Our sorrows with comfort.
 (*The Tempest*, II.1)

The textual echo of *The Tempest* constructs a formal arena for the appraisal of *Romiero*. Baillie's play will evolve as a "tragedy on jealousy", but the discordant temporal opening of the storm is conferred with an unexpected intertextual reference. *Romiero* opens out from a scenic vision of the unknown, yet the invocation of the Shakespearean text promotes a conceptual awareness of an authoritative 'control' over the structural and thematic progression of the nineteenth-century text. *The Tempest* serves a dual function, in this sense. The "Introductory Discourse" proclaims the unique Shakespearean ability to construct scenes which are beyond the capacities of "other dramatists", who "generally bestow ... pains on the chief persons of their drama only, leaving the second and inferior ones insignificant and spiritless". (P.72.) Baillie's reading of Shakespeare's universalist methods of characterisation reflect an authoritative 'approval' of her own methodology, with her voluble "mariners" and "Passengers displaying what she has professed to be the singularly Shakespearean

"variety of character". This "variety", as we have seen, is representative of the valuable constitutive elements of a universally agreed socio-political constitution.

[Shakespeare] never wears out our capacity to feel, by eternally pressing upon it. His tragedies are agreeably checkered with a variety of scenes, enriched with good sense, nature and vivacity, which relieve our minds from continued distress.

(p.72)

This literary/historical 'foundation' may be seen to serve another, but not unrelated function in relation to the position of serious literary consideration which Baillie seeks for *Romero*. The extravagant scenic directions for the opening of the play are to be read through our awareness of the established authority which is constituent within our conception of the subjectively present Shakespearean source. Baillie's text is thus absolved of the potential charge of creating a melodramatic arena for the delivery of a serious theoretical/moral "example". Baillie's views, in the preface to *Romero*, reflect her disillusion in relation to the physical inadequacies of contemporary nineteenth-century theatres, and the popularity of the melodramatic genre of dramatic performance.

The scenic comparison with *The Tempest* continues, as the 'storm scene' in both texts is followed by a confidential disclosure by the patriarchal figure to his daughter. The facts which both patriarchs relate refer to the political background of the immediate dramatic situation. These revelations expose the 'political arena' which is physically remote from Prospero's island and Zorada's country seat, as maintaining a judicial presence within that which on first encounter appears as an idyllic retreat. Both 'retreats' serve as a place of exile.

Prospero's declaration opens out from a subtle reaffirmation of his authority over Miranda.

Coleridge as a means of avoiding a "moralising" tone. Shakespeare, the "vital writer", "makes men what they are in nature, ... transports himself into the very being of each personage, and instead of cutting out artificial puppets, he brings before us the men themselves". It may be possible to view Baillie's mariners and their social superiors in the light of this statement as attempting to evade the charge levelled by Hazlitt in 1818: the charge that Baillie "makes moral puppets" of her characters. Hazlitt construes her characterizations, as we have seen, as "Unitarian ... they are not so in nature, or in Shakespeare".¹⁹⁵ Baillie transcribes an intertextual recognition of the literary model provided by *The Tempest*, which accords with Coleridge's comments on the aforementioned play.

In his lecture on *The Tempest*, Coleridge sets out the differences between what he describes as "mechanic" and "organic" regularity.

In the former the copy must appear as if it had come out of the same mould with the original; in the latter there is a law which all the parts obey, conforming themselves to the outward symbols and manifestations of the essential principle.¹⁹⁶

The "Introductory Discourse" emphasises the originality of Baillie's own "extensive design". The dramatist "crave[s] the forbearance" (p.17) of readers who discover unacknowledged sources, however, and impresses upon her reader that she is "situated where [she] has no library to consult". Baillie rejects the charge of conscious plagiarism, but the "unspecific obligation[s]" which she does lay claim to reflect a desire to construct an imaginative context for her plays, which will conform to the laws which govern Coleridge's "organic regularity". The similarities are produced at the behest of the "essential principle".

Do not, however, imagine from this, I at all wish to insinuate that I ought to be acquitted of every obligation to preceding authors; and that when a palpable similarity of thought and

reflects the "moralising" tone which Coleridge views Shakespeare as avoiding through Gonzalo's lack of criticism of the boatswain's language in *The Tempest*.

Zor. Nay, pause, I pray you do not tell it now;
Thou art too much distress'd. told

Seb. No, hear it now; 'tis short, and when once told,
One misery is passed. Leagued with three chiefs,
Resentful as myself, we did in secret
Devise the means and soon had each'd our mark.

Zor. Your mark! O what was that?

Seb. I see the fearful meaning of thine eye;
But be not so disturb'd.—Our mark indeed
Was vengeance, but not murder. On his throne
We meant to place a nobler prince, whose hand
Had even justice to his subjects dealt.
We meant to place on Pedro's worthless brow
that which became it better than a crown.

Zor. I understand;—a monk's unseemly cowl.
I'm glad you did not mean to shed his blood.

Seb. My gentle child, we meant but as I say.
And while revenging my especial wrongs,
We should have freed Castile from a hard master,
Who now sheds noble blood upon the scaffold,
As lavishly as hinds the common water
Of village pool cast o'er their arid fields,
And yet to kindle in our native land
The flames of civil discord, even this
Has often rac'kd my mind with many doubts,
Recoiling thoughts, and feelings of remorse.

Zor. Ha! that indeed had been a fearful consequence,

had but your enterprise succeeded.
(*Romero*, I.2)

Sebastian presents his reversal in fortune almost in the form of a confession before the morally inviolate judge. The legitimacy of his quest to dethrone the dictatorial monarch becomes progressively denuded as the dialogue unfolds. The diversion from "civil war" becomes as much an evasion of a 'tragic' outcome as does Sebastian's own escape from the original unjust wrath of his king.

The anxiety reflected at this point in Baillie's drama is, however, absent in

The Tempest. Miranda's responses to Prospero's revelations are both sympathetic and incredulous, and she offers summary comments which underline and support Prospero's account of the ills he has suffered. Miranda plays her part in extracting the tale from Prospero, and in telling it with him.

Mir. O heavens!

Pros. Mark his condition, and th' event; then tell me
If this might be a brother.

Mir. I should sin

To think but nobly of my grandmother:
Good wombs have borne bad sons.

(*The Tempest*, I.1.117)

Baillie's Sebastian is dispossessed of his social position, and is thus, in a sense, an emasculated malcontented figure. He is prevented from staging what would have been a bloodless coup, and yet is haunted by the dire consequence of its possible outcome.

In *The Subject of Tragedy* Catherine Belsey discusses the narrative possibilities of dramatic writing in the Jacobean period in relation to areas of conflict which were formally excluded from other kinds of writing.

These imperative texts, propaganda on behalf of the monarchy, cannot afford to recognise the possibility of democracy, or any case for revolution. The drama of the period, however, is not so inhibited. This is not because the dramatists were more radical, ... it is primarily because narrative depends on the existence of obstacles, while propaganda depends on their elimination. (p.100)

Belsey's observation is clearly a useful statement with which to approach Joanna Baillie's uneasy contract between the "Introductory Discourse" and its illustrative dramas: plays which are so often antagonistic to their implied function as educative and exemplary texts promoting a cohesive nationalism. As the "Discourse" clearly reveals, the *Plays On the Passions* are endowed with the status of morality plays,

offering an idealist mimesis of the outcome of civil and emotional unrest. The external and internal representations of disorder, indeed, are indissolubly linked.

Sebastian is forced to confront his own view of himself as an unconstrained 'subject' after his fall from political and social acceptance. He is, however, foregrounded within an ideological absolutism. Although he is aghast at the desecration which the monarch is causing to both human and natural resources, these are, in effect, a means by which the tyrant's power might be interrogated. Sebastian, dispossessed, nevertheless sees himself as a moral and legal beneficiary of the regime which is, in effect, forcing him to examine his own understanding of his own subjectivity. It is not his role as a liberal-humanist tragic subject which Sebastian articulates as being under threat. What he has been deprived of is the socio-political manifestation of this role: his status as a high-ranking subject of the monarch who holds the fabric of society in place.

In his fear of the "flames of civil discord" which are the alternative to his overthrow of the monarch, Sebastian echoes the theoretical template of morality within the Introductory Discourse.¹⁹⁷ This, in turn, may be seen to reflect a Hobbesian discourse of a nationally sanctioned form of autonomy as man's essential 'achievement'.

Catherine Belsey discusses Hobbes' "apology for absolutism" in *Leviathan* as a representation of the "divine authority for sovereignty giv[ing] way to the concept of popular consent" (p.96). Belsey's extract from G.E. Corrie's *Certain Sermons Appointed To Be Read In Churches* (1850) reveals a similarity to that which Baillie implies as the outcome of our unrestricted expression of the "unruly passions". Our instinct to attend the spectacle of constitutional punishment is a cross-cultural,

cohesive process, and is, therefore, a celebration of the achievement of a constitution based on liberal-humanist principles.

Take away kings, princes, rulers, magistrates, judges, and such estates of God's order; no man shall ride or go by the highway unrobbed; no man shall keep his wife, children and possessions in quietness; all things shall be common; and there must needs follow all mischief and utter destruction both of souls, bodies, goods and commonwealths".¹⁹⁸

Baillie presents our national strategies of self-preservation as instinctive, pre-social, and therefore not something which is culturally imposed. As we see in relation to Sebastian's situation, his disquiet is resolved in an inconclusive escape into the outskirts of the political arena, whilst retaining a symptomatic unease at the action he has attempted to undertake. The contradictions present in *Romero*, then, appear to accord, at certain points, with what Belsey views in *Leviathan* as the, "instabilities of ... absolutism" (p.98).

Who or what, then, restrains the natural propensities, the appetites and aversions, of kings? Theoretically, the interests of the monarch, which are synonymous with the interests of the commonwealth, since the sovereign's success arises from the success of the subjects. But in practice, the text concedes, rulers may ordain the doing of many things in pursuit of their passions, contrary to their own consciences and subjects who have no right even to protest, because in surrendering their power they have authorised whatever actions the sovereign may take. (p.98)

What Baillie's "Discourse" and dramas aim to promote may be defined as an essential absolutism: a common national predisposition towards a particular form of self-government. Baillie's characters in *Romero* are given unlimited freedom of expression and action within the confines of the value system which they are shown as having chosen to uphold. Baillie's "Discourse", indeed, reveals a kinship with the Tudor and Stuart absolutism which Belsey describes as "dispens[ing] law and order

in return for absolute control".¹⁹⁹ As we have seen, Baillie's textual echoes of the Jacobean plays (which often appeared to offer oppositional statements in relation to their contemporary power-base) are limited by Baillie in the form of a purely 'artistic' augmentation of the providential conclusion. Her dramatic control denies the radical implication of issues and themes in Jacobean plays, whose form and structure, as Jonathan Dollimore observes, is often a means of circumnavigating the rigours of the censor. Baillie's forays into "original" drama imply an innocent revival of a dramatic form which mirrors an image of an essentially productive, and irrefutably 'civilised' literary/historical moment.

There are loose parallels between Prospero and Sebastians' enforced exile. Both fall from a position of authority through malicious usurpation, and the eventual physical 'centre' of their previous socio-political status moves into a frame of reference which is outwith their control. Romiero has sworn to avenge his king; Prospero's brother has sworn allegiance to the King of Naples. Prospero, however, has been usurped from a position of power which far outstrips that of Don Sebastian. His linear account of the theft of his Dukedom indicates, nevertheless, that the scholarly application which opened the way to his brother's overreaching will assert itself in, and as, a solution to his present limbo. The outraged morality which provokes Sebastian's actions, is not viewed by Baillie as an entirely 'exemplary' response to an "adverse" situation. Sebastian's reactions are reviewed within the text through the debate with Zorada, as it is clear that his position represents a rejection of the values which employ him as the sacrificial "spectacle" which invokes an essential communal response in its audience.

Prospero's departure in his "rotten ... bark" is clearly echoed in the

description of Sebastian's departure from Castile.

In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
Bore us some leagues to sea; wher they
prepared
A rotten carcase of a butt, not rigg'd,
Nor teckle, sail, nor mast;
(*The Tempest*, I.2.142)

Seb. But we were warn'd of this,
And fled, each as he might. I gain'd the coast,
And lay disguised till I could find a boat,
In which I reach'd last night that foundered bark,
Whose slender mast just peeps above the surge,
Like some black wizard's wand, token of ill.
(*Romero*, I.2)

Sebastian, unlike Prospero, is stripped of all metaphorical contact with the power-base he leaves behind. Sebastian has no Gonzalo to donate possessions which "since have steadied much" (I.2.165) and no secure point of reference within the hierarchial system of establishment authority to which he can appeal for reinstatement. Prospero will be able to work within, and even precipitate, the discourse of traditional loyalty to the rightful ruler, the first-born son. Sebastian, once he has expressed his 'revolutionary' intentions, is denied the potential recovery of a social position which might lay itself open to this pregnant threat.

Coleridge's lecture on *The Tempest* (1818) circumscribes the 'ideal' dramatic function of Shakespeare's female protagonists. He views them as promoting 'eternal' rather than ephemeral values, that is, they practice outwith the political arena which play-text encompasses.

In the very first speech of Miranda, the simplicity and tenderness of her character are at once laid open;—it would have been lost in the direct contact with the agitation of the first scene. The opinion once prevailed that Fletcher alone wrote for women;—the truth is, that with very few, and those partial, exceptions, the female characters in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are, when of the light kind, not decent;

when heroic, complete viragos. But in Shakespeare all the elements of womanhood are holy, and there is sweet, yet dignified feeling of all that *continuates* society, as sense of ancestry, and of sex, with a purity unassailable by sophistry, because it rests not in the analytic processes, but in that sane equipoise of the Faculties, during which the feelings are representative of all past experience,—not of the individual only, but all of those by whom she has been educated, and their predecessors even up to the first mother that lived.²⁰⁰

Beaumont and Fletcher are presented as only succeeding in constructing female characters which challenge the means to our understanding of Coleridge's "eternal". Coleridge's Miranda reflects the qualities which Baillie applauds on the basis that they invoke our "sympathetic curiosity" (p.4). This, as we have seen, is an 'actively' cohesive project, which meets with universal approval from its audience. Coleridge implies that "writing for women", requires a representation of the female which avoids discordant mythological figure of the damned whore ("not decent") and an unnatural usurpation of the "heroic" arena reserved for the masculine protagonist. "Virago" in Coleridge's text implies a gross parodic reversal of the essentially feminine virtues which he considers as having a literary/historical value in "continuating" society: that is, in providing a "future determination".²⁰¹ Both Coleridge and Joanna Baillie, then, present drama as the progressive medium promoting values which will result in maintaining the socio-political 'status-quo' by purporting to alter it. The progressive "example" (p.36) takes the form of a definition, which in turn acts as the functional "warning" (p.35).

Baillie expresses this view in appraising her own "original" work, and the values of 'continuation' are clearly recognised in contemporary reviews of her 1836 volume. "All the critics", Margaret Carhart observes, who comment upon the *Miscellaneous Plays*, "feel that they are taken back to their youth" (*The Life And*

Works Of Joanna Baillie, p.55.) Carhart cites an emotive and colourful example of these reviews in *Fraser's Magazine* (Feb. 1836) which deserves to be quoted at length:

When the delay was at last over, and the work lay, in its glossy green calico dress, fairly before us, we could hardly summon the resolution to open it. We lingered in cutting the leaves—our hearts misgave us; and it was only after much idling and procrastination that we turned with fear and trembling to examine its contents. We dreaded lest our expectations be disappointed lest these later plays should prove unworthy of the high celebrity of their author—and lest, on rising from the perusal of them, we should find that the early-implanted and long cherished admiration which had been inspired by the wonderful creations of the summer of her days and the vigour of her genius, had in any degree suffered check or diminution from the perusal of the feebler efforts of her age. Our alarm was quite superfluous. We might have spared ourselves the pain of these petty, jealous, and mistrustful feelings. The new work has surpassed all that we had expected, or could have ventured to hope for; and we have not the slightest hesitation in asserting—and we are prepared to maintain our opinion against all gainsayers whosoever—that to meet with anything in dramatic literature equal to 'Henriquez', 'The Separation', 'The Phantom' and some scenes of 'The Bride'. We must pass over all that has been written, except by Joanna Baillie herself, during the space of the last two hundred years, and revert to the golden -days of Elizabeth and James I. So said Scott, in verse, some thirty years ago; and we, from the bottom of our hearts, and in plain prose, coincide in his judgement,—not only with regard to those earlier dramas to which he alluded, but to these, their younger brethren, which are now before us.

(*Fraser's Magazine*, 13.236.Feb.1836)

The writer invokes a nostalgic process of mythologisation as a response to the "new volume". Baillie becomes the inheritor of the Shakespearian achievement which Coleridge admires, the achievement of "continuat[ing]". In the act of fulfilling the promise of her earlier volumes, she alleviates the anxieties of her disciples, and justifies her position of "high celebrity". Baillie can be trusted in a material sense, with the burden of illustrating the myth of a continuity of values previously

circumscribed within a vision of a Renaissance 'golden age'. The palliative "trembling" which the expectation of the 1836 volume inspires in the magazine writer is indeed a material process, as Baillie is presented as being challenged to meet unspoken standards and conditions. Thirty-eight years after the publication of *The Plays On The Passions* she is still publishing, and securing excellent reviews. In his opening paragraph, the critic gives a metaphorical emblem of Baillie's achievement of acceding to her place in the canon of 'valuable' English drama.

Again we were brought back to the time when we used, in the midday heat of some summer holiday, to mount half way up the forked branches of a tall and favourite elm, and there to sit for hours together in our aerial arbour, forgetting all the sober realities of our then existence, masters, lessons, and exercises, and wholly absorbed by the love of Basil, the ambition of Ethwald, or the fearful passion of de Montfort.²⁰²

Like the "favourite elm", she has 'stood the test of time', and does not require a critical canvasser to restore her to a perhaps unjustified position. The critic inscribes a sub-text of admiration beneath his "plain prose" which applauds Baillie's unaided entrepreneurial gambol, and its subsequent rewards. Baillie is shown to avoid the risk of emulating Hazlitt's "restless candidate for praise" seeking to "lay violent hands on reputation".²⁰³ This entrepreneurial energy is presented as a vital element in the process of an overtly 'meritocratic' mythologisation. There is a clear ideological parallel therefore, between the nostalgic version of Joanna Baillie offered by the magazine writer, and Lytton Strachey's attempt in 1909 to re-engender interest in Thomas Lovell Beddoes, "the last Elizabethan".

As we have seen, the magazine reviewer suggests that we need to "revert back to the golden days of Elizabeth and James I" to rival Baillie's latest volume. "*Henriquez, The Separation, The Phantom* and some scenes of *The Bride*" are the

texts which elicit the seventeenth century comparison. The reservations which are voiced in relation to the last play mentioned clearly indicates that certain elements within the work may not uphold the Elizabethan "parallel". What then, are we to take from the absence of the first play in the volume, *Romero*? This issue may be examined by returning to Coleridge's 'Miranda' figure.

Are there certain elements in *Romero* which, to use Coleridge's term, do not "continue" according to principles laid down as a particular unwritten code of values? As we have seen, Baillie does address herself to the issue of female dramatic representation in the "Introductory Discourse". She offers a brisk, defensive, and at the same time 'mediatory' footnote on the subject. Female tragic representation is not discussed at length because "what[has been] said of the [male protagonists] is likewise applicable to [the female characters]. She continues to emphasise that, "there is no man who has not amongst women some corresponding spirit, who, on the like occasion ... would have behaved in the same manner". "Tragic heroes" have "corresponding ... heroines", although "with some degree of softening in the latter group". Baillie gives us 'classes' of heroes,

The tender and pathetic, no doubt, has the most numerous [female members] but the great and magnanimous is not without it, and the passionate and impetuous boasts of one by no means inconsiderable in number, and drawn sometimes to the full as passionate as itself.²⁰⁴

The desire not to take issue in a provocative manner with the dramatic representation of women, in the 1789 volume, is highlighted by the 'formal' status of the footnote within which it is transcribed. By "itself", Baillie indicates the primacy of the male protagonist within tragic discourse. The need for this addition to the main body of the text, however, expresses the realisation that, by taking these parallels as

recognised and therefore not requiring particular emphasis, the masculine discourse continues to ignore any real notions of dramatic 'equality'. *Orra* is a problematic text which addresses this issue, and *Romero* may be seen to provoke a similar discussion of female tragic representation, though arguably in a more muted and conciliatory form, as *Zorada's* outbursts take issue with injustices only in so far as they do not come into conflict with her belief that social stability is a consequence of the inviolate status of the sovereign.

Zorada, the leading female protagonist in *Romero*, vies with her husband for heroic seniority within the text. She is determined to maintain an intellectual Independence within the confines of the play-society, even if this is subject to a rigid dramatic decorum. *Zorada* defers to the patriarchal authority of her father, but her husband remains incognizant of the reason for her forest walks. Believing her father's life to be in danger, the status of the position of aristocratic wife is interrogated by Baillie. *Zorada's* holds an elevated social position only within the female world of the 'other', as she has no political influence over *Romero*. This is something which she has in common with all Baillie's leading female protagonists, and which all articulate with varying degrees of vehemence and 'theoretical approval'. *Elburga*, as we have seen, is castigated from the point of view of the masculine discourse for her pride in her finery and role as consort, which appears to accord with the version of decorum which the "Discourse" upholds. *Zorada* articulates her frustration that, as the wife of a Lord, she is denied an adequate platform from which to plead for Sebastian's safe passage from his hiding-place. She subsequently engages in a scheme of deception which effectively introduces an element of ludicrousness into *Romero's* position as husband and powerful Lord.

In Coleridgean terms, however, Zorada does ostensibly encompass the 'Shakespearean' virtues. Her loyalty to her father fuels the "dignified feeling of all that *continuates* society", as this is to be found in a dramatic illustration of "a sense of ancestry".²⁰⁰ Baillie's Beatrice and Zorada act out a similar duct of metaphorical unrest and calm in their discussion of the endangered ship, as do Prospero and Miranda. Zorada and Beatrice appear to adhere to a similar code of "continuat[ing]" as Coleridge prescribes, in terms of protecting the established values of the society within which the play unfolds. Baillie is allusion to *The Tempest*, then may be seen to invoke a literary/historical approval of the "sane equipoise of the faculties ... representative of all past experience".²⁰⁰

Mir. If by your art, my dearest father,
 you have
 Put the wild waters in this road, allay them.
 The sky, it seems, would pour down stink-
 ing pitch,
 But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's
 cheek,
 dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered
 With those that I saw suffer! a brave
 vessel,
 Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in
 her,
 Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
 Against my very heart! Poor souls, they
 perish'd!
 Had I been any god of power, I would
 Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere
 It should the good ship so have swallow'd
 and
 The fraughting souls within her.
Pros. Be collected:
 No more amazement: tell your piteous
 heart
 There's no harm done.
Mir. O, woe the day!
Pros. No harm.
 (*The Tempest*, I.2.3)

Zor. I was, indeed, awake, and heard with awe
 The war of elements, whose mingled roar
 Brought to mine ear the howl of raging fields,
 The lash of mountain billows, the wild shrieks
 Of sinking wretches, and at intervals
 Cross'd strangely with the near distinctive sounds
 Of clatt'ring casements, creaking beams and doors
 Burst from their fastening, swinging in the blast,
 It was a fearful night; and many a soul,
 On sea and land, have found have found a dismal end.

Bea. Ay, we shall hear sad tales of this ere long,
 When seated round our evening fire. Alas!
 It will be piteous; but, the ill then past,
 It will be a soft and pleasing piteousness.

Zor. Sad tales, I fear! O how my sympathy
 Follows the seaman's hardy, perilous life;
 Too toss upon the rude and fathomless deep,
 Who shall no more on the dry land set foot,
 Nor find a peaceful rest e'en for their bonus.
 It is a dismal thought.

Bea. And yet how fair and bright the morning
 shines,
 As if it laugh'd at all the late turmoil!
 (*Romero*, I.2)

The issues surrounding Romero's deception are complex and contradictory. Our first encounter with Zorada's dissimulation comes at the end of Act I, where she acts quickly to prevent Don Maurice following her father, and perhaps discovering his identity. Although, on this level, the action which follows is represented as 'instinctive', an impulse to protect the institution of the family under threat, it is an action which will also help pacify Romero. The focus of Zorada's assumed limp, then, shifts from a morally justifiable instinctive reaction to an issue which is distinctly problematical: the question of premeditation in the duping of the masculine authoritative figure.

Maur. What man is that to whom you motion so?

Zor. A shipwreck'd stranger, who inquired his
 way,
 But was about to take the erring path.

Maur. He has a stately air, though mean his garb;
 I'll go myself and guide him through the wood.
Zor. No, no! I pray thee, let us to the castle.
Maur. I'll follow thee: but 'faith I fain would go
 And hold some parley with that stranger. Surely
 He is no common man.
Zor. I do beseech thee!
Maur. I'll soon return [Going.
Zor. O stay, Don Maurice, stay.
Maur. Why? How is this?
Zor. I cannot stir without thee.
Maur. What is the matter lady? You are pale.
Zor. I've wrenched my foot: I'm lame; I'm faint
 with pain.
 I pray thee let me lean upon thine arm.
Maur. Ay, to the world's end. Nay, lean all
 thy weight,
 And let me bear thee up: thou dost but grasp me
 As if to hold me fast. The pain is violent.
Zor. No, it is better now, 'tis almost gone,
 But I walk lamely still. Let us proceed.
 (*Romiero*, 1.2)

The tone of this scene is inherently ambivalent. Zorada's sprained ankle explains her lateness at the beginning of Act II, but the blithe insouciance with which she dismisses her injury appears calculated to 'shift' the audience's identification with the plight of Zorada to that inflicted upon Romiero. At this point in the drama, Zorada is dispossessed of her interrogative role, becoming the 'catalyst' whose dramatic function is to precipitate the "passion" whose progression we are to observe.

Rom. Feels't thou no pain my love? Thou art
 fatigued.
 Ah! Why did'st thou refuse thine own support?
 These arms that to the earth's far verge would bear,
 Blessing their toil, so sweet, so dear a burthen.
Zor. Indeed, my lord, I needed no support;
 The pain has passed away: I walk with ease.
 (II.2)

Zorada's reply, however, illustrates the dual role which emerges and subsides

as the play progresses. Although Baillie may be seen to imply that the role of 'catalyst' reflects her belief in an interactive, "corresponding" structural relationship between her male and female protagonists,²⁰⁷ the dramatist implies that this "passion" must necessarily be sparked-off by a 'first cause'. Baillie, then, offers a paradoxical vision of Zorada and Romero's relationship. Romero must not be seen as guilty of a spontaneous outburst of unprovoked anger, so this is avoided by providing him with what may be justifiably seen as a legitimate cause for concern. This legitimacy is the representation of the approved masculine response of jealousy towards his wife's potential adultery. Baillie appears to recognise that tragedy is a masculine discourse, yet her idea of decorum is firmly entrenched within it. Nevertheless, we are made aware from the outset of Zorada's 'actual' innocence, and her desire to confront her socio-political situation. Zorada's answer amounts to a verbal assault upon Romero's sense of 'virtus' both in the sense of chivalry, and in that which reflects his mandatory ownership of his wife's sexuality. Zorada has rendered Romero impotent through her knowledge of the 'plot', as she has access to information and potential strategies of which her husband is totally unaware. Baillie's dialogue initiates a subtle power-struggle between its leading protagonists, from which Zorada emerges victorious at this point. The lie which saves Sebastian invokes a provocative sub-text of cuckoldry. Romero may be being punished for sins against the institution of the family, but from within this ephemeral context of ideological certainty, we are presented with the female protagonist flouting and upbraiding the emblem of marital authority from all points from which she can exert an interrogative influence. Baillie employs a curious cross-referencing of authoritative moral standpoints. Zorada's protection of her father is the means of absolving the sin against her husband (the lie) which becomes focused as an unforeseen attack upon Romero, the 'victim'. He is not

displayed as a tragic victim of a fated disaster hitherto outwith his frame of reference, however. The issue of seeing Zorada as the emblematic scheming woman is thus problematised.

Romero is clearly a 'domestic' tragedy. On one level, then, this ensures that Zorada is not excised completely from the socio-political arena of the play-text, as the drama concentrates upon the status assumed and demanded by individuals within a marriage. Within this reading, nevertheless, we are subject to the dislocation of the original moral justification for Zorada's disruptive action, her 'sprained ankle'. The issue of the just cause of her father's safety, on whose behalf she challenges the authority of her husband, becomes submerged. The fundamental issue of Zorada's innocence, however, retains her within Baillie's overall representation of dramatic decorum, and which, consequently provides the arena within which Zorada may voice her disapproval! Zorada, in a sense, may be seen to assume Prospero's authoritative intellectual standpoint. She views her role as a constructionist one, planning and detailing future events in order to facilitate her own vision of an ordered conclusion. Zorada employs the "analytic processes" which Coleridge so deprecates, in dramatic representations of women, in order to deny her husband the habitual tactical avenues of escape which the masculine discourse lays open to him.²⁰⁸ *Romero* is deprived of information required to engage in debate, and thus Zorada acts out the "equality" of influence which she seeks.

Rom. The foolish envious pain which cast thee,
sweet,
Upon another's care. Thus, thus, and thus
[Kissing her cheeks, and then both her hands,
one after the other.
I pay thee my devotion. nay, look on me,
Smile on me thy sweet smiles, and raise thine eyes,
Sweet mate, sweet play-fellow, pretty Zorada!
Zor. Nay, good lord, these words are full of

fondness.
 And yet they please me not. What shall I say?
 Speak to me as a wife, companion, friend,
 Not as a petted darling. Art thou well?
 How has it fared with thee since we last parted?
 My father too—what dost thou know of him?
 (*Romero*, II.2)

This charged scene between the couple carefully counterpoints the particular culturally based codes of behaviour which each feels both constrained within, and yet prepared to defend. This is a complex issue, which Baillie appears willing to address, by signposting the moral framework within which her investigations will take place. Romero is unprepared to acknowledge Zorada's outburst over her father's plight within the arena to which it is addressed. Zorada is, in effect, appealing for a protectionist intervention to deflect the threat to the patriarchal authority in which Romero himself is implicated. The contradictory status which she held as an unmarried daughter under Sebastian's guardianship cannot be reconstructed, as Zorada has been dispossessed of one sphere of masculine influence, to be transposed within another. In this sense, she may be seen as a dispossessed 'Miranda' figure. Romero's view of the female role within the play society espouses Coleridge's principles, in that he is only comfortable when women display themselves as "happy[in] intuition, without the intervention of the discursive faculty". Far from "err[ing] in the exaggerations of love alone", Zorada's affection for her father is the means through which she formulates her conclusion of Romero's hypocrisy.²⁰⁹ Zorada has been 'handed down' in order to "continue" a set of values against which Romero, the recipient, transgresses.²¹⁰

It is clearly difficult to isolate Baillie's exact position in relation to the dramatic representation of women, as her apparent hazy distinction between 'patriarchal' and 'marital' draws up a protective obscurantist veil over what may be

seen as a radical investigation. In a sense, nevertheless, Baillie appears to encompass Zorada within a version of theoretical dramatic decorum which she, as a female dramatist, is not prepared to 'sanction' within the body of the text. As the play progresses, Zorada instigates a recognisable rejection of values she appears to symbolise at the outset of the play, as she is shown coming to terms with the fact that, in her marriage to Romero, she is espousing the system of justice which has dispossessed her father. Such a conclusion obviously has a profoundly disruptive effect upon the theoretical bastion of the "Introductory Discourse". Distanced as it is from *Romero*, however, by thirty-eight years, the contradiction are perhaps hopefully resigned to the philosophical scrap-yard which coincides uneasily with the unitarian process of mythologisation which brings it into being, and brings its radical voice into sharp focus. It is at this point in the discussion that we must briefly re-examine the function of the Shakespearean allusion. *The Tempest* may indeed work at the same level as our appreciation of Zorada's innocence. This is ostensibly, as we have seen, an expression of a framework of moral containment, but we are subjected to issues and arguments within the text which permit us to question the extent to which this 'framework' is inherently, and perhaps deliberately superficial. The implication appears to be a dramatic acknowledgement that although Sebastian and Romero are represented as inhabiting opposite positions in terms of the functional instigation of the ongoing plot-narrative, they share ineradicably similar voices within the masculine discourse. The problematical nature of this text, then, perhaps explains its inability to qualify as a dramatic signpost for the writer in *Fraser's Magazine*, indicating the recovery of values entrenched within "the golden-days of Elizabeth and James I".²¹¹

Zol. Then it is true!

[turning from him with violent gestures of distress and displeasure to the end of the chamber then returning and looking him in the face upbraidingly.]

How could'st thou; Oh! how could'st thou
Swear to deliver to the tyrant's vengeance,
Dead or alive, wherever thou shall find him,
My father, thine old friend, the brave Sebastian?
Is it not so? If thou hast sworn an oath
Less terrible than this, tell it me quickly.
Dear love, he is in safety far from hence,

Rom. This oath, as to his life, is nugatory;
And, but for it, thou ne'er hast seen thy husband.
Thou knowst the cruel nature of Don Pedro.
Ah! Why that face of sorrow and displeasure?
Alas! I see I am not welcome here.

Zol. No; say not so.

Rom.

How can I then explain

Thy sad averted looks? Where art thou going?

Zol. I'm faint; I am not well; I'm sick at heart;
I long to be alone.

Rom. Life of my life! Indeed, thou art not well;
Then wherefore leave this chamber?

[pointing to a couch.]

Here lay thee down, and I will watch by thee.

Zol. I'll rest in my closet for a while.
I'm wayward grown, and love to be alone.

Rom. No; say not so; I know thou art not
wayward;

It is not thy nature; but distress
From filial duty, strained perhaps too far,
Hath made me so. Remain, my love, with me;
Thou wilt forgive me when thou hast considered.

Zol. I cannot now consider, with a heart
Gored to the quick. I pray you, then, my lord,
Permit me to retire.

Rom. I'll lead thee to thy closet: lean on me.

[She waves him off with her hand.]

Wilst thou not deign to do it?

(Romero, II.2)

This quotation furthers the carefully constructed power-struggle which is enacted within Baillie's version of dramatic decorum. The excessive romanticism of Romero's dialogue may even be justifiably read as a means of rendering his authoritative position unstable. Romero does not appear completely sincere: he is

portrayed as acting out of fear, a terror which increases as his authority is undermined by his wife's retorts.

Romero's concern displays a rendition of what he believes are his superior political insights and responsibilities, issues which are not raised in relation to Zorada's role. She will, "forgive him when [she has] considered". Her desire to leave his presence, ostensibly to sustain her own sense of unblemished loyalty to her father, is clearly indicative of a more insidious and provocative issue. Zorada reacts from the shock of realising the clichéd limitations imposed by her culturally defined feminine role. Baillie's heightened language in Romero's dialogue, then, pays lip-service to a formal decorum, yet the issues addressed within this very 'surface' linguistic 'harmony' may be seen to exert a muted form of the 'subversion within orthodoxy' which Jonathan Dollimore highlights in relation to his investigation of Renaissance texts subject to censorship.²¹² Joanna Baillie, working within the guidelines of the "Introductory Discourse" which underline the purity of her "extensive design" (p.1), purports to act as her own censor, deflecting criticism from the particular audience to which she is appealing. When isolating a version of the female protagonist however, the universality promoted as the explanation of the socio-political status-quo begins to show signs of a creative re-appraisal.

In relation to this issue of the interrogation of 'fixed' social roles, the frequent occurrence of the motif of 'leaning' and 'support' merits a brief discussion. In the support of Sebastian by Zorada in the first scene, there is a representation of role-reversal, the male figure under directions from, and dependent upon, the female protagonist. The second manifestation, Zorada being supported by Don Maurice, is perhaps the most provocative, as the 'need' which the action portrays is, ostensibly, a sham, which Maurice is engineered into supporting. The third reference wherein

Romero aims to resolve the conflict between himself and Zorada by accentuating his physical superiority is again representative of a form of rejection and role-reversal, "I'll lead thee to thy closet: lean on me" (II.2). Zorada refuses Romero's arm, and plunges him into a rationalisation of his impotence which leads to the conclusion that she must be seeking 'support' elsewhere, that support manifesting itself as a sexual threat. Zorada must be seeing another man because as a woman she is not intellectually or physically capable of sustaining herself on the basis of her own resources.

An absent father and a present husband
 I' the scales are put, and, to all outward seeming,
 The last doth kick the beam. Is it for this -
 For this that I have given my freedom up,
 Drawn every strong affection of my heart
 To one dear point?—and this the poor return!

[After a second pause]

My life in such a perilous circumstance,
 And now restored to her and to my home!
 This is of small account. O woman, Woman!
 One corner of a gallant's passing fancy
 Pleaseth thee well; the whole devoted heart
 Of man matured is to thee as a yoke, [escape;
 A cumb'rous weight from which thou would'st escape;
 And friendship, filial duty, ever tie
 Defrauds thy husband of his dear-earned rights.

[After pacing through the room as before.]

I am a fool! I knew the heart of woman—
 Knew what she had to give, and Oh! too well,
 What might, atprice of many an inward pang,
 To her be given; yet ne'ertheless, forsooth!
 I murmur at my lot.
 (Romero, II.2)

Romero diverges from his conciliatory dialogue and embraces an emblematic diatribe which is clearly aimed to gain the sympathy of his male audience. He weighs his marriage in terms of gains and losses, sets it "the scales" and finds that his predictions before the event were justified after all. Romero, "knew the heart of woman", and bemoans the frustration borne of "fool[ishness]" which arises from the

viper which he takes to the bosom of his masculine authority. The "freedom" which Romero loses is the freedom from the shame of being branded a cuckold. As he declares in Act II, Sc.2,

Lame and not lame, and leaning on his arm!
The stroke darts through me like an adder's sting,
Though but so slightly given.

Belsey analyses the dramatic representation of mistrust in marriage in *Arden Of Faversham* (circa 1590) as a possible "allegory of the transition to the liberal humanist family". "Liberal marriage", Belsey continues is "founded on consent", but "the family, separated from the public realm of politics, none the less becomes a microcosm of it, and by practice and by precept, a training ground for the ready acceptance for the power relations established in the social body".²¹³

The relationship between Zorada and Romero is one of mutual distrust, a distrust which is symptomatic of the socio-political, and to an extent, mythological, arena of cultural influence within which each is circumscribed. Zorada's crime is imaginary; whilst Romero is abroad, she has become vulnerable to the stereotypical image of the unpoliced adulteress. Her husband, however, is involved in an ongoing political intrigue whose 'moral' ramifications for the play as a whole are presented as problematical, even though they achieve a conciliatory and satisfactory conclusion. Romero's problem of weighing up conflicting disloyalties can be approached on several levels, and from directly opposing viewpoints: both poles, nevertheless, are intended to cancel each other out. Romero operates in the 'real' world of political chicanery and power relations, and therefore a personal disloyalty is clearly palliated and even upheld by his ultimate loyalty to the machinery of state.

Baillie insists upon a version of dramatic decorum, as we have seen, as foregrounding Zorada's outbursts against the impotence of her female role within the

play-society. This problematizes our perception of the position of women which Baillie is attempting to articulate within the drama. On finding herself unable to re-route Romero's insistence upon the priority of the monarch over familial loyalty, Zorada is forced to interrogate what she has hitherto accepted as her existence as a "unified autonomous ... subject".²¹⁴ The audience is privy to a representation of Zorada, on one level, as being bound by a set of culturally determined strictures which differentiate her from the realm of her husband's subjectivity. Baillie's decorous theoretical constraints construct an arena of subjectivity for her female characters in *Romero* which accords with the patriarchal prejudices to which Zorada finds herself subjected. Catherine Belsey's comment on the dramatic representation of women in Renaissance drama may be employed as a useful summary of the formal contradictions present in Baillie's text.

A discursive instability in the texts about women has the effect of withholding from women readers any single position which they can identify as theirs. And at the same time a corresponding instability is evident in the utterances attributed to women: they speak with equal conviction from incompatible subject-positions, displaying a discontinuity of being, and 'inconstancy' which is seen as characteristically feminine.²¹⁵

Another echo of *The Tempest* suggests itself in relation to Guzman and Romero's reconstruction of the old nurse's son. Grilled by Guzman on the reason for her expedition, she pleads the value of love based on "flesh and blood", the kindred tie between Sebastian and Zorada.²¹⁶ Both men leap to the conclusion that the nurse's missing boy has become Zorada's lover. The fear which generates this ludicrous response (the son has not hitherto been mentioned within the text) is clearly isolated by the dramatist as worthy of examination. Although the boy "with fair Zorada played like a brother" in infancy, Romero is haunted by the invasion of class-boundaries which the supposed liaison implies.²¹⁷ The absent youth becomes

transcribed as a Caliban figure, a rival who is so far removed from recognition as a social equal as to be considered monstrous. Romero is presented as being usurped on two levels. he is being robbed of his inviolate masculine authority by being threatened by the concepts which actually define it for him. On a more direct level, however, the figure of the tantalisingly obscure commoner is circumscribed within Romero's anxiety as a disruptive malcontented figure. Romero is doubly dispossessed.

Rom. No; here upon the ground, my bed of
agony,

I will remain. Sunk to this deep disgrace,
The centre of the earth were fitter for me
Than its fair surface, and the light of heaven.
Oh! This exceeds the worst imagination
That e'er found entrance to this madden'd brain!
That he—this hateful, vulgar, shapeless creature—
Fy, fy.

Guz. If thou canst harbour any such a thought,
Thou art in verity beside thyself.
It is not possible that such a one
Could please Zorada, were she e'en unfaithful.
(*Romero*, IV.3)

Romero's horror finds expression with recourse to the motif of the danger espoused in the figure of the 'fallen woman'. This theme runs throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and is a constituent ingredient in the construction of such tragedies, for example, as Middleton's *The Changeling* and *Women Beware Women*; Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Ford's *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*.

Rom. (*rising fiercely*). Not please her! every thing
will please a woman
Who is bereft of virtue, gross, debased.
Yea, black deformity will be to her
A new and zestful object.
(*Romero*, IV.3)

This outburst recalls Romero's speech in Act 111, where he expounds upon the falsity of the female and her mask of virtue.

While vice is all so gay and deftly trick'd
 That who can choose but range them on her side?
 (III.1)

This is Vindice's omnipresent motif in *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

... and in the morning,
 When they are up and drest, and their mask On,
 Who can perceive this, save the eternal eye
 That sees through flesh and all ...
 (*The Revenger's Tragedy*, I.3.65)

If Baillie is indeed drawing upon Tourneur's text, then the issue is clearly problematical: not only in relation to the position of women within the confines of the play-society in *Romiero*, but in relation to the dramatic 'positioning' of the female protagonist in relation to this "eternal eye". Vindice, as we have seen, has no faith in the divine response as anything other than a theatrical solution, "dost know thy cue, thou big-voic'd crier?".²¹⁸ Baillie's omnipresent 'representative' of the "eternal eye" is the theoretical legacy of the "Discourse" which purports to control the progression of *Romiero's* "passion". Baillie sets herself up as her own dramatic censor. The textual representative of this moral construct is Zorada's innocence, which the audience is made privy to. To take the allusive comparison to its logical conclusion in terms of Vindice's outlook, the ideological context within which the "Discourse" both transcribes, then prescribes itself, for an audience, becomes hopelessly undermined. We are positioned to interrogate the 'moral' basis upon which our "sympathetick curiosity" (p.4) is supposedly constructed.

The Revenger's Tragedy may be seen to act as a literary/historical source for *Romiero's* outburst, thus classifying it as a legitimate 'dramatic' response. Zorada's challenge to these responses, however, alerts the audience/reader to the actual form which this questioning takes. Baillie is arguably presenting *Romiero* as a purveyor of stereotypical responses which invoke an unfortunate disharmony within the

play-society. Baillie's "extensive design" (p. 1) includes a footnote which implies that she aims to offer a version of dramatic sexual equality as in-built within her 'guiding principle'. Zorada becomes the focus of this issue, but, on a more insidious level, she falls victim to the theoretical basis and function of the "Discourse" which proclaims the socio-cultural advantages of maintaining the status-quo.

The progressive debasement of the 'fallen woman' which Romero bemoans may be seen to echo Deflores' account of Beatrice-Joanna's future in *The Changeling*, and Vindice's generalisation from the morals of the Duchess in *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

Vindice. O common madness:
Ask but the thriving'st harlot in cold blood,
She'd give the world to make her honour good;
Perhaps you'll say, but only to the Duke's son
In private; why, she first begins with one,
Who afterward to thousand proves a whore:
Break ice in one place, it will crack more.
(*The Revenger's Tragedy*, IV. 4. 80)

Deflores' fallen woman is, like Romero's vision of an aristocratic female sleeping with a commoner, a representation of a social taboo of female sexual expression outwith marriage. Middleton's text offers a far less comfortable investigation of this issue than Baillie's *Romero*, for Zorada's fundamental innocence allows a form of questioning within an exemplary theoretical framework of moral purity. Nevertheless, Romero's vision of the fallen-woman is clearly portrayed on one level as a form of self-indulgent torture, which he engineers ostensibly to re-create and restore his "virtus identity".²¹⁹ This involves him in articulating stereotypical prejudices which characterise and uphold the masculine discourse. No 'crime' has been committed. What we are privy to is a portrait of an aberrant essentially anti-social passion, "envy and revenge" which Baillie insists she will dismiss, in her

introduction to the play, in favour of a portrait of "jealousy". Romero, then, plays a contradictory role within the drama. His vengeful diatribe is anti-social, as it offers a dramatic representation of women which the dramatist is unwilling to sustain. Romero isolates the danger which he faces and voices it as a warning to all man-kind: 'men beware women'. This is, however, his only point of contact with his previous status as an inviolate authoritative figure.

That ladies can be fair and delicate,
And to the world's eye e'en as saints devout,
Yet all the while be coarse, debased, and stain'd
With passions that disgrace the vulgar kind.
(*Romero*, IV.3)

This problematical 'radicalism' which reveals itself as a masculine transgression against an essential feminine innocence, must not be seen to extend beyond the realm of tragic fiction. In order to underline this fact, Baillie alters the status of the issue within the text itself. The representation of "envy and revenge" within this play is indeed a subtle and fascinating issue. The aforementioned "passions" become "jealousy", as she views this unified reaction as more easily recognisable as a function of the cohesive "sympathetick curiosity" (p.4).

"Jealousy", then, is considered a less provocative label, and is intended to marginalise the disruptive effects which may result from a portrayal of "envy and revenge". "Revenge has been so powerfully delineated" as to imply an encroachment upon the morality of her claims to dramatic originality, should she choose to employ it as a theme.²⁹⁰

Do we see the fragile linguistic security of the term "jealousy" as 'protecting' Baillie's drama from too direct an association with the Jacobean texts which she appears to recall in *Romero*? The "Introductory Discourse" does set out to re-work our experience of expressions of revenge as something which is subject to a

national/universal form of constraint. She does, we recall, tell us that,

Tyrants ... represented as monsters of cruelty, unmixed with any feelings of humanity, [and] villains as delighting in all manner of treachery and deceit, and acting upon many occasions for the very love of villainy itself [are] as ill-fitted for the purposes of warning, as the perfectly virtuous are for those of example.

("Introductory Discourse", p.35)

This active portrayal of "jealousy" appears to function once again as an umbrella-term which institutes an overtly decorous investigation of a particular issue, whilst invoking a subtly aggressive analytical sub-text.

It is Romero's facility to immerse himself in the masculine discourse of the 'fallen woman' which is clearly under investigation, as he chooses an anti-intellectual stance. Although he has pleaded at several points in the play that he could do no other than to pledge allegiance to Don Pedro, it is this vision of a feminine hell which he articulates as an indignant sympathy towards his own position at the close of the play. The sincerity of this allegiance is not in doubt. Although Romero recognises the nature of Don Pedro's rule, the question of his loyalty to the unjust king is a separate and inviolate issue. Romero bemoans the killing of Zorada, but he maintains his loyalty to the state which is, in fact, a constituent factor in his death. Sebastian is upbraided for diverging from this act of faith: from Romero's point of view, Zorada's death illustrates the folly of attempting to interfere with the structure of society which foregrounds our actual experience. Even though Sebastian's chaos is an imaginative one, not acted out, we are now suffering from the chaotic reverberations of the 'potential' revolution.

Thou restless, selfish, proud, rebellious spirit!
Thy pride has work'd our ruin, been our bane;
The bane of love so bless'd! Draw wretched
man!
I've sworn an oath, which I will sacred hold,

That when Sebastian and myself should meet,
 He should to royal justice be deliver'd,
 Or failing that, one of the twain should die.
 (*Romero*, V.3)

Don Guzman is the moral commentator in this scene, and he attempts to appeal to Romero's 'essential humanity', to no avail. He sees his employer as breaching the code of a natural moral order, something which in his passion he has attributed solely to himself.

Guz. (holding him [*Romero*] back) Hold, madman, hold!
 thy rage is cruel, monstrous,
 Outraging holy nature.
 (*Romero*, V.3)

At this point in the play, Romero's actions encompass a portrait of "villainy" which is "ill-fitted for the purposes of warning". The drama, then, requires the tempering influence of Guzman to restore the balanced image of a common moral reaction.

Romero recalls Jacobean texts in order to investigate and highlight issues involved in the conscription of women within the masculine discourse, and to a certain extent, is directly related to an anatomisation of this discourse as sustained by motifs, metaphors, and clichés. Once invoked, however, the anti-establishment issues raised within these texts must be obscured and marginalised. Baillie incorporates a sense of protest, then, in her version of dramatic decorum, over issues which she views as 'successfully' articulated within the Jacobean plays. The evident outcome on a theoretical level of an intertextual association with the Jacobean playwrights, will be a comparison with examples of socio-political regimes which display a similar corporate zeal in maintaining their institutional values as does Baillie in her "Introductory Discourse". The theoretical basis of the "Discourse" is in danger of being 'exposed' and undermined.

It is at this point in the discussion of *Romero* that the issue of the substitution

of "jealousy" for "envy and revenge" comes directly into sharp focus. Romero's outburst on marriage (II.2) recalls Leantio's speech on the same subject in *Women Beware Women*.

Oh thou the ripe time of man's misery, wedlock;
 When all his thoughts, like overlaid trees,
 Crack with the fruits they bear, in cares, in jealousies.
 Oh that's a fruit that ripens hastily,
 After 'tis knit to marriage, it begins,
 As soon as the sun shines upon the bride,
 A little to show colour. Blessed powers!
 Whence comes this alteration? the distractions,
 The fears and doubts it brings are numberless,
 and yet the cause I know not. What a peace
 Has he that never marries, if he knew
 The benefit he enjoy'd, or had the fortune
 To come and speak with me, he should know then,
 The infinite wealth he had, and discern rightly
 The greatness of his treasure by my loss.
 (*Women Beware Women*, III.1.270)

Leantio employs similar metaphors of profit and loss as does Romero, who remarks upon the "poor return" which marriage offers a husband. Leantio's jealousy has a material basis in *Women Beware Women*. His loss of Bianca is clearly an assault upon his masculine pride, and, as the Duke's mistress, she usurps his status in the political arena. Bianca is also able to 'secure' and justify her position within the corrupt society by expressing the gains of her adultery in terms of wealth, the language of power and high regard. Leantio, the businessman, is 'sold' by the advantages which he sees as decked out upon his wife's body. He takes no part in the masque which results in the death of his wife and the Duke, however, as he is killed at the end of the previous Act.

Romero is clearly intended as no Leantio, as Baillie must evade the allusive charge of social corruption in relation to her own text. Zorada's position, also, underlines its lack of association with that of Middleton's Bianca. We do,

nevertheless, view Romero confronting the issue of the socio-political impotence which results from a feminine challenge to the virtue ideal. The means through which he rebuffs or rather, attempts to nullify, this challenge is the invocation of the legitimate dramatic institution of the 'crime passionel'.

It is perhaps the potentially disruptive theoretical outcome for *Romero* of alluding to Jacobean sources of Revenge Tragedy which invokes the parallel, and palliative allusion of a vision of 'Shakespearean' harmonious restitution. Baillie perhaps concludes that the philosophical 'moral' basis of the "Discourse" cannot maintain even a muted identification with the Jacobean motif of the disruptive woman as a literary/historical version of anarchy which is legitimised by its temporal distance. *Romero* may be seen to move to encompass a reworking of the Shakespearean account of revenge-in-jealousy in the tragedy of *Othello*.

As we have seen, Baillie offers Christ and Shakespeare as sharing a common mythology which reveals a perfect rendition of human imperfection. Shakespeare is presented to Baillie's readers as offering a form of protection to his readers, a protection which shields them from the unscrupulous advances of critics, who purport to 'read' him from their own ideological standpoint. The avenues along which they seek, Baillie implies, have already been firmly signposted.

It appears to me a very strong testimony of the excellence of our great national Dramatist, that so many people have been employed in finding out obscure and refined beauties, in what appear to ordinary observation to be his very defects. Men, it may be said, do this merely to shew their own superior penetration and ingenuity. By granting this; what could make other men listen to them, and listen greedily too, if it were not that they have received from the works of Shakespeare, pleasure far beyond what the most perfect poetical compositions of a different character can afford.²¹

We may only approach Shakespeare successfully through our correspondence with the

'original'. Critical writing is rendered impotent through our prior involvement with 'the text itself'. As Shakespeare is beyond criticism, Shakespearean allusions within *The Plays On The Passions* may be actively employed in these works to re-engender this functional mythology, whose effects are generalised to encompass values expressed within the 'host' plays. *The Plays On The Passions* construct a particular form of nationalistic nostalgia which is seen to foreground Shakespeare's "national" literary/historical acclaim. That she is to be seen to be projecting these cohesive class-conscious values allows Baillie both to limit the negative reaction to such issues raised within the plot of *Romero* as "revenge", and to provide a literary/historical context for her representation of the dispossessed female character. This context is circumscribed within a mythological legitimacy which will hopefully eclipse any damaging radical implications which result from 'Jacobean' sources.

On one level, Baillie invokes *Othello* to legitimise her representation of "revenge". The contemporary critical context to which her readers have access confines Shakespeare's text as the growth and expression of the 'passion of jealousy', without focusing upon the murder of Desdemona as, ostensibly, an act of revenge. Coleridge submerges this issue beneath a justification of Othello's actions which are essential: 'pre-social'.

Othello had no life but in Desdemona:—the belief that she, his angel, had fallen from the heaven of her native innocence, wrought a civil war in her heart. She is his counterpart; and, like him, is almost sanctified in our eyes by her absolute unsuspectingness, and holy entireness of love. As the curtain drops, which do we pity the most?⁷²²

Hazlitt does articulate Othello's "passion" as a growth of the desire for revenge, but promotes the play as encompassing the ideal/eternal function of tragedy, which is to "create ... a balance of the affections" by "correct[ing] the fatal excesses in ourselves

by pointing to the greater extent of sufferings and of crimes to which they have led others".²²³

Romero's outbursts upon suspecting Zorada of adultery echo Othello's reactions in Act III.

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee; and when I love thee not
Chaos is come again.
(*Othello*, III.3.91)

... O, now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
(*Othello*, III.3.350)

It was the magic palace of a dream,
Changed in an instant to some dismal den:
It was a bower of healthful innocence,
Changed to a lazar's vile and loathly ward:
It was—Oh, oh! I know not what I say,
Thinking of what I was and what I am.
(*Romero*, III.3)

Othello appears to provide a legitimate allusive context for the representation of such a provocative issue as feminine adultery. At certain points within her drama, even so, Baillie may be seen to actually address and re-work the contentious issues in the Shakespearean text in relation to the moral legitimacy of the murder of the innocent Desdemona. Romero, as outlined in the stage-directions, kills Zorada completely by accident, whilst aiming at the veiled figure of her father. His response on discovering the latter's identity, is to fight carelessly, giving up his own life and aiming to save that of his father-in-law. The anxiety which Baillie reveals in relation to the 'morality' of her source is evident in the contradictory 'treatment' of the allusions to *Othello* within the text of *Romero*. Othello's jealousy must be pared from the murder it leads him to commit, as it is to be viewed as a separate issue.

The representation of the progression of events towards Zorada's death may

be seen to actually confront the 'legitimate' Shakespearean source on this level of 'punishment' and blame. Baillie's "Discourse" presents a reading of 'tragedy' as the portrayal of a 'trial of strength'. Desdemona's death, therefore, must be re-constituted in order to conform to Baillie's blueprint of "true" tragedy: that is, tragedy which both sets out, and engenders, our "sympathetick curiosity" (p.4). Desdemona's innocent persistence is echoed in Zorada's 'unitarian' wish to relieve her father, but in such a way as to alert us to the justification of Zorada's actual punishment. Desdemona-in-Zorada is punished for her perilous marginalisation of the authority of the masculine protagonist and deflecting the theoretical seriousness of his "passion". Romero's jealousy is as much a by-product of Zorada's secrecy, as an 'external' tragic consequence of her loyalty to Sebastian. Zorada is, then, more overtly 'blameworthy' than is Desdemona. Her actions provoke a near attack upon the eloping couple, and the old nurse, unable to sustain the validity of the conspiratorial dialogue she so enjoys, adds to the sub-text of guilt within which Zorada is transcribed. She is the active catalyst in constructing Romero's jealous reactions: "jealousy" as opposed to "revenge", whose outcome is a threatening spiral of discontinuity and social unrest. Zorada's guilt-in-innocence is the product of her initial guile in duping Romero, an activity which, as we have seen, explores the radical function of her 'mask', and the diametrically opposite response this engenders at the outset of the play. On one level, then, her decorous transgression absolves both *Romero* and the Shakespearean source of staging an act of "revenge".

Pietro and Don Guzman report Zorada's comings and goings in *Romero*. They do, however, strive to maintain a balanced view of the subject, which involves a constant reassertion of her probable innocence. Romero's male retainers appear to serve the dramatic function of distancing Baillie's audience from the problematical

figure of Iago. Once again, however, this strategy lays itself open to a theoretical reversal. By sanitising the disruptive Iago-figure, the issue of Romero's actions as a form of undiluted revenge, as opposed to a comprehensible jealousy, becomes ever more distinct.

The intertextual 'presence' of the Shakespearean text is alternately embellished, and exorcised in the construction of a suitably decorous, yet incisive conclusion to *Romero*. Baillie tells us that tragedy is a "species of moral writing" (p.37), which, if not offering us an example to live by, at least presents us with a "warning" (p.35). This latter outcome is delivered in response to a "passion" which to all intents and purposes appears out of control. On a deeper level, however, the "warning" is a reminder to her audience that, in tragedy, justice must be seen to be done. In support of this conclusion, we see that the patriarchal authority is never directly threatened in the play. Zorada acts according to the superior status of father over husband, and Romero himself expresses the desire that the socio-political values which are reflected in the father/daughter relationship continue to be upheld.

The conclusion of *Romero* may be seen to offer itself as an "example", rather than a "warning", which invokes the indecorous charge of preaching to her audience/readers. The "example" is a concluding vision of social order, borne of Romero's concise re-appraisal of the connection between Zorada's 'marital' disloyalty, and his own decision to uphold political expediency over 'essential justice'. Romero dies attempting to sustain both versions of loyalty articulated within the play-text: loyalty to the State, and to the relationships which the State has blessed and acknowledged as a 'microcosmic' mirror-image of itself. The closing vision of tragic decorum which is displayed in *Romero* is destabilised to such an extent as to become incoherent. Baillie attempts to outline a moral justification for Zorada's death as the

outcome of the passion of "jealousy", yet the results are consequent with a punishment for an act of treason. Romero, indeed, stresses his loyalty to his king as his motivation for the final duel with Don Sebastian.

This episode may be seen to echo Othello's last major speech (V.2.340) where he recalls his "state ... service" and recognition of the moral worth of the wife he has murdered. Baillie aims, perhaps, to restore Romero as a legitimate tragic protagonist by indicating what we are to recognise as a 'Shakespearean' intertextual echo of the superiority, or rather, 'priority', of state-loyalties over those ephemeral ties so easily plagued by disruptive circumstance and emotional prejudice. The issue of the 'restitution of order' at the close of *Othello* is of course problematic, as Iago refuses to articulate his activities as a representation of his punishment. In the Foucauldian sense (*Discipline And Punish*, p.43) Iago refuses to be the "herald of his own condemnation". He thus deprives his audience from approaching the statutory sentence as a version of 'poetic justice'. The state, then, cannot deploy the "spectacle of the scaffold" as a reaffirmation of its judicial universality.²⁴

Romero addresses the question of the restitution of order through the ritualistic nature of the duel between the male protagonists. Romero's death becomes a sacrifice to the state, a problematical sacrifice which is actually demanded of him in order to palliate the nature of the moral action he takes in restoring this sense of order. On one level, Romero pays the price of Sebastian's partial pardon. His contradictory 'incognizant complicity' is now at an end, however, and Sebastian is still at large, with the potential to restore a wider representation of justice by reorganising his coup. This possibility is remote, nevertheless, and allows for a questioning of the "example" (p.36) or "warning" (p.35) which we are to extract from *Romero's* complex and contradictory conclusion. Don Sebastian's co-conspirators

are not in evidence, and Sebastian is still a valuable prize for Romero's fellow political bounty-hunters. It is the 'bloodthirsty monarch' who ultimately heeds the "warning", as he continues to function as the exemplary 'law-giver'. The 'law-enforcers' have exercised their right to close ranks to protect their status within the social hierarchy.

Romero's final gesture corresponds to Belsey's observations on the socio-political function of the liberal humanist subject. Belsey comments upon Locke's "project of liberalism" in *Two Treatises*.²²⁵

To be a member of a society is to give tacit consent to its rules. ... Dissent is automatically anti-social. Resistance from within the social body is deviant or delinquent, legitimately ignored or penalised as the work of the enemy within. The autonomy of the individual subject is thus conditional on conformity to certain norms by which the individual can be measured, sifted, classified, ranked or disciplined. (p.120)

It is his ruler's absolutism which founds Romero's autonomy as a tragic subject. His grandeur in surrendering his opposition to his monarch fuels the sense of continuity which his own discontinuous heroic quasi-suicidal gesture implies. Romero is the agent of his own legitimate destruction.²²⁶ As Belsey comments,

In the absolute act of suicide the subject itself is momentarily absolute. As an individual action, therefore, suicide is a threat to the control of the state. The democratic liberal-humanist state, claiming to represent the legitimate community, cannot afford to recognise an act of autonomy which it does not itself authorise. Suicide was illegal in Britain until 1961.²²⁷

The 'legitimate' Shakespearean allusion to *Othello* also offers Baillie a literary/historical model for a decorous investigation of the female protagonist 'finding a voice' within tragic representation. Desdemona articulates a similar predicament to that which Zorada encounters: a choice between facets of the masculine discourse. Whomsoever Desdemona and Zorada choose to obey, they challenge one of the parties, husband or father, by flouting his masculine authority. Desdemona professes

"duty" to her husband rather than her father, to whom, as a woman, she is, "bound for life and education".²²⁸ Desdemona does not adhere, then, to Coleridge's view of the ideal elements displayed in the critic's view of womanhood. She "continues society" according to his terms, only in a very fragmented sense, as she employs an element of "sophistry" in the dubious invocation of the "discursive faculty".²²⁹ Desdemona uses tact and intellect to evade the judgement of those "by whom she has been educated" (represented by Brabantio) and is able to pacify him as a result of these skills in (1.3). Zorada echoes the example of her textual forebear, and exercises the right to engage in debate. She does this directly, when first accused, and then to argue for her father's pardon even after he has received the final blow. Zorada is unlike Desdemona, however, in that she is an 'active' victim who is shown to 'share' the responsibility for her own conclusion to a greater extent than Desdemona pleading for Cassio. This observation fuels two contrary positions. Firstly, Zorada's strident self-advocacy and conspiratorial activities condemn her to an audience as inherently more deserving of Desdemona's fate. This is the 'theoretical' result of a readership/audience who come to the text expecting to gain a clinical understanding of both the specific "passion" under scrutiny, and the subsequent socio-political benefits which this knowledge incurs.

On another level, though, the audience is privy to a female protagonist endowed with a voice which she raises, as does Orra, in legitimate complaint against the role mapped-out for her within the play-society. Zorada's displeasure is offered in a rational and decisive manner, and she is able, in both instances where she is challenged, to bring it under control to extract the greatest benefit from a charged situation. In this sense, Baillie is clearly questioning the role of the female tragic 'victim' within a text which sets out to reconstitute her for a modern audience.

Footnotes

- 1 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, edited by Leslie A. Marchand, Vol.IV, p.263.
- 2 *The Literature of Terror*, p.6.
- 3 See *Culture and Society*, p.xvi.
- 4 See Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.187.
- 5 The main text of Joanna Baillie's plays referred to is *A Series of Plays*, edited by Donald A. Reiman, (1977) which is a photo-facsimile of the three volumes of *A Series of Plays: In Which it is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind* which appeared in 1798, 1802 and 1812. Page-references throughout this chapter, which are otherwise undocumented, refer to quotations drawn from Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" to her first volume, and refer to the first volume of Reiman's Garland edition. Several works which appeared in 1836 as a "continuation of the *Series of Plays on the Stronger Passions of the Mind*" do not appear in Reiman's edition. The preface to *Romero* in the first Edition of Baillie's collected *Dramatic and Poetical Works* (1851) tells us that "the first Volume contained *Romero*, a Tragedy on Jealousy; *The Alienated Manor*, a Comedy on the same passion, and *Henriques*, a Tragedy on Remorse. *The Martyr* was bound up with these" (p.312).
- 6 *The Literature of Terror*, p.1.
- 7 Preface to the 1851 Edition of Baillie's *Dramatic and Poetical Works*, p.xix.
- 8 *Yale Studies in English*, Vol.LXIV, p.130.
- 9 See *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, Vol.V, p.147.
- 10 As above, p.144.
- 11 As above, pp.1-2.
- 12 As above.
- 13 As above, p.2.
- 14 See note 13, above.
- 15 As above, p.144.

- 16 *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*, p.75.
- 17 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.V, p.144.
- 18 As above, p.148.
- 19 As above, p.2.
- 20 As above, p.147.
- 21 All quotations relating to the subject of Unitarianism as a doctrine are drawn from the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, pp.519-24. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 22 As above, p.523.
- 23 As above.
- 24 See note 7, above.
- 25 *A Theory of Literary Production*, p.7.
- 26 See Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p.76. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 27 This article is to be found in *Untying the Text, a Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young, pp.79-99.
- 28 As above, p.81.
- 29 As above, p.89.
- 30 As above, p.88.
- 31 See note 28, above.
- 32 See note 28, above.
- 33 As above, p.88.
- 34 See note 33, above.
- 35 As above, p.89.
- 36 See note 30, above.
- 37 See note 22, above.

- 38 Balibar and Macherey, p.94.
- 39 See note 16, above.
- 40 See note 13, above.
- 41 See note 18, above.
- 42 See note 30 above.
- 43 See note 30, above.
- 44 As above.
- 45 As above.
- 46 As above.
- 47 As above.
- 48 Balibar and Macherey, p.97.
- 49 As above, p.93.
- 50 *Radical Tragedy*, p.76.
- 51 Balibar and Macherey, p.93.
- 52 See note 4, above.
- 53 Balibar and Macherey, p.93.
- 54 See note 30, above.
- 55 Balibar and Machereys' passage reads as follows:
- They flourish here, the subjects we have already named: the author and his Readers, but Also the Author and his Characters, and the Reader and his Characters via the mediator, the Author—the Author identified with his Characters, or, 'on the contrary' with one of their judges, and likewise for the Reader. (p.93)
- 56 *Classical Literary Criticism*, p.20.
- 57 Margaret Carhart, p.205.
- 58 *Introductory Discourse*, p..

- 58 *Introductory Discourse*, p..
- 59 See note 16, above.
- 60 *A View & c.*, p.1.
- 61 See note 60, above.
- 62 As above, pp.3-4.
- 63 As above, p.4.
- 64 As above, pp.6-7.
- 65 As above, p.8.
- 66 As above, p.9.
- 67 See note 63, above.
- 68 See note 64, above.
- 69 See note 64 above.
- 70 See note 64 above.
- 71 See Coleridge, *A Lay Sermon*, (R.J. White, p.116).
- 72 "Introductory Discourse", p.63.
- 73 *A View*, p.129.
- 74 As above, p.iii.
- 75 As above, pp.iii-iv.
- 76 See note 16, above.
- 77 See note 16, above.
- 78 See note 30, above.
- 79 See *Radical Tragedy*, Ch.4.
- 80 See note 18, above.
- 81 See note 30, above.

- 82 *A Series of Plays*, Vol. I, pp.vii-viii.
- 83 As above, p.viii.
- 84 *The Duchess of Malfi*, The New Mermaids Edition, edited by Brian Morris, second corrected impression, 1967.
- 85 ...for if a woman
Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
She spreads and mounts then like arithmetic,
1, 100, 1000, 10000,
Proves in time sutler to an army royal.
(*The Changeling*, I.2.60) in *Jacobean Tragedies*, edited by
Andor Gomme. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 86 I shall have a mad qualm within this hour again,
I know't, and like a common garden-bull,
I do but take breath to be lugg'd again.
(*The Changeling*, II.1.80)
- 87 Forgive me Alsemero, all forgive,
'Tis time to die when 'tis a shame to live.
(*The Changeling*, V.3.179)
- 88 *The Changeling*, (V.3.111)
- 89 *Classical Literary Criticism*, p.48.
- 90 See note 79, above.
- 91 *Women Beware Women*, (I.2.11.310-90) in *Jacobean Tragedies*, edited by
Andor Gomme.
- 92 See Hazlitt's *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth* in *Elizabethan Literature and
Characters of Shakespeare*, p.37. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 93 See note 79, above.
- 94 *Sejanus* (III.2.717).
- 95 See *Discipline and Punish*, p.49.
- 96 "It's aim [the "public execution"] is not so much to re-establish
a balance as to bring into play, as its extreme point, the
dissymmetry between the subject who has dared violate the law
and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength.
(*Discipline and Punish*, pp.48-9)

- 97 See note 96, above.
- 98 *Vict.* Away with it, I will not play again;
Many men no more look foolish in my presence,
If thou art not a cheat, an errant cheat.
(*Count Basil*, II.4)
- 99 *Jacobean Tragedies*, p.343.
- 100 *The Subject of Tragedy*, p.8.
- 101 See note 100, above.
- 102 See note 100, above.
- 103 See note 88, above.
- 104 *The Revenger's Tragedy* (III.6.203) in *Jacobean Tragedies*, edited by Andor Gomme.
- 105 See note 88, above.
- 106 For example, Ford's *Phileas* in *The Broken Heart*, and Massinger's *Eugenia* in *The Duke of Milan*.
- 107 Historical Association, 1965.
- 108 C.H. Knowles, p.6.
- 109 As above.
- 110 See note 16, above.
- 111 C.H. Knowles, p.12.
- 112 David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Abdication of James II.* C.C. Cookes Engraved Pocket Edition, 1776, Vol.III, p.36.
- 113 As above, p.36.
- 114 As above, p.37.
- 115 As above, p.38.
- 116 As above, p.42.

- 117 As above, p.47.
- 118 As above, p.44.
- 119 See note 118, above.
- 120 As above, p.37.
- 121 C.H. Knowles, p.29.
- 122 C.H. Knowles, p.26.
- 123 *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie*, p.xii.
- 124 *A Series of Plays*, vol.II, p.x.
- 125 Quotations in this paragraph refer to *A Series of Plays*, Vol.II, p.x.
- 126 As above, pp.x-xi.
- 127 *Radical Tragedy*, p.30.
- 128 As above, p.251.
- 129 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.II, p.x.
- 130 See note 127, above.
- 131 *Tamburlaine* in *Christopher Marlowe, Complete Plays and Poems*, edited by Ed Pendry & J.C. Maxwell. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 132 *Ethwald*, (I.1).
- 133 *Count Basil*, (II.3).
- 134 See *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.V, p.144.
- 135 As above.
- 136 See *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, pp.5-7.
- 137 See note 104, above.
- 138 See note 2, above.
- 139 *Discipline and Punish*, p.45.

- 141 See Balibar and Macherey, p.88.
- 142 As above.
- 143 As above, p.89.
- 144 As above, p.88.
- 145 As above.
- 146 *Ethwald*, (IV.3).
- 147 *Hamlet*, (I.5.149), in *The Complex Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Peter Alexander.
- 148 See *Radical Tragedy*, p.9.
- 149 Already! How rare is that man's speed!
 How heartily he serves me! his face loathes one,
 But look upon his care, who would not love him?
 The Ist is not more beauteous than his service.
 (*The Changeling*, V.1.70)
- 150 See *Radical Tragedy*, Chapters 13-14.
- 151 *Ethwald*, Part 2, (V.5).
- 152 As above.
- 153 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.III, p.iv.
- 154 As above.
- 155 *Modern Tragedy*, p.26.
- 156 See note 153, above.
- 157 See *Modern Tragedy*, p.31.
- 158 As above, p.26.
- 159 As above.
- 160 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.III, p.v.
- 161 *Dissemination*, p.145.

- 161 *Dissemination*, p.145.
- 162 See note 155, above.
- 163 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.III, p.iv.
- 164 As above.
- 165 *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, p.401.
- 166 *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, p.134.
- 167 *Scottish National Dictionary*, p.493.
- 168 Full details of the text referred to are given in the bibliography.
- 169 *Discipline and Punish*, p.46.
- 170 *The Second Sex*, p.450.
- 171 Eric Evans, p.283.
- 172 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, edited by E. Robins Pennel, p.vii. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 173 As above, p.xiv.
- 174 As above, Prefatory Note, p.vii.
- 175 As above, Wollstonecraft's 'Dedication to Talleys and Pengord', p.xxviii.
- 176 See note 150, above.
- 177 See Nicholas Brooke, *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy*. Full details are given in the bibliography.
- 178 See note 94, above.
- 179 *O.E.D.*, p.833.
- 180 As above.
- 181 See note 16, above.
- 182 See note 166, above.
- 183 In *The Revels Plays*, edited by Derek Roper. Full details are given in the bibliography.

- 184 *Orra*, (IV.2).
- 185 *Spurs Nietzsche's Styles*, p.37.
- 186 As above.
- 187 See *Count Basil*, (I.2).
- 188 See *The Second Sex*, Part 5, Chapter 1.
- 189 *Spurs, Nietzsche's Styles*, pp.49-51.
- 190 *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie*, p.312.
- 191 As above.
- 192 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, p.39.
- 193 SCENE I *On a ship at sea; a tempestuous
noise of thunder and lightening heard.
The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Peter Alexander
- 194 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.II, p.132.
- 195 *Hazlitt's Works*, Vol.V, p.147.
- 196 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.II, p.131.
- 197 *Romiero*, (I.2).
- 198 *The Subject of Tragedy*, p.95.
- 199 As above, p.93.
- 200 See Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.119.
- 201 See note 16, above.
- 202 Margaret S. Carhart, pp.55-7.
- 203 See note 134, above.
- 204 "Introductory Discourse", in *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, p.36.
- 205 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.119.
- 206 See note 205, above.

- 207 See note 204, above.
- 208 See note 205, above.
- 209 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.120.
- 210 See note 205, above.
- 211 Margaret Carhart, p.57.
- 212 See *Radical Tragedy*, pp.22-5.
- 213 Quotations in this paragraph refer to *The Subject of Tragedy*, pp.145-6.
- 214 As above, p.149.
- 215 As above.
- 216 *Romero*, (IV.3).
- 217 As above.
- 218 *The Revenger's Tragedy*, (V.3.42).
- 219 See *Radical Tragedy*, pp.206-30.
- 220 See note 190, above.
- 221 *A Series of Plays*, Vol.I, p.26.
- 222 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.113.
- 223 *Characters of Shakespeare's plays*, p.30, in *Elizabethan Literature and Characters of Shakespeare*, full details are given in the bibliography.
- 224 See *Discipline and Punish*, Chapter 2.
- 225 See *The Subject of Tragedy*, p.120.
- 226 Henriques, the title-hero of the tragedy which immediately follows *Romero*, makes a similar issue of his self-destruction. he has killed his friend Don Juan, mistakenly taking him for his wife's lover. Another man is taken into custody for the crime. Before revealing his guilt to his friend the king, Henriques demands that the perpetrator suffer the statutory penalty. In this way, he reinforces the system of authority which he has transgressed against.
- 227 *The Subject of Tragedy*, p.125.

- 228 *Othello*, (I.3.182) in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Peter Alexander.
- 229 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol.I, p.120.

CHAPTER THREE"The Last Elizabethan"The Criticism of H.W. Donner

Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1802-1849) wrote his most acclaimed works *The Bride's Tragedy*, and *Death's Jest Book*, or *The Fool's Tragedy*, between 1822 and 1828. These plays are more directly derived from Renaissance tragedies than any of the works of his predecessors and contemporaries. Byron's political dramas, and Shelley's *The Cenci* instigate, for the most part, an artistic revival based upon an echo of a perceived historical form. Beddoes displays a provocative depth of understanding of issues raised in the texts he draws upon. He recognises and relishes the disruptive potential for his own plays in revising and appropriating anti-establishment elements represented in seventeenth-century texts. This concluding chapter maps out certain key elements and texts which may be seen to constitute his dramatic legacy and contemporary dramatic environment. The discussion will then proceed to define the nature of Beddoes' individual contribution to a revival of interest in Renaissance tragedy in the early nineteenth century. For the purpose of this study, I will be focusing on *The Bride's Tragedy* as an example of Beddoes' aims and interests. His later work, *Death's Jest Book*, or *The Fool's Tragedy* is arguably the more startling and provocative text, but its length and revisions (1829-49) preclude it from a study of this nature.

"Bound to the Canon".

Beddoes' most prolific biographer and editor, H.W. Donner, opens his extensive account of the dramatist's life and works with a section on the state of

tragedy in the early nineteenth century¹. Donner echoes the views of both Baillie and Byron, when he tells us that the "unprecedented size" (p.2) of the theatres was a response to the scenic demands of burlesque dramas. This resulted in the playhouses "becom[ing] unsuitable for the performances of legitimate drama" (p.2). Donner upbraids the "Romantic dramatists" for failing to re-route and challenge their audience's preference for stylised performances, which appeared to have no sound historical source to render them legitimate. These melodramatic performances cannot be sanctioned by means of a telescopic cross-matching with an accepted traditional dramatic canon. Donner presents them as a disruptive theatrical hybrid. This disruption is envisaged as the progenitor of an enfeebling influence upon future generations of playwrights and audiences. In a sense, then, his belief in this particular Romantic failure reveals a set of values similar to those espoused by Hazlitt, values which led the nineteenth-century writer to call for the reintroduction of the hidden "treasure-house" of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Writing in the mid nineteenth thirties, Donner is in a position to comment upon the nature and success of this revival.

H.W. Donner offers an intriguing commentary which again mirrors Hazlitt's reading of the Elizabethan and Jacobean values which he wished to reintroduce into a contemporary socio-cultural arena. Hazlitt, we recall, demanded a re-appraisal of these texts precisely because they contained and preserved the concentrated essence of the golden-age values which he wished to disseminate. What we recognise in Donner's criticism is something which has proved problematical for Hazlitt: the generalised optimism that the process of revival itself will eclipse any potentially disharmonious elements in the Renaissance texts. These elements may, indeed,

disrupt his vision of a historically distant but metaphorically seductive version of seventeenth-century social order. Writing from the perspective of the twentieth century, Donner appeals to the systematised version of dramatic legitimacy laid down by Joanna Baillie, in projecting the appropriate function of the tragic genre as offering either an "example" or a "warning" to an audience. For him, the Romantics not only abdicate this responsibility: they reject the formal constraints which constitute the desirable idealist mimesis. If Donner presents these nineteenth-century writers as engaged in a theoretical conflict with values upheld in "the tradition of Elizabethan Drama", then his own position regarding the issue of retrieval becomes as worthy of analysis as the position of the Romantic writers themselves.

The serious Romantic playwright was thus fighting against great odds, but if he failed to raise the stage to its former level, this was due to another fact, namely that this drama lacked the qualities of great acting drama. He failed to utilize the conditions of the stage for his own purpose, he did not refashion the time and educate the audience; this was an effort of which the Romantic was not capable, and the reason was nothing less than a real deficiency in the Romantic genius. The same movement, it is true, produced great drama in other countries ... England alone remained barren of an art where once she had produced the world's masterpieces, for the very influence that stirred the dramatic faculties on the continent was slowly strangling the British Drama. The Elizabethan, and more particularly, the Shakespearean drama was new to the artistic world of France and Germany, and Shakespeare became a source of inspiration more powerful than had ever been experienced; the new literary form offered an opportunity for the display of genius and the new possibilities of dramatic creation. In England, on the other hand, the tradition of the Elizabethan drama was of the Elizabethan drama was a burden too rich and heavy for the narrow shoulders of the young world reformers; they succumbed, and their treasures were melted down and turned into current money for the profits of stage directors and mechanics.

The Elizabethan had been a period of unrivalled national activity; the nation at the time of the defeat of the great Armada was uncompromisingly alive and active. There was no negation of life, no shirking of any form of human activity, no

deafness to nature, and no blindness to reality ... the receptive capacity is without parallel in the history of the world's literature, yet less astounding than the creative faculty that turned all the various elements into one. The complexity of the origin of the Elizabethan drama must explain its richness and resourcefulness of language. No age has more to say, or a wider experience to relate, nor has any other given a more adequate expression to what was stirring at its very depth. The delight of discovery was theirs, but it was not

Silent, upon a peak in Darien,

it was clamouring to heaven for expression. The Elizabethans were truly in love with life, and their life they expressed in art. (pp.2-3)

The act of re-production deprives both the source and successor of the essence of originality. The critic pinpoints the artistic failure of the Romantic dramatists, then, as a curious consequence of their national kinship to the Elizabethan texts. The Romantics have access to the tragic franchise, but are faced with a series of writers who have a niche in the particular market which is entrenched, and unrivalled. They have to contend with an achievement which eclipses any potential efforts of their own. The tone of Donner's argument here suggests that he concurs with what he sees as an impossible situation for the nineteenth-century playwrights. He does not, however, focus his argument by debating the nature of the mythologising process upon which our concept of tradition is based. Instead, his argument implicates the Elizabethan dramatists in the successive failure of a future generation of writers. This critical position is reminiscent of Hazlitt's views on the consequences of relying upon an diet of wholly Classical plays. Donner's argument is particularly intriguing, in that it attempts to justify the disruptive consequences of the revival which Hazlitt institutes as a form of protest. What we see at the outset of the quotation as a comment on the failure of a particular group of Romantic

writers, alters its emphasis entirely, in order to excuse them. What we are privy to in this criticism is a defensive reaction, a refusal to disenfranchise the now obscure Romantic dramatists from a potential position of future historical acclaim.

Donner upbraids the nineteenth-century writers, yet places the source of the decline as the legacy of excellence which causes "strangulation". It is, nevertheless, unclear which generation of writers had their "treasures ... melted down and turned into current money for the profits of stage directors and mechanics". He recalls Hazlitt once more, in his unwillingness to sacrifice the conceptual benefits of retaining a vision of a fluid and progressive dramatic tradition, even if we recognise that the mechanics of continuity are unstable at certain points. This is Hazlitt's position, we recall, when he saves Beaumont and Fletcher for us as valid historical signposts, whilst condemning the content of their plays. "The men themselves" retain their symbolic status, whilst we must necessarily lose any insight which may have been available in relation to the "character of their minds"². In Hazlitt's writing, this is clearly a subtle and productive distinction. In the twentieth-century text, the contradictions inherent in such a strategy are more readily apparent. Donner implies that an unfortunate consequence of the Renaissance dramatists' legacy is to disrupt the creative confidence of subsequent playwrights. The nature of this disruptive focus, however, is something which he is unwilling, like Joanna Baillie, to define for his readers. This, then, renders his presentation less immediately seductive than Hazlitt's. The initial plausibility of Hazlitt's domestication of Beaumont and Fletcher, indeed, rests with its appropriation of the irrefutable argument now espoused by modern behaviour therapy. The blame-ridden basis of psychoanalysis is inherently futile, as the intimate access it depends upon is value-laden and inherently

inaccessible.

In the following passage Donner re-routes his criticism of both generations of writers, and this mutual rescue is achieved by means of a further reversal. The intellectual sensitivity of the Romantic writers is highlighted, in contrast to the banal and almost brutish responses of their European contemporaries.

The great Romantic poets did not respond to the element of problem drama present already in Elizabethan tragedy, nor did they continue the tradition of the eighteenth-century. They brought to bear on it, not an intensified experience of life, but the treasures of abundant imagination. Thus they came to concentrate on the recovery of the incomparable poetry inherent in the tradition, while they neglected the possibilities of developing both the domestic and heroic themes which supplied Kotzebue and his followers for an endless number of inferior plays. (p.4)

Arguably what lies behind this curious and constantly shifting appraisal of early nineteenth-century English drama, is the missing explanation of what the "element of problem drama" actually consists of. The Romantics do leave a version of originality for future generations of readers, even if it is vapid and one-dimensional. The sub-text of the passage, then, appears to conclude that the Romantic writers only fail to interrogate "elements" which result in "problem drama" for those who do choose to represent them: their Elizabethan ancestors, and European contemporaries. Donner views this as a legitimate evasion, but he also presents it, in abstract terms, as a loss of the "full-blooded life of the Elizabethans" (p.4) As the passage continues, the critic's essentialist reading hints at a Romantic domestication of Renaissance tragedy, but he is unwilling to focus on this issue in his main line of argument. The later dramatists are simply accused of distancing themselves from what may be viewed as a fit subject for tragedy. What they are actually shown to domesticate, is, almost exactly, Lamb's vision of "the moral sense of our ancestors".

Merely by imitating the form of Renaissance plays, Donner's Romantic writers cannot hope to revive the vigour of their predecessors, especially as their choice of subject-matter is arbitrary, and unrelated to the literary/historical source. This is, then, an extraordinarily problematical and contradictory critique.

On one level, the Romantic dramatists are considered illegitimate, because they choose to define the lasting power inherent in the concept of literary tradition and canonicity in material terms. They concentrate on form, rather than aiming to revive a certain body of values which, the critic implies, are central to the Renaissance texts.

In the view of the leading Romantic poets the popular drama had sunk too deep for any hope of redemption, and they did no longer look to the theatre for the salvation of the drama. It was their belief that in the medium of poetry lay the key to the restoration of dramatic art, and their efforts centred around the reproduction of the poetry and diction of the Elizabethans. The subject matter, on the other hand, remained that of their own age, and if it was too slight to fill the form that had once pulsed with the full-blooded life of the Elizabethans, this escaped contemporary notice. There was a curiously superficial view of the drama, for how could anything that was not originally conceived and experienced as tragedy be turned into one by the mere cloaking of an indifferent subject in a poetic garb! The unity of conception and the concentration of execution were equally lacking ... In a similar manner was all the poetry of early nineteenth-century tragedy only an outer garment without a corresponding inner life, and even one of Coleridge's most beautiful lyrics has not saved *Zapolyta* from oblivion. Almost any story may be dressed up as poetical drama, but true tragedy seeks its own expression, be it in prose or poetry, in five acts or in one. The Romantic poets felt themselves bound to the canon, and five acts of poetry remained the criterion of dramatic perfection. (p.5)

The fundamental contradiction in Donner's text is strikingly clear. The Romantic writers are castigated for evading certain issues raised in the Renaissance plays, issues which themselves remain unarticulated, and a serious "problem" for the

twentieth-century critic. This issue of an unfortunate anti-tragic contemporaneity in the works of the nineteenth-century writers, is worthy of further discussion. Firstly, the critic implies that the Renaissance writers did not choose to represent contemporary subjects, in order to remain true to a transhistorical tragic ideal. This is, obviously, an odd point to make, as the Elizabethan dramatists could not give their plays a directly recognisable contemporary setting, owing to the implicit criticism of corrupt systems of power which the dramas portrayed. Instead, they distanced their works from the charge of sedition by giving them a continental Medieval or Renaissance setting, most frequently, Italianate. Donner is not specific about the Romantic writers he refers to, but the most likely candidates are Coleridge, Baillie, Browning, Byron and Shelley. Contrary to Donner's claim, however, these writers do attempt, for the most part, to distance their works from directly contemporary settings and subjects. The issue becomes more complex, when the implications of such a strategy are investigated.

In certain cases, which I will go on to discuss in future sections, these nineteenth-century writers may indeed be deploying a similar subversive disguise as we see employed by the seventeenth-century writers. For the most part, however, and especially in the case of Byron's political dramas, the continental setting may indeed be viewed as part of the process of recovering a set of values which were seen to be upheld by the Renaissance playwrights. What we are privy to in these imitative texts, is a good deal more provocative than the purely formal echo which Donner suggests. Nevertheless, the elements which interest the Romantic writers are certainly circumscribed within the critical ethos of an Elizabethan vigour and vitality: the very ethos which Donner views the writers as working against. The issue of historical

accuracy is extremely important to Byron, Baillie and Shelley when collating the sources of their dramatic texts. The nature of their interest, however, upholds the value of research as a movement towards an abstract truth, and often precludes any discussion of the historical conditions in which the Renaissance texts were constructed and produced. The reading of seventeenth-century drama represented in Baillie's texts, for example, appropriates certain radical elements, but, in general, the plays themselves are de-politicised and de-historicised. Our experience, then, of the Romantic dramas, results in the "feeling of disorientation" described by Paul Ranger in his recent account of early nineteenth-century melodrama³. The Jacobean influence is undeniable, but the nature of the appropriation remains oblique, in this intriguing text, as the writer is mostly concerned with issues relating to performance.

The activities of these characters reflected not the actions of folk in medieval moralities and mysteries so much as the deeds of the dark characters of Jacobean and Caroline tragedy. Indeed, the later plays of Shakespeare and the blood-suffused dramas of Thomas Otway were highly popular in the latter part of the eighteenth-century and their atmosphere seeped into the gothic ...

Although the gothic stage represented the psyche of eighteenth-century man—his fears and longings—the presentations were of plays set in an undefined and romantically conceived medieval past. The plays were subject to Germanic influences which queried the traditional eighteenth-century concepts of social hierarchy.⁴

H.W. Donner's view of the function of tragedy is firmly grounded in essentialist humanism. As his analysis progresses, it reveals a close kinship to Joanna Baillie's comments on tragedy in her *Introductory Discourse*. Both writers set out to define the conceptual boundaries which identify the genre in its finite and legitimate form. Donner's representation is as follows:

The life and vitality of which they [the Romantics] were vaguely conscious were referred to another existence, and

things of this world could be of no more than secondary interest. But tragedy is a thing of this life, it is the strife in vain—it is the jeopardy of human effort, it is the breakdown of a strong will and the futility of high endeavour. It ends in the loss of life, but death to the Romantics meant the victory of the eternal over the temporal, and the loss of life implied no tragic experience. (p.8)

Whilst the Romantics were previously accused of breaching our sense of a literary/historical continuum based upon the principle of dramatic closure, this statement criticises the writers for failing to focus the universalist values inherent in the tragic genre. By not offering a specific socio-cultural situation in which the function of tragedy may be expressed, and shown as inherently productive, the playwrights are accused of limiting the benefits of an accessible tragic experience. Donner views contemporary "subject matter", nevertheless as, interfering with our understanding of the values inherent a pure Elizabethan mythos of "life and vitality". In addition to this, however, a further abstraction of these values takes place. Donner's golden-age vision of the Renaissance dramatists is fragmented by the process of abstraction itself. By upholding "the eternal over the temporal", the Romantics displace the carefully constructed and paradoxical reading into "another existence". Donner is ultimately implying that the appropriation is not carried out at a purely formal and simplistic level.

Donner's critical work gives a useful broad account of the editions of Renaissance texts which were becoming available in the early nineteenth century¹. What appears unusual, is the apparent lack of interest in the process of selection which is involved in the collation of these collections and extracts. He does not question the choices which Lamb makes on our behalf, even-if this choice "came to influence by its example not only the creative poets, but also the students of the old

drama" (p.12). This section of his argument suggests the legacy of Hazlitt's influential approach to the question of historical analysis; he offers us a detailed list of reprints of Renaissance tragedies, but no hypothetical analysis of the issues which precipitate and foreground their Romantic revival. Hazlitt, we recall, points out the inferiority of history as genre, but he certainly intends that any references he makes to particular textual sources must be scrupulously researched. What he is principally concerned with is a writer's place in the literary/historical canon. To be mis-represented, therefore, is a question of being misplaced, rather than misread. On one level, then, Donner enforces a similar critical silence upon the radical implications of issues raised in Jacobean texts, as we see in Hazlitt's criticism.

Whilst we may justifiably view this critic as working within the ethos of obscurantist criticism which he intermittently deplors in his subjects, he gives us a useful insight into the nature of the characteristic misreading which this type of criticism involves. Hazlitt's problematical relationship with the texts which he wishes both to revive and restrain, and Lamb's selective expunging of "that which the dramatists had better never have written" clearly suggests that their reaction to their dramatic forebears was more complex than "intense delight" in their "pure poetry" which Donner describes⁴. If this is Donner's impression of their expressed reaction to an audience then, as I have argued in preceding chapters, the writers are involved in an intriguing process of domestication which the twentieth-century critic is himself involved in perpetuating.

This essentialist reading of the ideal function of tragedy reaches its zenith at the close of Donner's introductory comments. We see the Romantic writers condemned for introducing a sociological perspective into their plays. This appears

to threaten the critic's belief in the socio-cultural gains from maintaining a decorous tragic vision of providential justice. Donner's response at this point mirrors an establishment position which Foucault describes in *Discipline And Punish*⁷. The French Critic underlines the seductive ethos of continuity which is perpetuated in our notion of poetic justice. This concept is based upon our experience of a precise and considered authoritative response which appears as an accurate reply to a specific anti-social act. In his text, Donner implies that the nineteenth-century dramatists disrupt our sense of dramatic continuity by means of their fragmenting appropriation of Renaissance texts. This alters our experience of the stability embodied in the Renaissance writers themselves. In a sense then, the former group have interfered with the perceived set of values implicit in Renaissance drama, and the reception of such values by a modern audience.

Since the beginning of the Romantic movement there is, with the exception of Cenci, not a single villain deserving of the name. Professor Ashley Thorndike has called the villain of eighteenth-century drama a constant reminder of Elizabethan tragedy. The trouble with the Romantics was that they did not know what a villain was. Apart from the melodramatic villain also to be found in the novels of the period—who is stereotyped and unreal, the Romantics tried to depict noble villains. In their sentimentalism they made their criminals the victims of inherited sin, acting against better judgement. Such villains we were better rid of, and in this sense Home's measure was an improvement. [Home's play *Cosmo de Medici* was labelled "a play without a villain" by the author.] At the same time it shows the gulf between the Romantics and the Elizabethans. In the view of the latter there was nothing unnatural about a bold deed—even if it were a murder—according to the other no one could be really evil and crimes were explained and excused instead of condemned in a spirit of just retribution. Whether this attitude was a result of the teaching of Godwin and other eighteenth-century thinkers or not, its application to the drama was disastrous. What is useful dramatically is the will that leads to action and the motives behind it. In accidents there is neither will nor motive, and they are useless on the stage unless they are made to serve an implacable destiny as was the case in Greek drama. (pp.28-29)

The critic continues to reinforce the idea that the Elizabethans are being displaced by their nineteenth-century successors. By being imitated at all, they are being de-contextualised. This is not, however, a radical reading which investigates the ideological basis of the process of imitation itself. Donner suggests that even if the valued essence of Renaissance drama could be excised from the "lumber-room of the British Theatre", its value would not now be recognised and revered. The process of retrieval is ultimately worthwhile, however, as it taps into the ethos of nostalgia so deftly described by Roger Sales. The revival which Donner is commenting upon has enacted a dreary and wretched form of restoration, yet the mythos of continuity itself is being revitalised on a subliminal level which may be seen to supersede the disruptive influence of the Romantic dramatists.

Thus it may seem that the whole attempt at an Elizabethan revival was of but little avail: its importance in the development of dramatic art may seem insignificant. It may even be doubted whether the term is justified, seeing that when the result was Elizabethan there was no revival, as in the case of Wells, and that where there was a revival of the drama, as in Browning, it was not Elizabethan. The laborious process of removing, out of the lumber-room of the British theatre, these gorgeous pieces of Baroque furniture, may seem futile in view of the fact that there was but a shed to receive them. Their palatial theatre remained a dream, for architectural genius was not among their gifts. Yet, even in a corrugated-iron shed the work of preservation may proceed, and perchance a few worm-holes were filled and a leg restored, here and there, to a broken chair. (p.33)

Donner views the process of tragic construction as based upon a firm moral foundation. In this, as we have seen, he accords with Hazlitt's views on tragic morality, which involve a limited appraisal of the dramatic texts, and an analysis of the playwright's suitability as a historical subject. Whilst this approach leads Hazlitt into a multiplicity of contradictions, the later critique is arguably more intriguing, as

Donner focuses upon the figure of Byron as the transhistorical personification of the Elizabethan vitality abroad within the early nineteenth-century. This suggests problems on several levels, the most obvious being the necessary evasion of the nature of Byron's contemporary reputation. This is a point which I will return to later, in relation to Byron's interest in the "future determination" of his dramatic texts and his own mythological status. Donner distances himself from the debate which the issue of Byron's "love of action" raises, as this necessarily threatens the nature of the moral element with which he wishes to endow the writer. The following comments upon the most generally acclaimed nineteenth-century tragedians, Byron and Shelley, offer a useful opening into a discussion of the lesser known, but startlingly powerful representations of their contemporary Thomas Lovell Beddoes.

Their [the Romantic dramatists] task was the glorification of the imagination, but a mere apotheosis is far removed from tragedy. A dramatist must have the sense of action and the love of action, as well as the love of life, and his heart must bleed at the failures of humanity. A deep interest in other worlds than ours led the early nineteenth-century to the exploration of new domains of art, but for tragedy the Romantic poets were constitutionally unfit ... In more respects than one, however, Byron differed from his brother poets: did he not also regard himself as an amateur? And he was right in this respect, that, in addition to being a poet, he was also a man of action. He had a sense of reality: will and action to him were something more than matters for speculation, and this deepened his understanding of human nature. In his vigorous dramatic dialogue alone do we find those complex expressions of feeling which rise straight from the heart, and which are the true secret of poetic drama. Tragic experience Lord Byron had; hence the tragic passion at his command. He did not reach the highest pinnacles of art, yet he is entitled to the credit of having climbed higher than any of his contemporaries in the realm of tragedy.

Byron's most notable success is *Sardanapalus*. The hero is a representative of an old race, at the same time heroic and effeminate, a weakling who has brought about the ruin of an empire, yet at the crucial moment alive to his duty and to the tradition of his blood; he has the qualities of a tragic

character. He is a live being, and so is his companion Myrrah, and their tragedy is real. This is more than can be said of Shelley's much debated *Cenci*. Though the subject, however repulsive it may be, is intensely dramatic, the tension is lost on account of his faulty character-drawing. Beatrice is a recognised failure, and so old Cenci can hardly be said to be human; he is a monster of the imagination, not a character from human experience. This is the shortcoming of all early nineteenth-century drama. The authors' attitude to life was subjectivist and self-centred, and they were incapable of character-drawing. The expression of character requires sympathy with the aspirations of men and affirmation of life. The drama depicts more than one mind with all its thoughts; it is a concentrated life. And when art ceases to be an expression of life, it ceases to fulfil its purpose; it cannot last, as that art lasts which reveals the complexity of life and the intricacy of human nature. (pp.8-9)

The Case of Byron

Byron's interest in his Renaissance predecessors is unashamedly opportunistic. His comments on Elizabethan and Jacobean plays throughout his letters and journals suggest an appraisal of the texts as legitimate points of historical reference: yet they are also seen as needlessly challenging a position previously held solely by Classical dramas. Byron is a provocative figure in a study of this nature, as his correspondence and dramatic texts offer an insight into the revival of dramatic and critical interest in Renaissance tragedy. He is interested in the ramifications of stage-representation, and the production of plays for closet consumption. His friendship with and appreciation of Joanna Baillie is well-documented, both playwrights campaigning to have the new gas-lighting removed from Drury Lane Theatre⁴. During his involvement in the managerial committee of this theatre, Byron was involved in a series of performances of the "Old Plays".

Joanna Baillie, we recall, appropriates the Renaissance dramatists purely as

a formal echo of a historical model, generally domesticating themes and issues raised in the texts themselves. Byron may be seen to reflect similar doubts to those which Baillie's subtly allusive representations suggest. He does, however, project his views in a more strident manner. Byron acknowledges the dramatists' legitimate place in the literary/historical canon, as this view fosters an appreciation of a sense of tradition and continuity. What he does appear to question, nevertheless, is the intellectual and socio-cultural ramifications which Hazlitt's reorganisation of the canon implies. Byron's paradoxical relationship with Renaissance drama is illustrated in the following extracts. The plays are invoked on one level, as part of a literary tradition of sexual frankness which challenges the charge of indecency levelled at *Don Juan*.

"If you admit this prudery", he exclaimed, "you must omit half Ariosto, La Fontaine, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ford".⁹

Byron applauds the ideological basis of the version of golden-age values which his contemporary Hazlitt promotes, yet he clearly expresses powerful reservations as to the validity of recovering writers who will eclipse the more traditional dramatic models. He argues this point in a letter to Shelley.

If you want to have a notion of what I am trying—take up a *translation* of any of the *Greek* tragedians. If I said the original—it would be an impudent presumption of mine—but the translations are so inferior to the originals that I think I may risk it.—Then judge of the "simplicity of plot—&c."—and do not judge me by your mad old dramatists, which is like drinking Usquebaugh—& then proving a fountain—yet, after all, I suppose that you do not mean that spirits is a nobler element than a clear spring bubbling in the Sun—& this I take to be the difference between the Greeks and those turbid mountebanks—always excepting B. Jonson—who was a scholar and a classic ...— But don't measure me by your own old or new tailor's yards!¹⁰

Inherent in this critique, then, is a recognisable dismay at the disruption of a dramatic form hitherto regarded as mirroring values which sustain contemporary English culture in its present form. Byron's belief that Greek drama has performed this task is stressed in his advice to the playwright Barry Cornwall. The Renaissance writers somehow threaten the formal orthodoxy of the Classical texts, and, in so doing, they question the nature of the legitimacy which the Greek dramatists are employed to justify and represent.

I think him [Barry Cornwall] very likely to produce a good tragedy—if he keeps a natural style, and not to play tricks to form Harlequinades for an audience ... this is not to be done by following the old dramatists—who are full of gross faults, pardoned only for the beauty of their language—but by writing naturally and *regularly* & producing *regular* tragedies, like the Greeks—but not in imitation—merely the outline of their conduct, adapted to our own times and circumstances—and of course, *no chorus*¹¹.

The following remarks in letters to Shelley underline the this view.

When Leigh Hunt comes, we shall have battles enough about those old ruffiani, the old dramatists, with their tiresome conceits, their jingling rhymes, and endless play upon words¹².

You also know my opinion of your own poetry,—because it is of *no school*. I read Cenci—but, besides that I think the subject essentially undramatic, I am not an admirer of the old dramatists as *models*. I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all. Your Cenci, however, was a work of power and poetry¹³.

Byron applauds the merits of a stable literary/historical canon which is self-perpetuating. What he wishes to reject are any limitations which a particular revival may impose upon the "future determination" of his own works. In relation to *Don Juan*, he recalls the Renaissance writers in order to invoke a seductive sense of danger from texts which present an element of sedition. Once again, however, any examination of these elements is rejected and displaced, in favour of a mythos of

disrepute centring on purely personal qualities. Byron's Renaissance & Restoration dramatists are contained and domesticated in a similar manner to Hazlitt's dealings with Beaumont and Fletcher.

Shakespeare and Otway had a million advantages over me—besides the incalculable one of being dead from one or two Centuries—and having both been born blackguards (which ARE such attractions to the gentle living reader.)¹⁴

The one advantage which he has over his predecessors, his historical experience, is upstaged and outweighed by the nature of the mythos which he is involved in perpetuating. Byron's problem with a series of relatively unfamiliar texts revitalising English culture is firmly echoed in Donner's criticism over a century later. Byron pre-empted the twentieth-century critic, and justifies the latter's praise, by appropriating what both ultimately view as the safe 'vital' qualities reflected in Renaissance plays.

Byron makes a well-documented and serious attempt to personify the "man of action" which Donner applauds. That this aim is also addressed in a notably less public arena, is equally intriguing. From his time at Harrow, he attempted to maintain what he viewed as the universally identifiable image of the unworldly aesthete.

I am better than ever—& in importunate health—growing ... large & ruddy—& congratulated by impertinent persons on my robustious appearance—when I ought to be pale and interesting.¹⁵

His ongoing obsession with image and weight-loss culminates in the self-congratulatory isolation of the anorexic consciousness, described by Lady Blessington:

he frequently asks—"Don't you think I get thinner?" or "Did you ever see any person as thin as I am, who was not ill?"¹⁶

What appears to be Byron's major problem with Renaissance drama is the issue of class-consciousness and class-difference, an issue which I will return to. His

allusions to the plays in his letters and Journals do not indicate that any interest he expresses is based upon a wish to re-articulate the critique of institutionalised power-systems that we see in the works of Webster, Tourneur, Middleton, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger. It may be argued, indeed, that the means by which he chooses to present his interest implies an evasion of such an analysis. This hypothesis, nevertheless, must take into account the conditions within which the dramatist Byron perceived himself to be working.

In his preface to the play *Sardanapalus: A Tragedy* (1821) Byron indicates that the work is not to be considered for stage-performance.

In publishing the following tragedies, [*Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari and Cain*] I have only to repeat, that they were not composed with the most remote view to the stage. On the attempt made by the managers in a former instance, the public opinion has been already expressed. With regard to my own private feelings, as it seems they are to stand for nothing, I shall say nothing".

The "former instance" which Byron refers to is the case of the "Historical Tragedy" *Marino Faliero, Doge Of Venice* (1821) which Elliston staged at Drury Lane in April 1821, in the face of an injunction secured by Byron's publisher Murray. The following account of this incident, given by Christopher Murray in his biography of Elliston, would tend initially to support the view that the playwright's rejection of stage-representation had no insidious political overtones. The play itself offered a dramatisation of the life of Doge Marino Faliero (circa 1355) who attempted to stage a mutiny against the corrupt Venetian authorities. He was betrayed, and beheaded. Upon his death the authorities attempted to eradicate all evidence of his existence.

On the other hand, Elliston's production of Byron's first play, *Marino Fallero*, on April 25, was anything but a good omen for the future of tragedy. In October 1820 Elliston had written to Byron for details on the play, just finished. He did not get permission to stage it, for Byron knew all too well the mauling

a dramatist's had to undergo in the public theatre, and he had no intention of exposing himself to it. He did not know Elliston—or rather, he knew the actor and not the manager. As the play was in press, Elliston got a copy, page by page, secured the approval of the play from George Lamb, a Drury Lane committee man, and had had copies made for rehearsal early in April. He did not scruple to cut the play considerably, nor did he waste any time over rehearsal; in fact, casting was not complete until one week before opening.

Marino Fallero went on under an injunction secured by Murray, Byron's publisher, barring a second performance before April 30. Since Elliston had obtained a licence for production from the Lord Chamberlain, he was in a very strong position ... He gained his point, and *Marino* was staged for five nights after April 30. He lost public support, however. Receipts averaged less than £140 over the seven nights of production, and the critics, to a man opposed in principle to the staging of a play contrary to the author's wishes, had little good to say of the acting ... The general verdict was that Byron's own view was right: the play was not suited to the stage. This was clean contrary to Elliston's boast in his handbill ... To this the Times critic responded on May 1: "the piece was received coldly, let the play-bills say what they please" ... Yet if Byron emerges from this incident the moral victor, one is tempted to observe, it can only be because everyone wished he had not written such a boring play.¹⁸

Allardyce Nicoll gives several contemporary quotations, which offer a similar graphic picture of the perils of production. The following text, taken from a newspaper article from 1814 reveals a generalised dissent which did not originate specifically from Byron's "damnable pit".¹⁹ Fire crackers were thrown by "would-be young men of fashion".²⁰

Again, why is a play, on first exhibition of a Christmas pantomime, acted almost in Dumb-Show, like the mummery that is to follow it, in consequence of the "tumult and disorder" of the spectators? Why during the intervals, is the stage strewn with apples, and orange-peels, accompanied in their descent thither by the shouts, groans, whistles, catcalls, yells, and screeches of the turbulent assemblage which has so elegantly impelled its vegetable projectiles from the upper regions? Why are the disturbances in the upper boxes, and lobbies, among blackguards and women of the town, by no means rare?²¹

The state of early nineteenth-century staging was clearly considered a very serious issue by established literary figures, in conjunction with those attempting to establish a particular place in literary tradition for their own dramatic works. Joanna Baillie, contrary to Donner's view, had little patience with the concept of closet drama, and suggested practical alternatives to the problems faced by playwrights and their audiences as we see in her views on stage-lighting. Sir Walter Scott, labelled rebellious audiences "a national nuisance"²². Allardyce Nicoll discusses the arbitrary and negative extremities of authoritarian censorship as adding to the daunting anti-intellectual arena of theatrical experience²³. Audiences at the major venues were declining, and the measures instituted in order to ensure their return are viewed by the critic as partly justifying the initial loss of custom²⁴.

Byron's realistic dismay, however, is also a response to the challenge which the paying public mounts against both literary and managerial authority. As opposed to the controlled and limited environment of the 'reading play', he sees the theatre all too readily transform itself into a platform for dissent. The physical setting fails to project the civilized vision inherent in the concept of a dramatic ideal: something to which Byron appears to adhere. He bemoans the unfortunate results of this ideal, appropriated by the mass audience and tortured into fulfilling their demands.

Unless it is *Love furious, criminal and hapless*—it ought not to make a tragic subject—when it is melting & maudlin it does—but it ought not to do—it is then for the gallery and second price boxes.²⁵

His conceptualisation of a tragic ideal reflects and reinforces particular class-differences. When altered by a theatre manager, or displayed before a wide cross-section of the public, his closet drama becomes a politicising instrument, provoking an arbitrary and unsolicited response. The observation of class-distinctions

in the theatre audience is evident in his comments on the performance of Mrs Wilmot's *Ian*, where he appears to bemoan the nature of the experience for the "Jerseys [and] Greys".

Mrs Wilmot's tragedy (*Ian*) was last night damned ... not a word of the third act audible. I went (*malgré* that I ought to have stayed at home in sackcloth for unc., but I could never resist the *first* night of anything) to a private and quiet nook of my private box, and witnessed the whole process. The first three acts, with transient gushes of applause, oozed patiently but heavily on. I must say that it was badly acted, particularly by [Kean], who was groaned upon in the third act,— something about "horror—such a horror" the fourth act became as muddy and turbid as need be; but the fifth ... the fifth act stuck fast at the king's prayer ... But he was no sooner upon his knees, than the audience got upon their legs - the damnable pit—and roared, and groaned, and whistled ... oh, it was all over! The curtain fell upon unheard actors, and the announcement by Kean for Monday was equally ineffectual ... I clapped till my hands were skinless, and so did Sir James Mackintosh, who was with me in the box. All the world was in the house, from the Jerseys, Greys, &c., &c., downwards. But it would not do. It is, after all, not an *acting* play; good language, but no power ...

Women (saving Joanna Baillie) cannot write tragedy; they have not seen enough or felt enough of life for it.²⁸

In relation to the performance of *Marino Fallero* which Christopher Murray describes, Byron turns to his old foes, "the impartial press". The poet retreats with a flattering rallying-call to members of his own social class.

Since an attempt to drag me forth as a gladiator in the Theatrical Arena—is a violation of all the courtesies of Literature—I trust that the impartial press will step between me and this pollution—I say pollution—for every violation of a *right* is such ... I have too much respect for the public to permit this of my own free will—Had I sought their favour it would have been by a pantomime.

I have said that I write only for the readers—Beyond this, I cannot consent to any publication—or to the abuse of any publication of mine to the purposes of histrionism—The applauses of an audience would give me no pleasure—their disapprobation might, ... bring me pain. The wager is therefore not equal ... The kick of an Ass, or the Sting of a Wasp may

be painful to those who would find nothing agreeable in the
 Braying of one—or in the Buzzing of the other.
 This may not seem a courteous comparison, but I have no other
 ready; and it comes naturally.²⁷

The ideological implications of this concept of a closet drama suggests a mutual exchange of values between playwright and reader: values which ultimately reflect and uphold the socio-cultural status-quo.

Byron's problematical relationship with Shelley's "mad old dramatists", and his preference for Classical tragedy are arguably implicated in his general view on the disruptive potential of stage-representation. This is an issue which comes directly into focus when the content of a particular play suggests that it will be vulnerable to such an outcome, owing to the particular issues which it chooses to represent. Such is the outcome with *Sardanapalus* and *Marino Faliero*. Byron writes of his fear in relation to the politicisation of the former play in July 1821, soon after the battle over the staging of *Marino Faliero*. His suspicions as to the potential ramifications of the play's content may be seen to reflect the nature of his moral disengagement from Renaissance drama. His reference to Shakespeare, is particularly unusual. What it does allow him, nevertheless, is a means of raising the discussion to a level which appears to operate above material influences. The comparative comments on Classical and Shakespearean drama are presented as a form of intellectual purity reminiscent of Shelley's "poetic principal": an exclusive form of awareness which only the true poet may tap into. Byron invokes the Shakespeare mythos and the historically distant figures of the Greek tragedians in order to appropriate a sense of abstract decorum. This, in turn, endows his text with a framework of critical legitimacy which permits him both to support, and yet publicly distance himself from, the issue of Shakespeare as a political dramatist.

I trust that "Sardanapalus" will not be mistaken for a *political* play, which was so far from my intention that I thought of nothing but Asiatic history.—The Venetian play, too is rigidly historical.—My object has been to dramatize, like the Greeks (a *modest* phrase!) striking passages of history and mythology. You will find this very *unlike* Shakespeare; and so much the better in one sense, for I look upon him as the *worst* of models—though the most extraordinary of writers ... The hardship is that in these times one can neither speak of kings or queens without suspicion of politics or personalities.—I intended neither.²⁸

What Byron attempts to enforce in this passage, is a finite distinction between history and politics. This is a process which both Hazlitt and Baillie are involved in, although more subtly. Hazlitt mounts a serious discussion of particular sources and early editions of plays, in order to reflect a purely antiquarian interest: Baillie domesticates her drama *Ethwald*, we recall, by aiming to give a realistic representation of an obscure 'dark-age' subject. Byron's comments are more directly reminiscent, perhaps, of Baillie's disapproval of Shakespeare's dealings with historical subjects,²⁹ as they raise awkward questions in relation to the version of theoretical decorum which she strives to uphold.

Clearly, Byron's fragmented view of dramatic decorum is more inherently unstable than the weighty theoretical discourse which Baillie compiles. What it does suggest, however, is an obvious connection with an issue raised in the opening chapter of this study, in relation to critical authority and the question of artistic elitism. Throughout his letters and journals, the poet presents himself not only as an artist opposed to the mass audience: he is to be seen as working outwith their spiritual and intellectual compass. His may be the position of cultural enlightenment, but he must, nevertheless, dispense his works within the public arena of supply and demand. The conflict which this involves him in, results in a curious Shakespearean

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reference which occurs at frequent intervals throughout his correspondence. Byron confirms the nature of his position in relation to his audience by invoking the figure of Coriolanus, defending the concept of *virtus* in the face of an ill-organised, threatening, and socially inferior public. This reference allows Byron to tap into the "incalculable advantage" which the Renaissance dramatists "have over" him: the position of power and status which their place in the literary/historical canon ensures. As we have seen in relation to his stage-performances of his own works, the playwright states that he does not wish specific sections of his audience to be influential in constructing the fragile historical future which will succeed him.

Neither will I write "Ladies books" "al dilettar le femine e la plebe"—I have written from the fullness of my mind, from passion—from impulse—from many motives—but nor for their sweet voices.³⁰

The "sweet voices" to which Byron refers here are those of the citizens of Rome, before whom Coriolanus has come to beg the "customary gown" of consulship. The extent of the nineteenth-century writer's prejudice towards his audience is legitimised by the invocation of Shakespeare's Patrician warrior. The allusion to Coriolanus indicates that Byron is reacting to a sense of foreboding which voices a threat against the socio-cultural values which maintain his own social position. Traditional isolationist principles of artistic vision and production are being undermined and altered, by being subject to the whims of an uncultivated audience. Once again, then, we may view a similar ideological standpoint to that espoused by Baillie, in her warning to the "civilised" section of her audience. Byron's allusion encompasses the soldier's defence of his intellectual and spiritual purity, distancing himself from the devaluation and disarray inherent in the inconsistency of tradition. This identification with Coriolanus' personification of the "*virtus ideal*"³¹ is reinforced

by the striking comparative echo of the Roman's speech in Act II, Sc.iii. Byron's passage follows the Shakespearean quotation, and by invoking a representation of Shylock, amalgamates the figure of Coriolanus with that of the outcast Jew.

Cor. You should account me the more virtuous, that I have not been common in my love. I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother, the people, to earn a dearer estimation of them; 'tis a condition they account gentle; and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practice the insinuating nod and be off to them most counterfeitly.

(Act II, Sc.iii. 1.90)³²

I know the precise worth of popular applause—for few Scribblers have had more of it—and if I choose to swerve into their paths—I could retain it or resume it—or increase it—but I neither love ye—nor fear ye—I will neither eat with ye—drink with ye—nor pray with ye.³³

The spirit of Coriolanus, then, identifies Byron's reaction to his reading public as based upon the question of class-difference. The nature of the divisions which his outburst aims to preserve, are themselves perceived as natural: that is, pre-social, and beyond question. Although the military Roman appears as a response to a serious threat, he is also the focus of the writer's belief in his ability to forestall the inconsistent future of his own plays. Coriolanus is called upon to reinforce Byron's textual integrity on frequent occasions.

I enclose some lines written not long ago, which you may do what you like with, as they are very harmless. Only, if copied or printed, or set, I could wish it more correctly than in the usual way, in which one's "nothings are monstered" as Coriolanus says.³⁴

Andrew Rutherford discussed Byron's duality in a more directly political setting, which offers a useful insight into the playwright's attitude towards Renaissance drama. Rutherford views Byron applauding the seductive concept of the

revolutionary ideal, as such principles may be easily abstracted and essentialised. We see from Byron's comments on the mass audience that such ideals ought, ideally, to be processed by a legitimate authoritative figure or body, before being dispensed within a public arena. Rutherford argues that Byron's class loyalty undermines his passionate avowals of revolutionary support for his own countrymen.

The idea of an English revolution, in which he could play a part, was often in his mind in the early months of 1817: ... in terms which made it clear that he was thinking of armed conflict; while in March he spoke of trying to see Rome "before I return to democratize in England" ... This popular idea of Byron as the poet of Liberty involved some oversimplification, for he never wholeheartedly repudiated his nation or his class, but remained extremely proud of being a peer of England; and many of his views and sympathies were fundamentally aristocratic, modifying his attitude to "the people" and to the revolution which he sometimes advocated.³⁵

Rutherford discussed the "deliberately provocative songs" which Byron composed for the Luddites in 1816-17 as prompted by the reaction of English society to his estrangement from his wife Annabella Milbanke. In the quotations which the critic culls from Byron's letter and journals, it is evident that the issue of revolution is promoted only as an ideal of abstract freedom.³⁶

The preface to Byron's play *Sardanapalus* gives its source as Diodorus Siculus' account of the life of the "last king of the Assyrians, [who] exceeded his predecessors in sloth and luxury"³⁷. The Governor of Babylon organised a revolt on viewing the extent of King Sardanapalus' profligacy. This resulted in several battles and a siege, which culminated in the king setting fire to himself and his palace as a form of extravagant and aggressive penance. The short preface insists upon both a Classical form, and a legitimate historical source, and we are to view the play as subscribing to a Classical genre which has come to personify a particular set of

civilised values for a modern audience.

The author has in one instance attempted to preserve, and in the other approach, the "unities;" conceiving that with any very distant departure from them, there may be poetry, but can be no drama. He is aware of the unpopularity of this notion in present English literature; but it is not a system of his own, being merely an opinion, which, not very long ago, was the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in the more civilised parts of it. But "nous avons changé tout cela," and are reaping the advantages of the change. The writer is far from conceiving that any thing he can adduce by personal precept or example can at all approach his regular, or even irregular predecessors: he is merely giving a reason why he preferred the more regular formation of a structure, however feeble, to the entire abandonment of all rules whatsoever. Where he has failed, the failure is in the architect,—and not in the art.¹⁴

These prefatory comments, nevertheless, which present the play as unsuitable for stage-representation, are particularly relevant to the issue of the writer's relationship with Renaissance texts. The text of *Sardanapalus* itself questions the basis of absolute monarchical power, in a form which recalls the works of the "old ruffiani" Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, and, to an extent, Shakespeare. A summary of the content of the play indicates a provocative theoretical conflict with views expressed in the preface itself.

Sardanapalus centres around an investigation of the version of posterity which the monarch is to fuel, by means of military activity: something which he has grown tired of. As an extravagant epicurean pacifist, Sardanapalus chooses to unmask the homiletic elements which foreground this military masculine discourse. As the successor to the throne of his ancestral triumphs, his own historical legacy has been almost wholly pre-formed centuries before his birth and accession. His indulgent pacifism rests upon a philosophical point of reasoning: if he is to be the figurehead of an on-going social process founded upon the basis of heredity, then he has already

fulfilled his duty to the continuity of power. As he tells us, "the empire has been founded"³⁹. Having anatomised the accident of kingship, he intends to retire and reap the benefits: "at least I will enjoy it"⁴⁰. This enjoyment, however, challenges key elements which maintain the conditions of monarchical authority. The play, then, may be seen to represent issues which are familiar in Renaissance tragedies which actually disrupt the vision of dramatic decorum which Byron wishes to construct for his own works.

The drama opens with a scene which is powerfully reminiscent of Marlowe's *Edward II*.

Salemenes (solus) He hath wronged his queen, but
 still he is her lord;
 He hath wronged my sister—still he is my brother;
 He hath wronged his people—still he is their sovereign—
 And I must be his friend as well as subject:
 He must not perish thus. I will nor see
 The blood of Nimrod and Semiramis
 Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years
 Of Empire ending like a shepherd's tale;
 He must be roused. In his effeminate heart
 There is a careless courage which corruption
 Has not all quenched, and latent energies,
 Repressed by circumstance, but not destroyed—
 Steeped, but not drowned, in deep voluptuousness.
 If born a peasant, he had been a man
 To have reached an empire: to an empire born,
 He will bequeath none; nothing but a name,
 Which his sons will not prize in heritage:—
 Yet—not all lost—even yet—he may redeem
 His sloth and shame, by only being that
 Which he should be, as easily as the thing
 He should not be and is. Were it less toil
 To sway his nations than consume his life?
 To head an army than to rule a harem?
 He sweats in palling pleasures, sulls his soul,
 And saps his goodly strength, in toils which yield not
 Health like the chase, nor glory like the war—
 He must be roused. Alas! there is no sound
 [*sound of soft music heard from within*]
 To rouse him short of thunder. Hark! the lute—

The lyre—the timbrel; the lascivious tinklings
 Of lulling instruments, the softening voices
 Of women, and of beings less than women,
 Must chime the echo of his revel,
 While the great king of all we know on earth
 Lolls crowned with roses, and his diadem
 Lies negligently by to be caught up
 By the first manly hand which dares to snatch it.
 Lo, where they come! already I perceive
 The reeking odours of the perfumed trains,
 And see the bright gems of the glittering girls,
 At once his Chorus and his Council, flash
 As femininely garbed, and scarce less female,
 The grandson of Semiramis, the Man-Queen.—
 He comes! Shall I await him? yes, and front him,
 And tell him what all good men tell each other,
 Speaking of him and his. They come, the slaves
 Led by the monarch subject to his slaves.
 (1.1.1)

Sardanapalus' refusal to encompass a less directly inflammatory lifestyle is based upon his refusal to view his own historical "future determination" as something he need exert himself further in order to negotiate.

Sar. the ungrateful and ungracious slaves! they
 murmur

Because I have not shed their blood nor led them
 To dry in the desert's dust by myriads, Or whiten with
 their bones the banks of Ganges; ...

Sal. Yet these are trophies
 More worthy of a people and their prince
 Than songs, and lutes, and feats, and concubines, ...

Sar. Or for my trophies I have founded cities:
 There's Tarsus and Anchialus, both built in one day
 In one day—what could that blood-loving beldame
 My martial grandam, chaste Semiramis,
 Do more, except destroy them? ...

Sal. I own they merit in those founded cities,
 Built for a whim, recorded with a verse
 Which shames both them and thee to coming ages.

Sar. Shame me! By Baal, the cities, though well built,
 Are not more goodly than the verse! Say what
 Thou wilt 'gainst me, my modest life or rule,
 But nothing 'gainst the truth of that brief record.
 Why those few lines contain the history
 Of all things human:—hear "Sardanapalus,

The king, and son of Anacyndaraxes,
 In one day built Anchialus and tarsus.
 Eat, drink, and love; the rest's not worth a fillip".
 (1.2. 226, 236, 241)

The king's entrance which opens this scene reveals him flaunting the physical representation of the martial "virtus ideal". He rejects an outward show of solidarity for the position which he upholds, and even goes so far as to identify himself with the 'other' as suggested in an element of cross-dressing. The "Man-Queen" projects a stylised version of the instability attributed to women as a function of masculine discourse.

Enter SARDANAPALUS effeminately dressed, his Head crowned with Flowers, and his Robe negligently flowing, attended by a Train of Women and young Slaves.

Sardanapalus argues that the ethos of kingship is, for the most part, a self-sustaining mythology, which does not require the level of individual participation which Salemenes calls for, and which would render his position completely stable. The king is willing to stretch the boundaries on which his tenure is based. He negotiates, then, with the ideological basis of the mythos of hereditary monarchy as the source of all social order and civilisation. The dramatic tension which Byron creates is focused upon Sardanapalus' bemused and ironic awareness of the erosion of his sense of himself as a pre-social subject, once his position is actually threatened.

What Byron may be glancing towards in this play is a materialist reading of the question of identity, such as Dollimore outlines in his analysis of *King Lear*. In *Radical Tragedy*, Dollimore offers the following argument in relation to Shakespeare's play:

What makes *Lear* the person he is—or rather was—is not the kingly essence (divine right), but, among other things, his authority and his family. On the heath he represents the process

whereby man has been stripped of his stoic and (Christian) humanist conceptions of self. Consider what Seneca has to say of affliction and philosophy:

Whether we are caught in the grasp of an inexorable law of fate, whether it is God who as lord of the universe has ordered all things, or whether the affairs of mankind are tossed and buffeted haphazardly by chance, it is philosophy that has the duty of protecting us.

(Letters, p.64)⁴¹

The governors of Sardanapalus' provinces demand that he meet theoretical demands of monarchy, which must involve further acts of empire-building. His mistress, Myrrah, is equally aware of the ramifications which the nature of his indulgence is beginning to provoke.

Sar. Why child, I loathe all war, and warrior;
I live in peace and pleasure: what can man
Do more?

Myr. Alas! my Lord, with common men
There needs too oft the show of war too keep
The substance of sweet peace; and, for a king,
'Tis sometimes better to be feared than loved.

Sar. And I have never sought but for the last.

Myr. And now art neither.

Sar. Dost thou say so, Myrrah?

Myr. I speak of civic popular love, *self-love*,
Which means that men are kept in awe and law,
Yet not oppressed—at least they must not think so,
Or, if they think so, deem it necessary,
To ward off worst oppression, their own passions.
A king of feasts, and flowers, and wine, and revel,
And love and mirth, was never King of Glory.

Sar. Glory? what's that?

Myr. Ask of the Gods thy fathers.

Sar. They cannot answer; when the priests speak for
them,

'Tis for some small addition to the temple.

Myr. Look to the annals of the Empire's founders.

Sar. They are so blotted o'er with blood, I cannot.
But what wouldst have? the Empire *has been* founded.
I cannot go on multiplying empires.

Myr. Preserve thine own.

Sar.

At least, I will enjoy it.

Come, Myrrah, let us go on to the Euphrates: ...
Crowned with fresh flowers like—

Myr.

Victims.

Sar.

No, like sovereigns,

The Shepherd kings of patriarchal times,
Who known no brighter gems than summer wreaths,
And none but tearless triumphs. Let us on."
(I.2.529, 558)

The machiavellian Myrrah proclaims her liberal humanist position, and, in so doing, gives a remarkable summary account of Joanna Baillie's views on the disruptive nature of the "passions" of "common men". As the pastoral idyll is part of a "patriarchal" discourse, Sardanapalus can see no reason for not indulging in its bounty. The conflict which his position creates pinpoints the opposing and contradictory elements in the "virtus ideal" itself.

The soothsayer Beleses and the pretender Arbaces exert themselves in order to restore the vision of teleological harmony which they feel has been disrupted.

Arb. (touching his scabbard). My star is in this scabbard:
when it shines,

It shall out-dazzle comets. Let us think
Of what is to be done to justify
thy planets and their portents. When we conquer,
They shall have temples—aye, and priests—and thou
Shall be the pontiff of—what Gods thou wilt;
For I observe that they are ever just,
And own the bravest for the most devout.

Bel. Aye, and the most devout for brave—thou has not
Seen me turn back from battle.
(II.1.67)

To Sardanapalus, however, the universalist vision of a chain of godhead is a form of intellectual limitation which underlines his own mortality. Byron's text clearly echoes, at this point, the ironic questioning of man's position in the universe and the basis of power in society, which we identify with Renaissance tragedies.

Bel.
My leige—the son of Belus! he blasphemes

Hear him,

The worship of the land, which bows the knee
Before your fathers.

Sar. Oh! for that I pray you
Let him have absolution. I dispense with
The worship of dead men; feeling that I
Am mortal, and believing that the race
From whence I sprung are—what I see them—ashes.

Bel. King! Do not deem so: they are with the stars,

And—

Sar. You shall join them ere they will rise,
If you preach farther—why *this* is rank treason.

Sal. My lord!

Sar. To school me in the worship of
Assyria's idols! Let him be released—
Give him his sword ...

Sar. Be silent.—Guilt is loud. If ye are loyal,
Ye are injured men, and should be sad, not grateful.

Bel. So we should be, were justice always done
By earthly power omnipotent; but Innocence
Must oft receive her right as a mere favour.

Sar. That's a good sentence for a homily,
Though not for this occasion. Prithce keep it
To plead thy Sovereign's cause before his people ...
(II.1.235, 300)

The stage-directions for the opening of the third act are reminiscent of those detailed by Tourneur in Act V of *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

Scene 1. — *The Hall of the Palace illuminated—
SARDANAPALUS and his guests at Table.—A storm without,
and Thunder occasionally heard.*

*The Revenger's dance. At the end, steal out their swords, and
these four kill the four at the table, in their chairs. It thunders.*

Vindice. Mark, thunder! dost know thy cue, thou big-voic'd crier?
Duke's groans are thunder's watch-words.
The Revenger's Tragedy (V.3.42)²

In Tourneur's text, Dollimore argues, the divine response is an "implied parody of the providential viewpoint, the *caricature* of the vengeful god ... in effect, the conception of a heavenly retributive justice is being reduced to a parody of *stage*—

effects". (*Radical Tragedy*, p.139-140). Byron may be seen to be attempting a reworking of the anatomisation of providential order which Dollimore describes in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a play which may be a possible source for Byron's work. Sardanapalus, indeed, employs the "moral posturing" (ibid. p.141) which Dollimore sees unmasked by Tourneur, in his play. Dollimore refers to Antonio's speech upon the Duchess' suicide.⁴³

Byron's investigation caricatures the divine response in a similar manner to Tourneur's but institutes a further layer of black comedy. Myrrah, Altada and Zames each attribute the thunder-clap to a particular providential motive. Their conflicting viewpoints bring the issue of a divinely ordered monarchical succession into sharp focus. To borrow Dollimore's phrase, the "caricature" of the basis of monarchical tradition results in the institution being "thrown into exaggerated relief ... turned inside out and held up for inspection".

Alt. Guests, to my pledge!
Down on your knees, and drink a measure to
The safety of the King—the monarch, say I?
The God Sardanapalus!
[ZAMES *and the guests kneel, and exclaim—*
Mightier than
His father Baal, the God Sardanapalus!
[*It thunders as the kneel; some start up in confusion.*
Zam. Why do you rise, my friends? in that strong
peal
His father gods consented.
Myr. Menaced, rather. ...
Sar. Impiety!—nay, if the sires who reigned
Before me can be Gods, I'll not disgrace
Their lineage. But arise, my pious friends;
Hoard your devotion for the Thunderer there:
I seek but to be loved, not worshipped.
Alt. Both—
Both you must ever be by all true subjects.
Sar. Methinks the thunders still increase: it is
An awful night.

Myr. Oh yes, for those who have
No palace to protect their worshippers.

Sar. That's true, Myrrah; and could I convert
My realm to one wide shelter for the wretched,
I'd do it.

Myr. Thou'rt no God, then—not to be
Able to work a will so good and general,
As thy wish would imply.

Sar.
Who can, and do not?

And your Gods, then,

Myr.
Lest we provoke them.

Do not speak of that,

Sar.
Better than mortals ...

True—,they love not censure

(III. I. 24)

Sardanapalus' suicide/regicide is particularly intriguing. Although he ultimately colludes with the 'closed shop' of his ancestors, he is attempting to redeem a lifetime of transgression against the ideal of kingship. In so doing, he is very much aware, nevertheless, that he is playing into the hands of history: that is, perpetuating the values which he has for so long questioned and destabilised. he acknowledges, however, the privileges with which his position has endowed him, and so he redresses his misdemeanours in the form of a fantastic funeral-pyre, large enough to eclipse his faults and to live on as a "future determination" of his nobility. In the very excessiveness of this deed, it is again possible to view an oblique reference to the "parody of stage-effects" which Dollimore observes at work in *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Byron's king chooses to defer to the highly paradoxical juxtaposition of self-abasement and immortality involved in the perpetuation of traditional civilised values: yet his resentment remains undiminished.

It may be, purified by death from some
Of the gross stains of too material being,
I would not leave your ancient first abode
To the defilement of usurping bondmen;
If I have not kept your inheritance

As ye bequeathed it, this bright part of it,
 Your treasure—your abode—your sacred relics
 Of arms and records—monuments and spoils,
 In which *they* would have revelled, I bear with me
 To you in that absorbing element,
 Which most personifies the soul as leaving
 The least of matter unconsumed before
 Its fiery workings:—and the light of this
 Most royal of funeral pyres shall be
 Not a mere pillar formed of cloud and flame,
 And then a mount of ashes—but a light
 To lessen ages, rebel nations, and
 Voluptuous princes. Time shall quench full many
 A people's records, and a heroes acts;
 Sweep empire after empire, like this first
 Of empires, into nothing; but even then
 A problem few dare imitate, and none
 Despise - but, it may be, avoid the life
 Which led to such a consummation ...
 Adieu Assyria!
 I loved thee well, my own father's land,
 And better as my country than my kingdom.
 I sated thee with peace and joys; and this
 Is my reward! and now I owe thee nothing,
 Not even a grave.

(V.1.424,493)

Clearly, then, *Sardanapalus* raises questions which appear to destabilise Byron's claim that he is adhering to wholly Classical models. The provocative political content of the play itself explains his anxiety on two levels, conceiving why the work should not reach the stage: a Jacobean allusion, and a contemporary political reference. In a previously quoted letter to Murray, we recall, he rejects both political and Shakespearean allusions.⁴⁴

By raising issues represented in Renaissance plays, Byron is, by his own admission, recalling "the worst of models". As the interrogative position which these writers take is generally at odds with Byron's underlying conservatism, it becomes necessary to offer a speculative analysis as to his motivation, in appropriating several of the plays' most disruptive elements. It is possible to argue that, in closet form,

Byron's political dramas are less vulnerable to direct association with his anti-establishment predecessors, an association which might be evident in performance before a wider audience. By actively distancing himself from both contemporary damaging allusions and the provocative tenour of his dramatic forebears, Byron lays claim to the prevailing critical mythos of the Renaissance writers' insouciant vigour and vitality. The reference to Shakespeare, however, implies that these playwrights were deeply implicated in political intrigue, and thus his own plays are more intrinsically valuable for avoiding this. What he actually engaged, in nevertheless, is an imitation of the stylistic and structural strategies which focus the issues raised in the Renaissance texts. It is possible to view Byron's opportunistic relationship to Elizabethan/Jacobean drama as a muted appraisal of their anti-establishment impulse; an appreciation, however, for a limited audience whose social standing ensures that the representation remains a curiosity, rather than a call to arms. This is the case, as we have seen, with the former drama, *Marino Faliero*.

I have nothing more at heart (that is, in literature) than to prevent this drama from going upon the stage: in short, rather than permit it, it must be *suppressed altogether*, and only *forty copies struck off privately* for my friends. What damned fools those speculating buffoons must be *not* to see that it is unfit for their Fair, or their booth!

This limitation, then, suggests that it is possible to view *Sardanapalus* as actually domesticating those anti-establishment elements which Byron appropriates from Jacobean plays. These texts become the source of the decadent disorder which ensures that any subsequent revivalist drama must necessarily remain 'for the closet'— Byron's own representation, however, remains above reproach, as he claims no overt alliance with Renaissance texts. He skilfully excises them from a legitimate place in the literary/historical canon by claiming an exclusively classical

source. The consequences of invoking these political dramas are clearly more problematical than the writer appears to have foreseen, in implying a purely artistic and subtly dangerous romantic echo of a bye-gone century. He aims perhaps, towards an impression of the "vigorous dramatic dialogue" which H.W. Donner describes. The nature of the Byronic silence, then, is perpetuated in the obscurantist vision of his twentieth-century successor. For Donner, Byron replaces the dislocated and distant fragments of values which identify our seventeenth-century dramatic legacy.

'Mitigating Circumstances': Shelley's *The Cenci*

Shelley's drama *The Cenci* (1819) is a five act tragedy which offers a powerful imitation of seventeenth-century dramatic models. Like his contemporary Byron, Shelley maps out the documentary details of his historical source, and investigates the myth which has grown up around it. The prefatory account provides a scenario wherein the abuse of power is enacted on several levels. The drama is constructed around the theme of incest, a theme powerfully represented by John Ford in *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*. *The Cenci* also raises a general issue which runs throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy: the aggressive hypocrisy of institutionalised religion. Shelley's corrupt Cardinal Camillo, for example, is strongly reminiscent of Webster's Cardinal in *The Duchess Of Malfi*.

The preface to *The Cenci* sets out the documentary evidence which Shelley will be working from, and the theoretical basis which actually foregrounds the dramatisation of these events.

A manuscript was communicated to me during my travels in

Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. [The mother in question, in the play, is Beatrice's stepmother, and from the context of the preface, this is Shelley's likely meaning.] The young maiden who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and admirable being, violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest person in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue. Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hope and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart. (p.70)⁴⁵

These comments clearly contradict H.W. Donner's dismissive analysis, which presents Count Cenci as a "monster of the imagination". The detailed preface, indeed, is precisely engineered in order to evade such a charge. For Shelley, it is Cenci's documentary existence and contemporary mythology which renders him a legitimate candidate for dramatisation. The playwright anticipates an outright rejection of his subject matter and attempts to undermine this reaction as the preface unfolds.

This story of the Cenci is indeed a eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the actions of another... (pp.70-71)

This passage reveals a striking contradiction. In order to "increase the ideal", the dramatist becomes involved in a form of censorship and domestication which is, in effect, "subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose". The dramatist himself is not to be viewed as implicated in this censorship, as it is an integral function of the process of writing stage-tragedy. It is useful, at this point, to highlight the lines which indicate the form of limitation which is taking place: "the pleasure which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring". This process of mitigation results in the formulation of a desired response in a prospective audience, and thus raises some very searching questions. Shelley appears to imply that the fundamental nature of poetry itself carries its own "highest moral purpose" which supersedes the "vulgar" version which a less aesthetically minded authority might bring to the process of 'mitigation'. That Shelley appears to be aware of this paradox, is reflected in his response to it: his list of the worthy essentialist aims of ideal drama. A writer who upholds the values inherent in the "highest species of the

drama" is indisputably in control of his material, as his particular form of refined artistry is inaccessible to those in receipt of his "teaching". This issue is addressed in further detail in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821).

Every man in the infancy of art, observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which this highest delight results: but the diversity is not sufficiently marked, ... except in those instances where the predominance of this faculty of approximation to the beautiful ... is very great. Those in whom it exists in excess are poets, in the most universal sense of the word, and the pleasure resulting from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature upon their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort of reduplication from that community. Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. (p.111)⁶⁶

Poetry assumes the burden of rescuing and reviving pastoral values, and becomes a metaphor for its own ordering principle. It presents itself as a self-perpetuating defence against a debilitating normalisation in language, which is unproductive for society as a whole. A self-policing critical control is the product of the superior prophetic awareness which shores up the potential rift in our ability to transcend pressing problems through poetic contemplation. We benefit from poetic insight, rather than prescription, as "the future is contained within the present, as the plant within the seed" (A.D.O.P., p.110). The poet, then, teaches us to return to a harmonious source, described in *The Cent* preface as "teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself". This essential humanist position shifts the pressing question of the ideological implications of this poetic mediation. All the poet is showing us, he maintains, is something which is

fundamentally pre-social. Although he holds a privileged position in society, the nature of the poet's control over his output becomes subtly altered as the treatise progresses. The poet as subject begins to take an authoritative precedence over the question of delivering the material. Such a shift aims to deflect the suggestion that the poet is an agent of establishment values which perpetuate the socio-political interests of the establishment. This is the position from which Shelley attempts to disengage himself in the preface to his dramatic text.

Shelley denies, in this preface, that his own critical position reflects the "vulgar" morality which actually appears at the logical conclusion to a softening of his audience's experience of an abuse of power. In *The Cenci* preface, Shelley assumes the role of the impartial legislator who is able to perceive the ramifications of a set of social and aesthetic conditions, although these remain ill-defined. This the role mapped out for the poet in *A Defence of Poetry*.

Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time ... They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. (p. 140)

These comments suggest that the "increas[ing of] the ideal" which takes place

in *The Cenci* may well be anticipated as a form of domestication. This issue is clearly related to the "behold[ing] of the future in the present" which the *Defence* views as a function of poetic authority. In retaining a recognisably Jacobean model for the play, the poet-critic reflects the unwritten values to which his version of poetic authority is a response. This formal recognition is necessarily imbued with the "spirit of the age" in which the poet is writing.

The particular ethos of Renaissance drama which Shelley invokes performs a dual role. It offers a vital "reduplication" of an imaginative diversity which invigorates society, yet helps to retain this society in its present form. Shelley is aware that the nature of his reconstruction of Jacobean drama will have a marked influence upon future generations of readers. It is at this point, then, that the playwright's desire to "mitigate" requires further analysis. We recall Shelley's assertion in the Preface, that the writer must engage in a certain delicate evasion of subjects his audience might shy away from. In this case, he must "increase the ideal and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which exists in these tempestuous sufferings ... may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring".

Again, Shelley uses the term in a dual sense. The most obvious reading suggests the following *O.E.D.* definition

with a quality as obj: To moderate the severity, rigour, heinousness of something) in recent times there has been a tendency to prefer this periphrastic use to the uses in which the vb. takes a thing or condition as its object ... 1718 *Free Thinker* no 69. "No consideration upon earth can mitigate the seriousness of the crime".

(*O.E.D.* p.909)⁴⁷

This reference implies a process of negotiation, with one set of conditions acting upon

and altering our experience of another. Nevertheless, Shelley's text also invokes a level of meaning which, the *O.E.D.* counsels, is now rare. This is a notion of appeasement, or mollification.

To render (a person, his mind, disposition, or mood) milder, more gentle, or less hostile; to appease, mollify ... 1761
HUME Hist. Eng. 1.VIII 178 "The Cardinal of Pavia ... took care ... to mitigate the pope by the accounts which he sent of that prince's conduct". (p.909)

Here in the preface, the action of inducing pleasure proffers compensation for the experience of the "moral deformity" elicited by the original source material. The poet responsible for enacting this appeasement, by "increas[ing] the ideal" acts as an intermediary between the monstrosity of the source, and the transcendent experience into which the "tempestuous sufferings and crimes" may be translated. In this sense, then, the poet acts as a mediator, who negotiates the nature of the reader's experience of the 'real' and the 'ideal'. The *O.E.D.* gives several contemporary examples of the term 'mediate', which describes an aspect of Shelley's position in the preface.⁴⁴

The playwright, in this respect, assumes the role of authoritative legislator, who acts in the form of a sensitive moral arbiter. After all, as a poet, he has access to the prophetic outcome of the values he wished to imbue in an audience. Raymond Williams highlights the usage of the term 'mediate' in relation to Idealist philosophy. Shelley may be seen to be working within the idea of "totality" which Williams describes, in his vision of the prophetic role.

Sense (i), of reconciliation, was strongly present in Idealist philosophy, between God and Man, between Spirit and world, between Idea and object, between subject and object. In its developed uses, three stages of this process can be distinguished (a) finding a central point between two opposites, as in many political uses; (b) describing the interaction of two opposed concepts or forces within the totality to which they are assumed to belong; (c) describing such interaction as in itself

substantial, with forms of its own, so that it is not the neutral process of the interaction of separate forms, but an active process in which the form of the mediation alters the things mediated, or by its nature indicates their nature."⁴⁹

For Shelley, then, poetry fulfils both of the latter functions which Williams describes as a process of mediation. The sublime nature of poetry indicates the 'Cenci' source to be unpoetic: the legislative mandate alters our perception of these past events in the form of a dramatic mediation. As I have argued, then, Shelley's approach to the revival of potentially disruptive material is to stress that his own editing and censorship is designed to uphold certain moral and spiritual values. He is very much aware of the implications of such a position, however, and distances his own text from a "vulgar" position of promoting a formal response to the play which is ideologically based. Williams gives a Marxist reading of the term 'mediation', which offers a useful insight into the contradictions against which Shelley appears to be defending himself in the preface:

A different use of *totality*, in the Marxist tradition, emphasized irresolvable contradictions within what was nevertheless a total society: mediation then sometimes took on the sense already present in English as an indirect connection. It is still often used in the unfavourable sense, in a contrast between *real* and mediated relations, mediation being then one of the essential processes not only of consciousness, but of IDEOLOGY.⁵⁰

The "mediated relations" which Shelley described, which mitigates the pain of contemplation" results in a form of exorcism. The indication that our experience of the ideal is transforming our experience of the real illustrates the Marxist reading that the process is inherently ideologically based. In order to qualify this conclusion in relation to his own position, Shelley's "totality" involves a series of values which are pre-social as opposed to those who appropriate the moral basis of the universe for the entrenchment of their own "vulgar" socio-political aims. If the process of

'mitigation', (or mediation) is to be a potentially uplifting experience in a dramatic arena, it must be seen to make certain values accessible to those who will benefit from receiving them. The poet, then, must subscribe to a dramatic form and language which is not necessarily his 'own', and with which he need not identify on any other than a purely aesthetic level. It is in this complex and intriguing manner that Shelley invokes the ethos of Renaissance drama in its most interrogative form. This ethos is to act as the catalyst which will precipitate the process of mitigation/mediation itself, as it fulfils a dual function in relation to a mass audience.

The Renaissance writers, as I have argued, are progressively viewed in the early nineteenth century as epitomising the values of a community conscious of nationalist feeling. This golden-age vision may be revived in conjunction with a muted representation of their tragedies. In this sense, they reinforce the version of poetic and critical authority which their successors are aiming to justify to a contemporary audience. What is particularly curious in relation to this form of revival, is the implication that the Jacobean playwrights only achieve their formal status by means of their historical distance, and relatively recent promotion to the literary/historical canon. They appear, in relation to *The Cenci*, as a response to the politic poetic "careless[ness]" which Shelley refers to in the preface:

Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects, I have written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men; and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a

study of whom might incite us to do that for our age what they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general, and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature. (p.335)

The lack of care with which he engages in a muted process of revival indicates a level of detachment in relation to it. Shelley implies that these writers, in general, direct their texts towards issues which would incite the interest of a more broadly-based audience than his own position will allow him to address as a necessarily elitist poetic figure.

The preface to *The Cenci*, then, may be read as an ingenious, and somewhat politic appropriation of an anti-establishment ethos, in order to transmit 'ideal' values to a wider public: an ideal which is contrary to the issues raised in the Renaissance texts themselves. Shelley's position in relation to this process of allusion and revival is extremely problematical, as it is also possible to argue that his interest lies with an interrogation of class-based authority: something which the dramatists in question expose. Fundamentally, however, the contradictions stem from the playwright's views on appropriation, and his insistence that his own attempt at a reworking of "the language of men" is an innocent procedure. He remains true to the idealist function of drama itself. It is on this point, then, that the productive nature of the allusion to the "ancient English poets" becomes apparent. The prescriptive "legislation" which is a function of "increas[ing] the ideal" promotes a version of artistic and cultural order. Shelley affiliates this sense of order with what we view as the residual appeal to order represented in Jacobean texts: often as an open attempt to appease the censor. To promote *Beatrice Cenci* as a transcendent subject, however, suggests that

the ideological implications of the function of 'ideal' drama are actually implicated in condoning the crimes committed against her.

By stating that a revival of the "ancient English poets" will "incite us to do for our age what they have done for theirs", Shelley brings the issues involved in a study of this nature into sharp focus. We are given a further insight into what he considers to be the fundamental merits of seventeenth-century England, and how these specific conditions may be reconstituted. These points will now be discussed with reference to the play-text itself.

The plot of *The Cenci* describes the events surrounding the rape of Beatrice Cenci by her violent psychopathic father, already glorying in the recent deaths of two of his sons on a sojourn abroad. As the preface explains, Cenci was a profitable penitent for Clement III. Beatrice and her step-mother hire assassins who themselves revolt at the deed, but are persuaded to carry out the murder of Cenci. One this is achieved, however, a papal legate arrives to bring the Count to justice for the past outrages which he has already paid for, and thus absolved himself of. On finding a corpse rather than a prisoner, the family and assassins are arrested. After a long trial, with many pleas for mercy, the assassins are tortured to death. The family go to a similar, if precisely undocumented fate, although it appears that they are to be beheaded.

The drama opens with an exchange which revives a motif prevalent in Renaissance tragedies, that of the corruption and hypocrisy of the Roman church. Cardinal Camillo reprimands Cenci for the frequency of his applications for absolution, although if "once or twice compounded" they will "enrich ... the Church". Constant applications to the Pope are disruptive, as they undermine public

representation of the values upon which Papal authority is purportedly based. The symbol of divine inspirational authority, nevertheless, cannot be seen to interact with his flock on the basis of an exchange and trade, subject to forces of supply and demand. Such a material relationship objectivises the nature of the transcendent spiritual communion which sustains his power in its present form.

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up
 If you consent to yield his Holiness
 Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
 It needed all my interest in the conclave
 To bend him to this point: he said that you
 Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
 That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
 Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
 An erring soul which might repent and live;
 But that the glory and the interest
 Of the high throne he fills, little consist
 With making it a daily mart of guilt
 So manifold and hideous as the deeds
 Which you scare hid from men's revolted eyes.
 (l.l.i)

This speech echoes the sentiments expressed in the preface which question the nature of our relationship with organised religion in general. Shelley avoids the extremities of Joanna Baillie's anti-catholicism, yet indicates that a religious mien is a "cloak" which endows the wearer with a certain form of social acceptance. It embodies an underlying code of values: a system of belief which promotes socio-cultural order as a based upon an unquestioning decorum and self-control.

To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiments of the relations between God and man which pervade the tragedy of *The Cenci*. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being,

which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to the established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion evades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge, never a check.

(Vol II, pp.71-2)

This dramatic motif of an authority founded upon a system of belief which is not the poet's own, clearly raises problems for any discussion of the position which the poet himself holds. Nevertheless, the ideological basis of the function of "dramatic composition", which is to "increase the ideal and diminish the actual horror of events", suggests a level of association with the Papal strategy exposed in *The Cenci*. This raises questions in relation to the dramatic representation of punishment and atonement, an issue to which I will return.

As I have argued, Shelley aims to reinvigorate contemporary society on a universal scale, by means of the reintroduction of values which typify our experience of Elizabethan/Jacobean social and artistic conditions. As Roger Sales argues, the process of recovery itself is ideologically based. Our first encounter with an allusion to a Jacobean tragedy, occurs in the opening speech. Cardinal Camillo's version of corruption echoes the sentiments of Webster's Cardinal in *The Duchess of Malfi*. The following examples from Webster's play illustrate the nature of the comparison.

Cardinal... [aside] Are you come? so: this fellow must not know
By any means I had intelligence
In our Duchess' death; for though I counsell'd it,
The full of all the' engagement seem's to grow
From Ferdinand. Now Sir, how fares our sister?
I do not think but sorrow makes her look

Like to an off'dy's garment: she shall now
Taste comfort from me: why do you look so widely?
(V.2.103)

Cardinal. 'Tis thus: Antonio lurks here in Milan;
Inquire him out, and kill him: while he lives,
Our sister cannot marry, and I have thought
Of an excellent match for her: do this, and style me
Thy advancement.
(V.2.121)

Cardinal. I am puzzl'd in a question about hell:
He says, in hell there's one material fire,
And yet it shall burn all men alike.
Lay him by. How tedious is a guilty conscience!
(V.5.1)

What does Camillo inherit, then, from his Jacobean predecessor? He is clearly a corrupt agent of the institute he serves, but his range of activities is strictly limited. Camillo himself is not directly involved in planning and executing murder, in contrast to Webster's prelate, who dispatches Julia, his mistress, with a poisoned bible. Shelley's Cardinal does not reflect this depth of villainy, and the questions which Webster's Cardinal raises within *The Duchess of Malfi* are thus not so fully articulated in *The Cenci*. In poisoning the bible, Webster's Cardinal makes a mockery of the institution of confession, and, in manipulating Julia's trust, he presents the religious 'mask of virtue' as a form of social control. Cardinal Camillo is a more problematical figure because he has occasional periods of humanitarian insight and pays lip-service to remorse.

Camillo (much moved) What shall we think, my Lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

Judge Yet she must be tortured.

Camillo I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived he would be just her age;
His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes

Like hers in shape, but blue, and not so deep)
 As that most perfect image in God's love
 That ever came sorrowing upon the earth
 She is as pure as speechless infancy!
 (V.2.59)

Webster's Cardinal does not attempt to repent his sins, which again brings his belief into question; in Shelley's play that belief becomes focused as the sinister "cloak" which the poet defines as a badge of social respectability. Webster, then, does not offer the subtle form of justification with which Shelley's preface endows the catholic villainy. Webster's Cardinal is amoral at a much more interrogative level than Shelley's Camillo, whose response is socially conditioned, yet, in a sense, beyond his own intervention. The former glories in a position which allows him to flaunt the laws which he polices. Camillo's remorse, then, appears as one aspect of the "increase" of the "ideal". This teaches us something about ourselves by example, but risks blinding us to the possibility of confronting the source of the crime itself. Camillo's reversal is only momentary, however, and the play assume a more directly ironic exposure of the nature of Papal authority. The Cardinal reads the Pope's final verdict to Beatrice's brother Bernardo; a text which defines her behaviour as a far from spiritual threat. In this passage, Camillo is more specifically reminiscent of Webster's corrupt and hypocritical protagonist, even though he may be reporting 'second hand'.

Camillo. I urged him still;
 Pleasing as you could guess, the devilish wrong
 Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
 And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
 Murdered his mother yester evening,
 And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
 That soon, for some just cause, no doubt, the young
 Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
 Authority and power, and hoary hair
 Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,

You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
 Here is their sentence; never see me more
 Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled.
 (V.4.15)

What we have in this play is an unstable marriage of contending discourses. The paradoxical blend of an inherently conservative dramatic ideal, and an equally powerful rendition of social criticism is engineered to fulfil the demands of an essentialist representation of dramatic decorum. It is this transcendent outcome, however, stressed in the preface, which rendered the play and its questions accessible to and suitable for contemporary theatrical managers and audiences. Joseph Donohue approaches such an observation in *Theatre In The Age of Keats*, when he tells us that, "[Shelley] correctly sensed how outraged they [his audience] would be by Beatrice's specific denial of guilt, in the fact of insurmountable 'objective' evidence to the contrary" (p.173). He continues, "it may be argued that it is impossible for a playwright to compose an effective tragedy aimed at an audience for whom he feels nothing other than mistrust" (p.173).

Donohue's account, nevertheless, identifies Beatrice as a vehicle for an "insoluble conflict of elemental good and evil" (p.172). She is a transcendent subject whose "miraculous fortitude of soul" (p.172) appears, almost, to eclipse the rape, the reaction against which results in her own violent death. Although the critic's passage acknowledges Shelley's questioning of the authority which condemns Beatrice, the wide scope of his study does not allow for a detailed representation of the poet's dealings with the institutions of religion and patriarchal justice.

Shelley's Beatrice is a woman of miraculous fortitude of soul and vigour of intellect, finally induced through circumstances into committing a deed that, Shelley believes, cannot be fairly judged in any human tribunal. Driven past the point of temperance by her demonic father Count Cenci, Beatrice hires assassins who succeed in doing away with him. Arrested and

brought to trial, she presents an eloquent but ultimately ambiguous argument for her own innocence. In a courtroom scene that ranks as possibly the highest achievement of Romantic poetic drama, Shelley brings to a climax the insoluble conflict of elemental good and evil, cast in the aspect of a radically innocent human being forced to act, inevitably for the worse, in a world where human justice proves a shallow mockery of the ideals it professes to serve. (p.172)

Donohue's critique is enacted on an elemental level similar to Shelley's own. When this universalist vision of injustice is invoked, we are drawn away from a pointed analysis of the social criticism imbued in the text. Beatrice's "miraculous fortitude" is problematical in Shelley's play, precisely because it is contingent upon the action which precipitates it: the violent rape. This fortitude, indeed, eclipses the cause and consequences of the rape itself. On one level, Beatrice becomes a necessary victim in support of a theory of dramatic decorum and poetic transcendence, which is a function of the patriarchal discourse which condemns her for retaliation.

The incestuous nature of the assault suggests a parallel with another Renaissance tragedy: Ford's *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*.³¹ The comparison is intriguing and far from opportunistic, since there is a recognisable linguistic parallel in Cenci's first speech. The Count echoes Giovanni's lines, in which he makes up his mind to reveal his love for Annabella, his sister. Although the context is very different, Cenci echoes Giovanni's legalistic metaphor.

The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:—it angers me!
Respited me from hell! ...
(*The Cenci*, I.1.24)

Keep fear and low faint-hearted shame with slaves!
I'll tell her that I love her, though my heart
Were rated at the price of the attempt ...
(*'Tis Pity She's A Whore*, I.2.160)

The nature of the incestuous relationship which Shelley represents, is clearly very different from that which Ford describes. In both cases, however, it is shown as a condition attending a more immediate and powerful impulse. That Annabella is Giovanni's sister is arbitrary in relation to their physical and emotional attraction, yet it is the condition which allows for a dramatic investigation of the basis of social taboos and controls. On one level Cenci's incest is arbitrary, a condition of attending an act of violence. It is, however, a fundamental factor in the decision which Cenci takes. He rapes Beatrice in order to subdue her public outbursts against his irrational love of violence and cruelty. It is a means by which he can reassert his patriarchal authority in its most basic form: a masculine dominance based upon strength. Cenci invokes the conditions which support this physical dominance however, as he is aware that, out of shame and a sense of decorum, she will not be able to articulate to the authorities that the crime has actually taken place.

The stylised representation of vice which we see in Count Cenci, is a revival of an element which runs through Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline tragedy. The following quotation gives an example of this appropriation, which, in this case, interrogates the entrenched and self-perpetuating values of patriarchal authority. The acting directions also suggest an echo of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*: "Cover her face, mine eyes dazzle, she died young."³²

Cenci
Come hither!

What, Beatrice, here!

[She shrinks back and covers her face

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;

Look up! Why yesternight you dared to look

With disobedient insolence upon me,

Bending a stern and inquiring brow

On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide

That which I came to tell you - but in vain.

Beatrice (wildly, staggering towards the door). On, that the earth
would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cenci. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
 Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
 Flew from your presence, as you now from mine.
 Stay, I command you:-from this day and hour
 Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
 And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
 And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
 Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
 Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
 Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother;

[*To Bernardo*

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!
 (II.1.104)

This drama, then, offers a rigorous interrogation of the system of authority manifest within the play-society. What makes this work an extremely problematical one, is that the silence imposed upon Beatrice in the play-text appears conducive to the actual stage-performance of the work itself. The radical exposure of Beatrice's position becomes qualified, as her silence is an essential factor in constructing a version of an artistic "ideal" for the audience, which will "mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which [the crimes] spring" (p.333). This view of a subtle reactionary impulse in Shelley's allusion to Renaissance texts, may be discussed further, with reference to the reworking of the theme of incest. Whilst Ford's Giovanni decides to flaunt establishment conventions whilst being able to predict the consequences, Cenci's action actually obscures the anti-authoritarian impulse in the Renaissance source. Cenci's crime is a straightforward and simple act of villainy: an emblematic act of insanity which necessitates an immediate reaction. Donohue views incest as Shelley's theme in this play, rather than rape, which would lend support to this particular reading of *The Cenci*. If Shelley is recalling *'Tis Pity She's A Whore* and mediating or "mitigat[ing]" issues which Ford's play raises, then the nature of the domestication is clearly more inflammatory than many of the

instances discussed in previous chapters. Although subtle, the allusion suggests a parallel with the gross domestication of Middleton's *The Changeling* revealed in William Hayley's *Marcella* (1795).

Although Cenci echoes Giovanni's phraseology, there is another obvious thematic parallel with Ford's outraged husband Soranzo, who discovers that Annabella has become pregnant prior to their marriage. Annabella's rejoinder to his violent outburst challenges the basis of his masculine identity, much as Beatrice challenges her father's unlimited authority in *The Cenci*. It is Giovanni, however, who murders Annabella for her marriage to Soranzo, whom he views as a rival lover: a usurper. In a sense, then, he acts out a form of justice upon her which transgresses against his vision of a relationship which flouted such despotic convention. This residual representation of patriarchal values in Giovanni illustrate that his vision of the ideal and the real are interrelated, and derived from the socio-cultural values inherent in the play-society. This is an issue which Shelley evidently distances himself from in the preface to his play.

The echoes of particular Renaissance tragedies are clearly visible, but rendered vague by means of the convenient and constant juxtaposition of allusions. Any unwelcome interference from Ford's Annabella, is displaced by the more romantically comforting victim, the disenfranchised Duchess of Malfi. The process of revival then, as I have argued, involves a selective censorship. Allardyce Nicoll may be seen to be moving towards such a reading of the Romantics' interest in Renaissance tragedy, although he is clearly dismayed at a series of undisclosed ramifications when dealing with the "dead hand of the older poetic drama".⁵³

The nineteenth century opened with the growing love of melodrama, and this melodrama was at once the cause of

dramatic decline and the expression of vital forces yet working in the theatre. In one respect, it was the unashamed demand of dramatists and spectators for thrill and action on the stage. It was the reply of the romantics to the passionless rhetoric of *Irene*. In so far, the melodrama was a force for the good. Romanticism, however, had already called forth a group of highly philosophic poets with exceedingly lofty ideals, and the melodrama, to them, seemed nought but primitive buffoonery. These poets recognised Shakespeare as a master, and soon they were discovering Shakespeare's companions and followers, Marlowe and Massinger and Ford. Condemning the melodrama, they sought to provide a legitimate tragic drama of their own by copying the Elizabethans in style, by throwing in gratuitously a good deal of their philosophic conceptions, and by borrowing a few themes and characters from the fashionable German dramatists of the day. As has already been seen, they never escaped from these toils. From Baillie to Browning, from Wordsworth to Tennyson, the dead hand of the older poetic drama was upon them. This meant that only those authors who made no claim to the fame of authorship dared to write plays which might be popular, and as a consequence the purely literary form of drama inevitably declined. Subsidiary causes—such as the necessity of rapid production—took away even that simple polish which a Fitzball might have desired in leisure to give his melodramas. (pp.212-13)

From the prescriptive preface to *The Cenci*, and Beatrice's stoical departure, it is perhaps useful to return to *A Defence of Poetry* in order to isolate Shelley's view of drama in relation to an artistic, vigorous representation of social order.

The drama of Athens, or wheresoever else it may have approached its perfection, coexisted with the moral and intellectual greatness of the age ... The drama, so long as it continues to express poetry, is as a prismatic and many-sided mirror, which collects the brightest rays of human nature and divides and reproduces them for the simplicity of these elementary forms, and touches them with majesty and beauty, and multiplies all that it reflects, and endows it with the power of propagating its like wherever it may fall.

But in periods of the decay of social life, the drama sympathises with that decay. Tragedy becomes a cold imitation of the form of the great masterpieces of antiquity, divested of all harmonious accompaniment of the kindred arts; and often the very form misunderstood, or a weak attempt to teach certain doctrines, which the writers considers as moral truths, and which are usually no more than the specious flatteries of

some gross vice or weakness, with which the author, in common with his auditors, are infected. Hence what has been called the classical and the domestic drama.

(Vol 7, p.122)

For all the writers under discussion, the contemporary theatre suggests such a "period of ... decay". For Shelley, the only solution is to invoke and reinvent what he sees as the idealist principles of pure poetry. These principles, or values, must be embellished by means of the "many-sided mirror" of potentially productive dramatic sources. Revival itself is considered a fraught process, as it is viewed as displacing a text from the "harmonious accompaniment or the kindred arts". This suggests that when specific issues are drawn from particular sources, they become, to borrow a medical term, 'free radicals': out of range of the golden-age mythos which encompasses the period from which the allusion is drawn. The above passage suggests the consequences of the "vulgar" appropriation of the "ancient English poets" referred to in the preface to *The Cenci*. Tragedy, as a genre, decays, if poetic principles are not adhered to. Access to these, we recall, is reserved for a limited and privileged few.

"The Last Elizabethan"

In *A History of Early Nineteenth Century Drama, 1800-1850*, Allardyce Nicoll gives a brief account of Thomas Lovell Beddoes' theoretical and dramatic contribution to the early nineteenth-century theatre.

A year before the appearance of *The Duke of Mantua*, Thomas Lovell Beddoes—like Lamb full of dark thought culled from Jacobean drama—issued *The Bride's Tragedy*. It is peculiar that this author, whose work breathes the very spirit of Webster and Tourneur, should have been he who gave the best advice to his age—advise unhappily never followed—concerning dramatic necessity. "I am convinced", he declared to a friend,

the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow—no creeper into worm-holes—no reviser even—however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold—Such ghosts as Marlowe—Webster & c. are better dramatists, better poets, I dare say, than any contemporary of ours—but they are ghosts—the worm is in their pages—& we want to see something that our great-grandfathers did not know. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama I still think that we had better beget than revive—attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy & spirit of its own & only raise a ghost to gaze on not to live with—just now the drama is a haunted ruin'.

That is genuinely inspired, thorough and profound theatrical criticism; yet all that Beddoes produced was *The Bride's Tragedy*, an immature drama redolent of the Elizabethans, and *Death's Jest Book or The Fool's Tragedy* (finished in its first form 1826; published 1850) in which, more than half in love with easeful death, he brought back to life the gloomy and macabre conceptions of the early seventeenth-century stage. (pp.201-2)

Nicoll bemoans what he sees as Beddoes' failure to follow his own advice; a failure to reinvigorate the contemporary theatre by other means than recalling Renaissance texts. Beddoes's overview of this situation, as I will go on to argue, is much more complex than this passage suggests. Nevertheless, the choice of this particular quotation reveals the nature of Nicoll's position in relation to the revival of interest in seventeenth century drama in the early nineteenth century. Nicoll questions an ethos of recovery which relies upon the perpetuation of an obscure golden-age vigour, when a more credible view of the earlier period suggests a less favourable legacy. This is visible in the "gloomy and macabre conceptions of the seventeenth century stage" (p.202).

The reference to Beddoes reinforces the critic's own doubts as to the results of alluding to, or engaging with, Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline tragedies. This is a view encompassed in Shelley's problematrical critique, and is shared by Nicoll's contemporary H.W. Donner, in *Thomas Lovell Beddoes, The Making of a Poet*

(1935). In this work, Donner offers a remarkably detailed set of footnotes which set out the texts which Beddoes appears to be alluding to, rather than borrowing from. This distinction is important, and its results in a form of "liberation" for certain nineteenth-century playwrights.

Putting aside the 'prehistoric' period of this movement, the period of occasional reminiscences rather than conscious imitation, the course of the Elizabethan revival runs from complete dependence on the models towards greater freedom. The series Cunningham, Wells, Beddoes, illustrates this act of liberation. (p.26)

Donner sees Beddoes' relationship with Jacobean drama as resulting in a patchwork text: *The Bride's Tragedy* (1821). His dramatic forebears tempt Beddoes from his own theoretical aim to revitalise the drama, and lead him into a fragmented summary of diverse and unproductive allusions.

It would seem indeed as if the indiscriminate borrowing from old plays and new had landed Beddoes in a contradiction. The exculpation of the criminal is modern, but the punishment is Elizabethan. In a similar manner the murdered in the execution of his crime acquires a strength of character, which is Romantic only inasmuch as it is melodramatic, culminating in the Marstonic cynicism of the murder scene. The details attending it are all borrowed from the Elizabethans. The crime is preceded by a sleepless night, in which Hesperus spontaneously clutches his dagger with words reminiscent of Macbeth. The scene at the suicide's grave reminds us Hamlet-like of the fate of mortality, and confirms the Shakespearean impression. Then follows the invocation of the phantoms of Hades in the manner of Lady Macbeth, and the blood-stains on the hands of Lady Macbeth were not more easily rubbed out than the ruby on Hesperus' finger. But in spite of these details Hesperus remains a Romantic character, and strange it would be if it required a Macbeth to slay an innocent Floribel. It is characteristic of the Romantics that a simple story must be dressed in the clothing of great tragedy. In the case of *The Bride's Tragedy* it might even be worth considering whether the association with a literary model did not distort the motives of Hesperus, as they appear in the play. (pp.92-3)



This notion of distortion remains uppermost throughout Donner's critique of *The Bride's Tragedy*. It is the Jacobean legacy which is seen as responsible for the "submissive" female characters which appear in the play. "Literary models interfere even with her", he says of Floribel, the murdered heroine.

The female characters are humble, innocent, and submissive, with no will of their own and no desire but a quiet, self-sacrificing love. Two such creatures are undone by Hesperus. Of the two Floribel is the more pathetic ... About Floribel's misgivings concerning Hesperus there is something real, but literary models interfere even with her, and in a most unexpected manner the 'silly girl' turns into a Portia or even a Beatrice, thus bringing about her own undoing. Her submission in the murder scene is equally absurd, and it can only be explained by the influence of more illustrious predecessors. Luce in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is an example out of many. It is an interesting fact whereas the male characters are all modelled on Beddoes himself and essentially Romantic, the women are mere copies of the devoted heroines of certain Elizabethan plays. Floribel shares, it is true, the rustic innocence of one of Monk Lewis' female characters, Angela in *The Castle Spectre*, and this is no more than appropriate in the work of a young poet educated in the doctrines of Rousseau, but in all her main features Floribel, like Olivia, belongs to the class of women without self which had been made popular by Montemayor and Sir Philip Sidney, Greene, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, and Shirley. She was especially convenient to Beddoes who knew even less about women than he did about men. Yet how easy it would have been to give Floribel an existence of her own. In an Elizabethan domestic tragedy she would almost certainly have been with child at the time of her murder. (pp.97-98)

Donner clearly views Beddoes as hampered by his dramatic predecessors. Their "dramatic models" result in a domestication of the playwright's original thought, and a re-imposition of outmoded cultural bias. For Floribel, this association means a loss of innocence, which renders her culpable in her own murder: "bringing about her own undoing" (p.97). Donner is clearly unwilling, however, to offer a detailed discussion of female tragic representation in Renaissance texts, in order to

clarify his position. (The issue will be investigated within the discussion of *The Bride's Tragedy* later in this chapter.) Donner's position is indeed a curious one, when we consider the nature of his solution to Floribel's inconsequentiality in the play: pregnancy. This raises several obvious contradictions. If, as the critic tells us, "in an Elizabethan domestic tragedy she would almost certainly have been with child at the time of the murder" (p.98) then the Elizabethan influence becomes more problematical than the critic appears to suggest. Donner reverses his opinion on Renaissance tragedy at this point, as he sees her potential position within such works as rendered subject to debate at a much more interrogative level than we see in Beddoes' play. He is definitely not claiming, however, that the Renaissance writers represent the position of women in a patriarchal society, in terms of their ability to secure an heir. Donner subscribes to this discourse, in his suggestion that such an 'interesting condition' would entice a greater appreciation by her audience of Floribel as an object.

Seventeenth-century echoes, then, are viewed as disruptive, but only in the sense that they are out of their time, a dislocation, a distortion of the values of a new and progressive generation. There is no mention in this critique of the radical implications of recalling issues which were clearly subversive at the time of the text's production. Hesperus, Beddoes' bigamous protagonist who murders his secret first wife, may recall Jacobean dramatic models, but the critic views him as endowed with psychological traits which obscure the nature of the crime itself¹⁴. In this sense, then, we cannot view him as rejecting liberal humanist values. As "the male characters are all modelled on Beddoes himself" (p.97), this absolves the play of any attempt to implicate the social conditions of the play-society in the events which unfold within

it. Beddoes' relationship with his predecessors is viewed as based upon precocious curiosity and intelligence, rather than an interest in socio-political questions raised in the texts themselves.

In spite of all this, however, we are inclined to sympathise with Hesperus. Beddoes has given him so much of himself: his youthful aspirations, his longing for life and love of action, his own unhappiness and disharmony, and his boisterous delight in the world of imagination. (p.96)

Beddoes is mythologised, and this obscures the nature of his interest in Renaissance drama. Donner tells us that, "Romantic emotion enlivens the Elizabethan situation" (p.106). This underlines a point made earlier in his criticism: "but the play is not rant all through. Only the agitated scenes about with it, and these are Elizabethan in their inspiration" (p.100).

It is, not unexpectedly, Shakespeare, who is invoked as the more acceptable source for Beddoes' play. The critic brushes aside any allusion to Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* and concentrates upon what he sees as the legitimate birthplace for *The Bride's Tragedy*. Marlowe is suggested as a possible source, but, we note, in the role of Shakespearean apostle. He is domesticated by being personified as the strident symbol of golden-age values.

As to the Elizabethan means of poisoning people, they were as many as they were impossible, ranging from poisoned wine or ale, meat, salad, porridge ... we hear of poisoned prayer-books even and hunting saddles, but the poisoned flowers of Lenora seem to be suggested by Marlowe. Massinger's Duke imbibes the poison smeared on his dead wife's face, a method which goes back to *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, or *Soliman and Perseda*.

Real reminiscences, however, there are; and as usual in the Romantic poets, they are mainly of Shakespeare, from whom Beddoes borrowed so many of the situations of his play. Thus Hesperus becomes in the eyes of Floribel 'the glass of all good qualities', whereas his hand becomes in his own view 'Cain the arch-murderers'. Sometimes he achieves a happy

expression, modelled on Shakespeare, ... He has learned also the bitter world wisdom of Hamlet, but he never just repeats, he alters all for his own purpose and gives it an air of novelty. The same applies to his borrowings from other Elizabethan dramatists, if borrowings they can be called when it is rather that he drew upon them for inspiration. Hesperus' soliloquy in prison is thus inspired by *Dr Faustus*, and much of the rant naturally goes back to the same source, but it cannot be denied that while Marlowe gloried in his rant, that of Beddoes is sometimes created with labour. Marlowe was the apostle of all the dramatists of the 'Elizabethan Revival,' but the robust life of Marlowe, the indomitable will, the inexhaustible energy and self-assertion are not to be found in his imitators. Marlowe's rhetoric is the display of power, Beddoes' is the attempt to achieve such power. (pp.108-9)

It is Shakespeare's presence which absolves Beddoes of his doubtful contract with the Renaissance dramatists in general. In order to reinforce this position, Donner implies that Beddoes himself is only aiming to appropriate a certain paradoxical wisdom which past writers have gained, by the very fact of their historical distance. Beddoes, we are told, displays an "apologetic attitude" (p.111) to his dramatic forebears and he keeps one foot on the ground during his textual encounter with them. The precarious nature of the association is held in check by the Shakespearean inference, which retains an impression of a formal artistic excellence. Shakespeare rescues Beddoes not only from the early seventeenth-century, but from the stylistic vagaries of his dramatic contemporaries.

However much he may have borrowed from the Elizabethans, Beddoes remained a Romantic, and however well he may have imitated the style of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Beaumont, Marston or Webster, we notice in his adaptations of their ideas and superstitions an apologetic attitude of one who does not himself believe what he says, but is trying to apply the experience of the past to the circumstances of the present. What claim, then, can be put for Beddoes as 'The last Elizabethan'? ... The verse is the best part of *The Bride's Tragedy* and it is modelled on the Elizabethans. Beddoes employs all their figures of speech, and uses all the tricks of their verse—epanaphora, antithesis, repetition, parenthesis, etc

... The parenthesis in the first line (II,ii.11.20-22.) is almost as good as any of the more famous instances in Shakespeare ... Such lines as these stand out from the background of Joanna Baillie, Shiel, Knowles, and even Procter, by prosopoc qualities unusual in their day. (p.111)

Thomas Lovell Beddoes is a particularly interesting figure in a study of this nature. Born in 1803 in Clifton, he entered Charterhouse school where he became an eccentric, but not particularly popular figure amongst staff and pupils, by the extreme nature of his practical jokes. At this time, he showed an interest in seventeenth-century tragedy, writing imitative pieces for his friends. H.W. Donner gives an account of one of these pieces, which reveals the early nature of Beddoes' interest in his dramatic forebears. Rather than referring to the plays as the repository of traditional values, Beddoes appropriates their radical elements as a means of revenging himself upon a tradesman whom he feels has taken advantage of him.

Beddoes went on to Oxford in 1820, and published his acclaimed work *The Bride's Tragedy* in 1822 at the age of nineteen. In 1825 he went to Göttingen University to take up his medical studies, following in the footsteps of his famous father. During this time, he wrote his extraordinary and powerful work *Death's Jest Book, or The Fool's Tragedy*, a text which underwent much revision and reorganisation. The nature of the revisions, and the length of this text unfortunately take it beyond the scope of this present study. Beddoes was ultimately sent down from Göttingen, as a punishment for spectacularly drunken binges at his lodgings. Donner gives an account of one of these in his introduction to *The Plays And Poems Of Thomas Lovell Beddoes* (1950).

When he appeared to be dozing off, the policemen left. But within half an hour the a new call arrived at police headquarters from his landlord saying that Beddoes was making

an awful noise in the house. When the reinforced patrol arrived, however, he was quiet and made no more noise that night. His landlord, nevertheless, could show them his trunk and writing-table and other belongings in the courtyard where he had thrown them out of the window ... On the following morning Beddoes emerged and in the company of a few friends consumed eight bottles of wine in celebration of his deeds.

The next day he was forbidden to leave his lodgings between eight in the evening and six in the morning. Three days later he made his first appearance before the university court. He denied all knowledge of the offenses charged against him, because he had been drunk and did not remember what had happened.

(Introduction, xliii.)

After leaving Göttingen, Beddoes matriculated at Würzburg University, and completed his medical studies there. He was eventually forced to leave, however, as his involvement in the Radical Party's campaign against the King of Bavaria was being followed by the secret police. At party meetings, Donner tells us, Beddoes, "depicted the aristocracy as creatures lacking all soul ... he spoke in fiery metaphors of political freedom and of the happiness of the free citizen" (*Plays and Poems*, xlviii). Beddoes was ordered to be deported from Würzburg, stalled for time, and was briefly imprisoned for debt. He then matriculated at Zurich University, where he was denied a medical professorship owing to his reputation for subversive activities. According to Donner, he "stayed on until 9 April 1840, when, by all accounts, he had suddenly to flee the country ... the only conclusion seems to be that he had been guilty of some exceptionally violent attack on the government or felt himself under suspicion and sought safety before arrest—a fate which indeed did overtake other foreign political agitators at that very time".²⁶

During his time at Zurich, Beddoes developed an extremely close friendship with a young man called Degen. The intensity of the relationship is suggestive of homosexuality, something which Hiram Kallogg Johnson in an otherwise uninspiring

article in the *Psychiatric Quarterly* links with the poet's suicide.

Beddoes experienced some remission in the steadily deepening depression, which had descended upon him. In his enthusiasm for Degen, he even went so far as to charter a theatre in Zurich where his young male companion appeared in the principal part. The end finally came after a violent quarrel when the two became separated. The next morning, Beddoes opened up an artery in his leg and was removed to the city hospital in Basle. The wound did not heal well, possibly because, as Gosse says, he stealthily tore off the bandages, so that an amputation became necessary. As soon as he was strong enough to leave his room, he took the first opportunity to visit the apothecary. On the evening of Jan 26, 1849, he administered himself a massive dose of curare, and was pronounced dead on the same night at 10p.m.⁵⁷

This question of homosexuality is, not surprisingly, disputed by Donner. He attributes the nature of the relationship to Beddoes' worldly failure in general, and his immersion in a strength-sapping but seductive contemptus mundi. The subversive element in the question of his possible homosexuality is submerged within the romanticised vision of his overwhelming desire for non-being. This echoes the version of Beddoes which we see in Allardyce Nicoll's criticism. Nicoll presents the playwright as "more than half in love with easeful death", and links this with his revival of the "gloomy and macabre conceptions of the seventeenth-century stage".⁵⁸ Donner's view is given below.

At Frankfurt Beddoes pursued his scientific experiments and one day, while dissecting, cut his finger and for six months suffered from the effects of blood-poisoning. One almost wonders whether the accident was genuine. As usual when he was ill, he cut himself off from all company, except Degen, who came in to see him at least twice a week. But Gosse's insinuation that he lived with Degen is absolutely without foundation. Whatever his friendships, they were not of a nature to convince Beddoes of anything except the 'absurdity and unsatisfactory nature of human life'. His friendship for Reich had not been sufficient to deter him from trying to commit suicide at Göttingen, nor was his deep and genuine attachment to Degen of a nature to make him prolong his

existence now. His philosophy, so far from that of an inverted Don Giovanni, successful in love-making, is on the contrary that of a man whose heart is with the dead, whose soul is in eternity.³⁹

In this introduction to Beddoes' *Plays And Poems*, Donner positions the now little-known dramatist as an emblematic missing-link, whose recovery illustrates and upholds accepted milestones in our perception of an ongoing literary tradition. Donner appropriates Lytton Strachey's comment on the place which Beddoes occupies within this tradition: that of "The Last Elizabethan". This concept eclipses the transitory nature of Beddoes' appreciation by his contemporaries, and is implicated in reforming the 'circle' whose breach is exposed by Hazlitt in *Lectures On The Age Of Elizabeth* in 1817. For both Donner and Lytton Strachey, Beddoes personifies what Hazlitt regarded as the "sacred influence of light": the force by which the spirit of Elizabethanism may eclipse the "worse than gothic darkness" of Restoration drama,⁴⁰ something which has contaminated subsequent playwrights.

In his lifetime the most obscure but after his death slowly recognised as the most remarkable of English poets; in the late Lytton Strachey's phrase, the 'Last Elizabethan'; but equally, in an age of Romantic exhaustion, the first of the moderns.⁴¹

Like Donner, Lytton Strachey discusses Beddoes' relationship with Renaissance tragedy, but is less eager to question the implications of such a relationship. For the latter critic, the Renaissance writers confirm Beddoes' place amongst the poetical elect. The ethos of piety which Hazlitt invokes within criticism promoting Jacobean drama, provides a writer such as Lytton Strachey with a sound basis for Beddoes' own revival as the "Last Elizabethan".

The shrine of poetry is a secret one; and it is fortunate that this should be the case; for it gives a sense of security. The cult is too mysterious and intimate to figure upon census papers; there are no turnstiles at the temple gates ... Yet if Apollo were to

come down (after the manner of deities) and put questions—must we suppose to the Laureate?—as to the number of the elect, could we be quite sure of escaping wrath and destruction? Let us hope for the best; and perhaps, if we were bent upon finding out the truth, the simplest way would be to watch the sales of the new edition of the poems of Beddoes, which Messrs. Routledge have lately added to the "Muses' Library". How many among Apollo's pew-renters, one wonders, have ever heard of him? For some reason or another, this great poet—for as I hope to show, he deserves no meaner title - has not only never received the recognition which is his due, but has failed almost entirely to receive any recognition whatever ... But Beddoes' highest claim to distinction does not rest upon his lyrical achievements, consummate as these achievements are; it rests upon his extraordinary eminence as a master of dramatic blank verse. Perhaps his greatest misfortune was that he was born at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, and not at the end of the sixteenth. His proper place was among that noble band of Elizabethans, whose strong and splendid spirit gave to England, in one miraculous generation, the most glorious heritage of drama that the world has known. If Charles Lamb had discovered his tragedies among the folios of the British Museum, and had given extracts from them in the "Specimens of Dramatic Poets", Beddoes' name would doubtless be as familiar to us now as those of Marlowe and Webster, Fletcher and Ford. As it happened, however, he came as a strange and isolated phenomenon, a star which had wandered from its constellation, and was lost among alien lights.

(*"The Last Elizabethan"* in *The New Quarterly*, (1907, pp.47-48))⁶²

Lytton Strachey's Beddoes has been misfiled in time, and time has, comfortingly, redressed the error, by exposing it to a later and more appreciative audience.

But the truth is that Beddoes was not a "creeper into worm-holes," he was not even a "reviver"; he was a reincarnation. Everything that we know of him goes to show that the laborious and elaborate effort of literary reconstruction was quite alien to his spirit. We have Kelsall's evidence as to the ease and abundance of his composition; we have the character of the man, as it shines forth in his letters and in the history of his life— records of a "bold, trampling fellow," if ever there was one; and we have the evidence of his poetry itself. (p.61)

Beddoes becomes, in a sense, a transhistorical symbol, a modern ambassador for Hazlitt's "island voice"⁴³ which rejected the artistic fripperies of a neighbouring power. Just as the past imperfect Jacobean was for Hazlitt, Beddoes becomes Lytton Strachey's focus for the essential Englishman. The poet's ebullient unconventionality is presented as a metaphor for an irrepressible national originality. Donner casts Beddoes in the role of a romantic Faust figure: erratic, original, unfulfilled. The earlier critic Lytton Strachey, lays the foundation for this reading of the playwright. He places Beddoes as a nineteenth-century Hamlet, displaced, but never dispossessed.

His characters, so eminently English, with something coarse in it as well, puts one in mind of Hamlet: not the melodramatic sentimentalist of the stage, but the real Hamlet, Horatio's Hamlet, who called his father's ghost old truepenny, who forged his uncle's signature, who fought Laertes, and ranted in a grave, and lugged the guts into another room. His tragedy, like Hamlet's, was the tragedy of an all-powerful will—a will so strong as to recoil upon itself, and fall into indecision. It is easy for a weak man to be decided—there is so much to make him so; but a strong man, who can do anything, sometimes leaves everything undone. Fortunately Beddoes, though he did far less than he might have done, possessed so rich a genius that what he did was beyond Price. (p.70)

Hamlet and the nearly Professor Beddoes are shown as burdened by a gift which is far greater than their own ability to rework it as a definitive legacy for future generations. To remain true to this cause, Beddoes is viewed by Lytton Strachey as a conscientious martyr to the idealist principles of poetic construction. This mythologisation of Beddoes represents an attempt to bring him within the aegis of the literary/historical canon. This critique, nevertheless, offers a powerful illustration of the form of anxiety which Hazlitt expresses, when he feels that literary reputation is being unfairly claimed by the undeserving. Both critics, subscribe, then,

to the very ideological structures which have resisted the canonization of their lost prodigies. The seductive sense of order present in the Shakespeare mythos, for example, justifies the sense of inferiority which Hazlitt imposes upon the very writers he wishes to revive and re-appraise. In the closing section of his chapter on *Troilus And Cressida*, Jonathan Dollimore outlines the kind of philosophical contradiction upon which Lytton Strachey's article is based.

Central to the development of essentialist humanism is a view of tragedy which sees it almost exclusively in terms of man's defeated potential. But it is a kind of defeat which actually confirms the potential. Perhaps this is the significance of 'tragic waste': the forces destructive of life (fate, fortune, the gods or whatever) paradoxically pressure it into its finest expression in the events which lead to, and especially those which immediately precede, the protagonist's death. In one sense what is being identified is a potential somehow passively realised in its very defeat. We see, for example, protagonists learning wisdom through suffering, willing to know and endure their fate even as it destroys them. It may be that the individual, in virtue of a 'tragic flaw', is partly responsible for his or her suffering. Even so, the extent of that suffering is usually disproportionate to the weakness (hubris, passion, ambition or whatever); to this extent the individual is more sinned against than sinning, and his or her potential is finally reaffirmed in a capacity to suffer with more than human fortitude: 'There's a grace on mortals who so nobly die'. Additionally the protagonist's potential may be realised in a sacrificial sense, death leading to a regeneration of the universe.

(*Radical Tragedy*, p.49)

Lytton Strachey circumscribes Beddoes' demise within the universalist order which Dollimore describes. Both Donner and Strachey romanticise the poet's violent suicide, until it is perceived, almost, in terms of a vision of order represented as a form of poetic justice. "The poet of death" returns to his source.

His life was full of high nobility; and what other way of death would have befitted the poet of death?

(*The Last Elizabethan*, p.71)

H.W. Donner presents Beddoes' death in a similar manner. His work is expressed as a languorous textual parallel with his life experience and prediction of his suicide. This last act, indeed, is described as an "act of faith".

There is an almost threatening note in his latest fragments, as if he meant to say: Beware, the spirit will get the better of you. His self-inflicted death, whatever the momentary misery and direct cause, was the triumphant close of a career devoted to the discovery of proofs physical and spiritual of man's existence in another sphere. His suicide was an act of faith.⁶⁴

The mythologisation of Beddoes as a misunderstood Elizabethan, a nineteenth-century Renaissance man, is a particularly problematical comparison to invoke. It may be argued that Donner underwrites his descriptions of Beddoes' spectacular activities in Göttingen, by means of an invocation of a disreputable, yet historically valid, literary source. Beddoes' antics are shown as ebullient schoolboy japes, born of excessive creative energy, rather than the more pressing interpretation of a manifestation of a depressive mental illness. If the Renaissance writers are employed in order to offer a transhistorical reference for the disruptive Beddoes, then this is a reading which the critic clearly finds difficult to sustain. Donner's essentialist humanism suggests an underlying version of the poetic ideal proposed by Shelley. In order to remain faithful to this vision, the disruptive influence of the Renaissance writers must be quietly domesticated within the ongoing process of Beddoes' revival.

Although Donner gives a scholarly and detailed catalogue of the playwright's active participation in radical politics, neither he, nor the other critics under discussion give any serious attention to the subject itself, or relate it to Beddoes' literary output. There is no suggestion that his anti-establishment ideals, for example, bear any relation to the nature of his interest in Renaissance drama. The most colourful of these critical views on Beddoes' politics is given by Hiram Kellogg

Johnson in *The Psychiatric Quarterly* (1943). In this article, Beddoes' works "enjoy a certain fame more clinical than literary" (p.448). The poet's political activities are viewed as much a facet of his pathological personality as of his possible homosexuality, something which he flaunts, rather unsportingly, alongside his obsession with death. The conservatism inherent in this critique is undeniable. Beddoes remains less potentially disruptive if he is seen as a psychiatric curiosity.

Secretly, he continued to write poetry always nursing the fancy that he was a sort of super-Shelley and one day would fulfil the promises of his childhood. Outwardly, he mixed his medical work with politics, and although in time he came to practise medicine he spent much more of his energy in radical activities. As a revolutionary he was imprisoned at least once, and driven from several countries. The bulk of his work had been printed years before, but when he died alone an exile in Basle it was found that during the intervening years he had been working on a huge, rambling five act tragedy, the *Death's Jest Book* which still constitutes one of the strangest and most pathological works in the English language ... This was the sort of household in which the poet grew up, an over-intellectualized, politically "pink" household, full of eccentric intellectuals wherein that lusty fledgling Science, was absolute monarch and the reading by the children of fairy stories, romances and such trash was strictly forbidden. On the whole, the Beddoes household reminds us very much of our own distinguished New England families, whose intellectual radicalism is based less on a feeling for downtrodden mankind than as an expression of hostility for their own social stratum.

(*Thomas Lovell Beddoes, A Psychiatric Study*, p.447)

The critical representation of this writer appears to be particularly important, as his own socially privileged position appears to be threatened by the nature of his behaviour, and the startling qualities in his language. The psychiatrist's reading suggests a parallel with Lytton Strachey's 'Hamlet' analogy. The latter critic offers an essentialist reading of both protagonists as wealthy dispossessed intellectuals, who transcend their earthly bonds: "the tragedy of an all-powerful will—a will so strong as to recoil upon itself, and fall into indecision" (p.70). In this way, the extent of

Beddoes' disruptive potential is both defined and restricted. The question of an Elizabethan influence is offered as the vague emblematic source of a morbidity which has a literary/historical foundation. Beddoes' contemptus mundi and visceral intrigues may have been provoked by a childhood spent in the dissecting-room, yet the Elizabethans are invoked as an objective leveller: a controlling critical adjective. The seventeenth-century allusion is curiously antithetical in this respect, and may well have been appreciated by Beddoes himself, in view of his own family's recent radical tradition. His father was ousted from his Chair of Medicine at Oxford, in response to his anti-establishment speeches.

When we consider Donner's account of Beddoes' political leanings, we see the level at which the critic is working in order to refute Beddoes' involvement in a direct form of social criticism.

Three of his articles in the *Volksblatt* deal with English Affairs, and he speaks with admiration and pride of his constitutional Monarch and of the liberal leaders, but with an immeasurable hatred of the Duke of Wellington. Brougham was his great hero, in whose work for educational and constitutional reform he found inspiration and encouragement. The aristocracy and the clergy were to him nothing but the forces of darkness and reaction. His attitude was extreme, and his hatred as passionate as his admiration. The wise caution which experience had taught him to adopt in matters of literary criticism, completely vanished the moment he touched on politics. To such an extent had the practical activity of body and mind rejuvenated him.

The articles in the *Volksblatt* are the only political prose writings of Beddoes that have survived. The editor of the paper was Gottfried Eismann ... a revolutionary of long standing and republican views, whose release from prison in 1825 was only conditional and who, like Behr and many other radicals, was only to be imprisoned again. Vulnerable as he thus was, he could yet allow Beddoes to vent his extremist views in matters that concerned England, France, and Poland, and Beddoes took this opportunity. Like many scandalous remarks in his early letters, the ruthlessness and bad taste of Beddoes' attacks in the *Volksblatt* on the Duke of Wellington, on the aristocracy in general are painful to recall, but his plea

for the education of the people and for their participation in public affairs is remarkable. He was in this matter in the vanguard of the advocates of progress, and, whether for good or ill, the way he pointed was the one in which succeeding generations have travelled. Historical developments have thus proved, if not necessarily the wisdom of his ideas, at least the possibility of their realization, and have thus vindicated their impassioned advocate.⁴³

Curiously, then, it is the process of history itself which absolves Beddoes. His radical politics are essentialised by being endowed with a prophetic insight into their own future validation. Donner's "historical developments" are employed as a universalist metaphor which de-historicises and abstracts the conditions in which the offending articles were produced. Beddoes' hatred of Wellington is particularly intriguing, as he was generally hailed in the early nineteenth-century as the personification of national military achievement and power. Beddoes appears to be promoting a European rather than an isolationist strategy. The playwright's rejection of the Wellington mythos, then, raises an interesting question in relation to the version of Renaissance vigour which both Donner and Lytton Strachey construct for him. Beddoes clearly does not intend to promote himself as the repository of exclusively English golden-age values.

Like his dramatic and critical contemporaries, Beddoes expresses a firm interest in improving the standards of productions in the British theatre. Donner gives an account of one spectacular demonstration against the contemporary fare.

He did not turn up for dinner, but on approaching Drury Lane the Proctors found Beddoes arrested by the police for attempting to set the theatre on fire by means holding a burning five-pound note against a chair ... there can be little doubt that this was a genuine demonstration on Beddoes' part against the 'hapless drama of our day', and if his and Isbrand's friend Lord Alcohol supported him in his contention, this makes the gesture none the less significant.⁴⁴

A discussion of this issue takes us back to the quotation which opens this section on

Beddoes the playwright: the quote which Allardyce Nicoll selects in order to illustrate Beddoes' rejection of a revival of interest in Renaissance tragedy. Beddoes' position is more problematical than this comment suggests, since he is commenting upon the conditions in which the 'revival' is taking place, and the effect which this has on our experience of the texts. Although it is possible to read this passage, as Nicoll does, as an evasion of the radical elements within the plays, Beddoes may also be seen to suggest that contemporary allusions to Jacobean plays are merely the product of an antiquarian curiosity. These writers are being appropriated in order to distract a contemporary audience from the demerits of the modern theatrical production. If they are invoked in support of an ideal, then this is something which will have to be questioned. This short passage reveals an implicit line of criticism which states that Jacobean texts were created as a response to a specific set of socio-historical conditions. All that a revival can offer us, is a "vampire cold", sanitised version of what these conditions might have involved.

In a letter to his friend Kelsall in 1824, Beddoes refers to Sir Walter Scott's edition of Renaissance texts, *The Ancient British Drama*, a project begun in 1810. The extent of Beddoes' interest in the first volume, and the two which followed, suggests that it is the process of revival itself which troubles the playwright, and not an actual serious and scholarly attempt to reissue the plays for a modern audience.

You are very unnecessarily suspicious of N°1 Ancient B. Drama. Turn to your Massinger Vol 1. Preface look at the list of plays saved from the backsides of Warburton's pies. It is out of the Lansdown collection, undoubtedly authentic, and contains some very fine things! It is to be followed by other most desirable reprints—The Devil's Law Case—Marston's Insatiate Countess—Comedies of Middleton & other previous scarcities.⁶⁷

Although this intense interest is something of a departure in nineteenth-century

writings on Renaissance drama, Beddoes' own commentaries disclose a series of contradictions. Nevertheless, he exposes what he sees as the farcical attempt to write closet dramas. This type of play aims to appropriate a sense of decorum implicit in the tragic genre, whilst attempting to evade the ramifications of the text's performance before a live audience.

For if this affair excites no notice [*Death's Jest-Book*] I think I may conclude that I am no writer for the time and generation, and we all know that posterity will have its own people to talk about.

You are, I think, disinclined to the stage: now I confess that this is the highest aim of the dramatist & should be very desirous to get on it. To look down on it is a piece of impertinence as long as one chooses to write in the form of a play, and is generally the result of a consciousness of one's inability to produce anything striking and affecting in that way. Shakespeare wrote only for it, Ld B. despised it, or rather affected this as well as every other passion, which is the secret of his style and poetry in life.⁶⁸

The most pertinent question to be asked, then, is whether Beddoes is reworking anti-establishment elements in Renaissance texts, or simply taking a more subtle line in relation to the mythology of seventeenth-century vigour embraced by his contemporaries. The quotation given below, may be reminiscent of Hazlitt's nationalism, which set a powerful precedent for forthcoming commentators on seventeenth-century drama. Nevertheless, the playwright's experiences on the continent show him to be far from the closet nationalist which the passage might suggest. As I have previously discussed, his progression of sackings, arrests, deportations, rallies and speeches suggest that he considered himself a European, a rootless semi-professional agitator who delighted in exposing corrupt systems of power. The thought that he may have caused offence to a pillar of the establishment was particularly pleasing, especially when such an institution as Oxford had to come to terms with the fact that it had harboured an unforeseen radical in its midst.

Although the passage is unremarkable in relation to contemporary views on Renaissance texts, the wish which follows implies that the "villainous school" referred to is not Charterhouse, but the seventeenth-century tragedians. Beddoes may style himself as a malcontented figure, but he does so at a much deeper interrogative level than Lytton Strachey, Allardyce Nicoll, or H.W. Donner would have us believe. This is an issue which will be discussed in detail in relation to *The Bride's Tragedy* itself.

In my preface I have made use of an essay on Tragedy by Southey's Dutch friend Bilderdijk, which is, I think, extremely satisfactory and establishes the independence of the English Drama of all Greek authority on a undeniable historical foundation. B. to be sure is directly opposed to the English in taste, but this is nothing to the purpose, he has given us good weapons if we can only use them. It is not really a ridiculous fact that of all our modern dramatists none, (for who can reckon a Mr. Rowe now a days?) has approached in any degree to the form of play delivered to us by the founders of our stage. All—from Massinger & Shirley down to Shiel and Knowles more or less French: and how could they expect a lasting popularity? The people are in this case wiser than the critics: ...

Poor Mr Professor Milman will really be quite horrified, if he should live to read the *J. Book*, at the thought that a fellow of so a villainous school" as its author should have been bred up at Oxford during his dictatorship there. I hope he will review me. Indeed, I only lament that so much absurdity in reviews is likely to escape me on account of my foreign residence.⁶⁹

In spite of his paradoxical views on the recovery of Renaissance texts, Beddoes subscribes to the teleological vision of Shakespeare at the heart of an "imaginary universe", with his contemporaries considerably devalued against "sleepless sun of his golden intellect"⁷⁰. Whilst he implies that the Jacobean in general may be appropriated to fulfil an interrogative function, Shakespeare cannot be decontextualised, and his position remains constant. Whether or not this is borne

out in the allusive text of *The Bride's Tragedy* is an issue which I will go onto raise in the next section.

"Memory's Wizard Pencil": Revival and *The Bride's Tragedy*

In his analysis of Beddoes, H.W. Donner details a probable source for *The Bride's Tragedy*. The work appears to be based upon events which centre upon the issue of class-difference. This theme is clearly one which runs throughout Jacobean tragedy. This final section will analyse Beddoes' representation of this theme, and will offer a comparative investigation of the issues as reflected in the Renaissance texts which Beddoes appears to echo: Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* and Massinger's *The Duke Of Milan*.

By the time of the publication of *The Bride's Tragedy* the story that had set the young poet's fancy working more than eighteen months earlier, had been published in a book of poems by Thomas Grillet, and Beddoes consequently referred to this publication as the source of his play. The story is purported to be founded on real events which had taken place at Oxford in the early part of the eighteenth-century. It is best related in Beddoes' own words.

The Manciple of one of the colleges ... had a very beautiful daughter, who was privately married to a student without the knowledge of the parents on either side. During the long vacation subsequent to this union the husband was introduced to a young lady, who was at the same time proposed as his bride: absence, the fear of his father's displeasure, the presence of a lovely object, and most likely, a natural fickleness of disposition overcame any regard he might have cherished for his ill-fared wife, and finally he became deeply enamoured of her unconscious rival. In the contest between duty and desires, which was the consequence of this passion, the worse part of man prevailed and he formed and executed a design almost unparalleled in the annals of crime.

His second nuptials were at hand when he returned to Oxford, and to her who was now an obstacle to his happiness. Late at night he prevailed upon his victim to accompany him to a lone spot in the Divinity Walk, and there murdered and

buried her ...

In this account Beddoes follows Gillet's ballad rather than the *Memoir* which was its source. According to the latter the secret marriage took place only after the courtship of the other lady had begun, and Beddoes must have shrunk from the wickedness of such conduct. Of the various motives for the second marriage he omits the one stressed by his sources, i.e. ambition. This is significant not only because Beddoes himself possessed no social ambition, but also because it tends to put the social theme into the background. That the student's second bride was the daughter of a Peer of the realm meant nothing to him; he stresses the fickleness of disposition and represents the young man as genuinely in love with the girl of his second choice. This gives us a line on the treatment of his subject ... Beddoes transplants the story into a vague country at a vague date—in every respect vaguer than an Elizabethan drama, but just the sort of scene cherished by the Romantics ...

Donner suggests, then, that Beddoes attempts a partial domestication of his original source, on two levels, but the nature of this censorship only stresses the dramatist's bias towards an individual moral purity of purpose. Donner's Beddoes spares his audience the "wickedness" of the student's act, and de-fuses the issue of class-difference precisely because, on a personal level, it is of no consequence to him. This is an inherently paradoxical critique, which applauds Beddoes' egalitarian principles and yet juxtaposes their radical implications within an arena which is actively hostile to them. Donner enacts a form of pastoral 'closure' in his vision of the nineteenth-century writer. I aim to argue that Beddoes' refusal to implicate his own aristocrat in an act of pre-meditated bigamy suggests that the issue of class-difference is clearly something which he considers central to the drama, rather than peripheral.

Beddoes' interest in Renaissance drama reflects similar contradictions to those expressed in the works of his aforementioned contemporaries. He does, however, claim a more powerful identification with the plays as potentially disruptive texts.

The most obvious issue addressed in the play in question is that of class-difference, and the nature of its relationship with the prevailing moral order. This questioning takes place within a formal discourse which underlines the natural and pre-social justice upon which its values are based. Throughout the play, Beddoes invokes, and simultaneously interrogates, the ideological position of the pastoral idyll in which his protagonist, Hesperus, takes refuge. It is this particular investigation which may explain the apparent domestication of his original source. In *The Bride's Tragedy*, the reader is seduced by the anti-intellectual contentment which the sylvan fantasy offers, only to have this vision disrupted and exploited. An early example from the opening scene underlines the question of class-difference as retained within the supposed leveller of pastoral discourse. As his social inferior, Floribel, Hesperus' secret wife, is represented as having to distance herself from his visionary metaphors, in order to outline the nature of the reality which she herself is experiencing. Their exchange of flower imagery recalls Ophelia's mad-scenes in *Hamlet*, and suggest an ironic appropriation of the result of Ophelia's betrayal by her former suitor. Whilst Ophelia has had her previously mapped-out social identity hopelessly disrupted by Hamlet's change of demeanour towards her, Hesperus employs her flower metaphors in a form which stresses their social context. Beddoes confirms that the obscurantist idealisation and personification of aspects of physical nature may be invoked as a means of transcending an investigation of the social conditions and circumstances which necessitates the 'escape' itself. It is Floribel's participation in the un-worldly marriage, instead of choosing to reveal it, which helps seal her fate.

Flor. And here's a treasure that I found by chance,
 A lily of the valley; how it lay
 Over a mossy mound, withered and weeping
 As on a fairy's grave.

Hesp. Of all the posy
Give me the rose, though there's a tale of blood
Soiling its name ...

Flor. Take it then,
In its green sheath. What guess you, Hesperus,
I dreamed last night? Indeed, it makes me sad,
And yet I think you love me.

Hesp. By the planet
That sheds its tender blue on lovers' sleeps,
Thou art my sweetest, nay, mine only thought:
And when my heart forgets thee, may yon heaven
Forget to guard me.

Flor. Aye, I knew thou didst;
Yet surely mine's a lonely fate
Thus to be wed in secrecy; I doubt,
E'n while I know my doubts are causeless torments.
Yet I conjure thee, if indeed I hold
Some share in thy affections, cast away
The blank and ugly vizor of concealment,
And, if mine homely breeding do not shame thee,
Let thy bride share her noble father's blessing.

Hesp. In truth I will; nay, prithee let me kiss
That naughty tear away; I will, by heaven;
For, though austere and old, my sire must gaze
On thy fair innocence with glad forgiveness.
Look up my love,
See how yon orb, dressed out in all her beams,
Puts out the common stars, and sails along
The stately Queen of heaven; so shall thy beauties,
But the rich casket of a noble soul,
Shine on the world and bless it. Tell me now
This frightful vision.

Flor. You will banter me;
But I'm a simple girl, and oftentimes
In solitude am very, very mournful: ...
'Twas on a fragrant bank I laid me down,
Laced o'er and o'er with verdant tendrils, full
Of dark-red strawberries ...
(1.1.40,64,92)

The conflict which is so cleverly exposed in this early dialogue is sustained throughout Hesperus' outrage and despair at the nature of his subsequent situation. He is faced with a marriage with the sister of his father's creditor, in order to secure the weak old man's release from prison. The situation is inherently ambiguous.

Hesperus chooses not to take the simple way out of a bigamous marriage, revealing his present one, which would also clear the way for a realistic negotiation of his father's situation. The major issue which Beddoes addresses then, is one of class-difference and the ambitious pursuit of social status.

This is an issue which is directly articulated by Floribel's father Mordred. He implicates Lord Ernest, Hesperus' father, in his daughter's fate in Act III, a fate he is, as yet, unaware of. Although Hesperus himself is deemed an un-worldly and worthy suitor, Lord Ernest is infamous for his belief in reinforcing class-differences in order to secure his position of power.

Mor.

My wish is all fulfilled. There's not a man
Beneath the sun more noble; but his father
Was wont to be a stern imperious lord,
A scorner of the poor.

I'm satisfied,

Len.

Mor. He knew it not! That was a sad omission,
Unworthy of a parent, we might rue it.
(III.5.37)

He did not know it.

Ernest, indeed, is a particularly insidious peddler of emotive clichés. His prison is continuously transformed around him, from a "tomb" to a "hermitage" and allows him to extract the optimum obeisance from his son. Ernest reinforces the concept of filial duty by invoking the language which most successfully represents the essential legitimacy of patriarchal authority. The implausibility of Ernest's tone is furthered, perhaps, by his allusion to Lear's imprisonment, a means of gaining a sympathetic response from his audience. Ernest aims to tap into a mythos of fathers unjustly wronged, as this wrong underlines a consequent threat to the universal order which he represents. Although it does not question Shakespeare's teleological centrality, the ironic portrayal of Lord Ernest may be seen to offer a subtle questioning of the basis

basis of prevailing Romantic readings of Shakespearean texts.

Enter Guards leading LORD ERNEST in chains

L. Ern. I pray you do not pity me. I feel
 A kind of joy to meet Calamity,
 My old friend again. Go tell your lord
 I give him thanks for these his iron bounties.
 How now? I thought you led me to a prison,
 A dismal anti-chamber of the tomb,
 Where creatures dwell, whose ghosts but half inhabit
 Their ruinous flesh-houses; here is air
 As fresh as that the bird of morning sings in,
 And shade that scarce is dusk, but just enough

To please the meek and twilight-loving eye
 Of lone Religion. 'Tis an hermitage
 Where I may sit and tell my o'erpass'd years,
 And fit myself for dying. My old heart
 Holds not enough of gratitude to pay
 This noble kindness, that in guise of cruelty
 Compels me to my good.
 (I. 3.1)

Hesperus yields to the authority of the pater familias, an act which he describes as "sanctify[ing] his guilt" (III.3.1.101). His desire for oblivion upon his father's release charts the black comedy of a learned helplessness which is the product of the Romantic discourse of isolation and despair. The powerful metaphors of world destruction, however, also invoke an echo of the despair of the Renaissance malcontented figure, venting his anger and despair at the corrupt systems of authority which deny him access to decision making processes himself. Within the following quotation, the "wounds" which may "gape again" are reminiscent of Deflores' comparison of himself to a "common garden-bull": "I do but take breath to be lugg'd again".⁷²

There, there they go; my hopes, my youthful hopes,
 Like ingrate flatterers. What have I to do
 With life? Ye sickly stars, that look with pity
 On this cursed head, be kind and tell the lightning

To scathe me to a cinder; or if that
 Be too much blessing for a child of sin,
 But strike me mad, I do not ask for more.
 Come from your icy caves, ye howling winds,
 Clad in your gloomy panoply of clouds,
 And call into your cars, as ye pass o'er
 The distant quarters of the tortured world,
 Every disease of every clime,
 Here shall banquet on a willing victim;
 Or with one general ague shake the earth,
 The pillars of the sky dissolve and burst,
 And let the ebon-tiled roof of night
 Come tumbling in upon the doomed world:
 Deaf are they still: then death is all a fable,
 A pious lie to make man lick his chains
 And look for freedom's dawning through his grate.
 Why are we tied unto this wheeling globe,
 Still to be racked while traitorous Hope stands by,
 And heals the wounds that they might gape again?
 Aye to this end the earth is made a ball,
 Else crawling to the brink despair would plunge
 Into the infinite eternal air, ...
 (1.3.117)

Hesperus' contemptus mundi expresses his denial of intellectual fulfilment, the despair of moral blackmail, and the lack of any radical alternative. Any anti-establishment activity would be self-defeating: he would endanger his social position. In altering the circumstances of his source-story, then, Beddoes is not romanticising it out of a sense of decorum and personal horror, as Donner suggests. Rather than offering us a melodramatic villain in a pre-meditated murder and bigamy, we have a fairly complex investigation of the systems of power which precipitate the action of the drama. For Hesperus, murdering Floribel is the healthiest alternative. This suggests that, in spite of the spiritual torment which the idea supposedly invokes, it is less inherently sinful than remaining true to the socially inferior bride.

It is his decision to marry Olivia and release his father, then, which provokes Hesperus' outbursts against Floribel, and his accusation of adultery. Floribel is disturbed by her husband, whilst she is receiving an unexpected visit from the

page-boy of Orlando, a rival suitor and Ernest's erstwhile jailer. Innocent of any involvement with Orlando, who is unaware of the marriage, she kisses the page-boy, who consoles her for the upset which Orlando's love-letter has caused. Seeing the kiss, Hesperus launches into a diatribe which comes easily to him, the conceptual institution of the woman as the errant Eve, awaiting the inevitable fall. Floribel moves from an arcadian virginal perfection into an adulterous and threatening force, and this merits a form of punishment and control. Hesperus mourns the violation of his vision of pastoral perfection, and the hypocrisy of his outraged decorum once again questions the social function of the clichés so readily accessible to him in order to condemn his bride. Floribel's retort is terse and ambiguous, and suggests that she recalls conflict inherent in the arena in which their marriage was isolated: a pastoral, other-worldly idyll, free from all social constraints. Although her answer may be read as submissive, it also suggests that Hesperus' understanding of Floribel's social experience and individual needs have always been as superficial as his reversal now reveals. The brevity of her responses contrast vividly with his egotistical and indulgent display.

Hesp. Why Floribel,—Girl! Painted fickleness!
Madam, I'm rude; but Hesperus did not think
He could intrude on—what was Floribel.

Flor. Nor doth he ever.

Hesp. If he does not now,
Be sure he won't again. Oh girl, girl, girl,
Thou'st killed my heart: I thought thee once, good
fool,
I will not tell thee what, thou'lt laugh at me.

Flor. By heaven!

Hesp. Don't name it: do not be forsworn.
But why should I regard thy words or oaths? ...

Flor. By the solemn spousal tie,
I charge you, hear me,

Hesp. Lady, I will tell you,
Though it needless, what I meant to say,
And leave you then forever, You remember

A loving dupe you entertained some while,
 One Hesperus, you must; oh! that you ever
 Forgot him. Well, I will be brief. ...
 (II.2.130,138)

The disparate nature of their comments suggests that Floribel recognises that she is not permitted to engage in any rational debate over the actions with which she is charged. She is articulated as the 'other', and is not allotted the status from which to launch a form of self-defence. The disruption of Hesperus' pastoral vision of inviolate innocence may be read as a pointed interrogation of the values which sustain it. Jonathan Dollimore offers a succinct analysis of the disruption of perceived 'natural' forces in his discussion of the kinship of Flamineo and Vittoria in Webster's *The White Devil*.

Here, as throughout Jacobean tragedy, the bonds of nature and kind collapse under pressure and, because they break—indeed, precisely as they break—they are shown to be not natural at all, but social.

(*Radical Tragedy*, p.236)

Beddoes' play raises several of the issues which Dollimore argues are interrogated in Webster's text. Dollimore's reading of the "Christian/stoic belief in the efficacy of adversity" (p.223) focuses the experience of the passive yet analytical Floribel in Beddoes' play.

In short *realpolitik* presupposes for its successful operation complicity by the few, ideological misrecognition by the many. At this same point in *The White Devil* (Act I scene ii) we witness yet again irony in the service of subversion: Cornelia preaches to the Duke precisely the myth which ratifies his exploitation of subjects like her. Having internalised her position as one of the exploited she does not exactly make the rod for her own back, but when the master drops it she is the one who 'instinctively' returns it to him. By embracing the Christian ethic of humility and passive virtue Cornelia endures poverty and reproaches her son's conduct with the question: 'what? because we are poor/Shall we be vicious?' (I.ii.304-5).

In *this* society the only means of alleviating poverty is a self-regarding viciousness. Here, as in the very first scene of the play, we see the lie being given to the Christian/stoic belief in the efficacy of adversity. (p.223)

Floribel "internalise[s] her position as one of the exploited", as she recognises the futility of reacting against the nature of the discourse which condemns her. She does not expose the legal marriage. She "deliberately returns the rod" to Hesperus by appealing to his better nature. Beddoes' play reveals an illustration of the extent to which pastoral and non-pastoral worlds can not be deemed mutually exclusive: fantasy and reality. The values and boundaries have become interlinked, and irrevocably blurred. The moral framework to which Hesperus subscribes is hopelessly confused: he displaces social concerns into the arena of religion. For the most part, religion is employed to bolster decisions which are based wholly upon a question of social advancement.

Floribel enters the wood in (III.1) unable to comprehend nature outwith its cultivated form: 'The Garden' of the first act. Beddoes arguably offers an investigation of Arcadian and Romantic pastoral discourses as a complex facet of the prevailing discourse of power and domination. The wild wood is an alien concept to the young woman, yet her physical reality is a home in a relatively poor rural setting. Uncultivated 'nature' is beyond comprehension because it has been neither physically or metaphorically signposted. It is thus less real to her than the flowers she tends in the early morning. In entering the forest, Floribel steps outside her place in the pastoral tradition, and thus outwith the protection which the innocence of her role to affords her.

Oh how these brambles tear; here 'twixt the willows; Ha!
something stirs, my silly prattling nurse
Says that fierce shaggy
wolves inhabit here, ...

If life outside the garden does not meet the expectations of the functional fantasy, then the fantasy is wielded in its own defence. Her life pointedly threatened, Floribel can only succumb, in her attempt to gain ground within this power-struggle. This futile paradox involves her appeal to the dominant male figure, and as such stressing her acquiescence and subservience. Beddoes' "horrid laughter"⁷³ underlines the inevitable outcome of this mute sacrifice. Floribel seeks refuge within the confines of the pastoral convention which provokes the nature of the threat she appears to pose.

Hesp. Repent and die.

Flor.

Oh, if thou wilt it, love,

If thou but speak it with thy natural voice,
 And smile upon me; I'll not think it pain,
 But cheerfully I'll seek me out a grave,
 And sleep as sweetly as on Hesperus' breast.
 (III.3.102)

Floribel does not benefit from any "Christian/stoic belief in adversity" any more than Webster's protagonist. Indeed, she talks herself into the position of murder victim, on one level, by remaining faithful to the role in which Hesperus has cast her. The question of "alleviating poverty" which Dollimore addresses in relation to *The White Devil* is a more abstract issue in *The Bride's Tragedy*, and therefore more problematical. It is possible to offer a radical reading of the issue, in Beddoes' play, as the malcontented Hesperus reveals a "self-regarding viciousness" whilst maintaining a privileged social position. The question of monetary gain is shifted outwith the frame of reference of Floribel's family, as they are unaware of the marriage. It is the rival suitor Orlando who perceives a particularly appealing sense of order in marrying Hesperus into his own family: reparation for Ernest's original

debt, and a uniting of the families. For both Hesperus and Orlando, then, this "viciousness" is consequent upon the assumption of a comforting universalist vision of continuity and social order. Beddoes employs the Jacobean motif of the malcontented villain inform which suggests an ultimate rejection of the essential morality which Hesperus and Orlando claim. What he does reflect is the resilience of this morality within those figures who occupy positions of power in the play. Floribel and her family are permitted to question the limitations of their own social position, however. This reinforces, then, an interrogative reading of the tragedy, as the fact that they were once of aristocratic stock does not protect them from being excluded from the sphere of dominant power once their money has disappeared.

Patrick Cullen discusses the contradictions which are inherent in the contending perspectives in what we recognise as the pastoral genre.

Within the fallen world of the Sheperdes Calender the tension between Arcadian and Christian pastoral perspectives is never fully resolved: while the desire for Classical otium threatens to imperil man's Christian and spiritual nature the commands of Christian and humanist spirituality continually threaten to deprive life of any intrinsic meaning.⁷⁴

In Beddoes' play, Hesperus, as we have seen, becomes the battle-ground for these contending perspectives, which disrupt the vision of ideality which he attempts to sustain. Hesperus invokes an abstracted vision of death in order to resolve his confusion in relation to his own actions, yet this is simply another obscurantist strategy. These metaphors of death and decay touch upon both Arcadian and Christian perspectives, and pinpoint the similarity of the socio-political closure which both ideals are implicated in constructing within the play-society.

An example of Beddoes' indictment of transcendent 'pastoral' discourse is the curious version of paradise which the idea of death itself invokes. Hesperus' reaction

to the fragmentation of the ideal of the archetypal innocent woman results in a stultification of his and Olivia's potential for growth. A similar idea is expressed in Alisdair Gray's modern novel *Lanark*. In his representation of stultification in a contemporary setting, he offers a powerful stylised vision of the institutional defensive response to a situation of urban decay and economic collapse. In order for his characters to survive in the freakish welfare benefits system of Unthank, 'energy is drawn from their future'. The prevailing authorities have mapped out their own defence. It is an ironic response of this kind which Beddoes seeks, then, in *Hesperus* and Olivia's fantasy of life in death.

Oliv.

Be it so;

You'll let me pray for death, if it will bring
Such joys as these! Though once I thought to live
An happy bride; but I must learn new feelings.

Hesp. New feelings! Aye to watch the lagging clock,
And bless each moment as it parts from thee,
To court the blighting grasp of tardy age,
And search thy forehead for a silver tress
As for a most prized jewel.
(II.36.88)

This fantasy continues at great length, exerting a powerful control upon *Hesperus*. The result is that he abdicates any responsibility for the murder which follows. The Arcadian ideal, although inverted, still provides the means of invading and overturning entrenched Biblical precepts. These too, however, are appropriated in order to uphold the version of authority on whose behalf *Hesperus* acts. He sees himself, in a sense, as divinely sanctioned to commit the crime. Any individual responsibility is resisted, by invoking the Biblical serpent, which assumes, like filial duty in the previous act, the burden of his guilt.

Hesp. Hail, shrine of blood, in double shadows
veiled,
Where the Tartrian blossoms shed their poison

Faustus, nevertheless, he faces another set of conceptual regulations with a predestined outcome. As Patrick Cullen points out, the virtues of the "pastor bonus" are sustained by the parallel existence of the "pastor malus".⁷⁵ Beddoes reveals, perhaps, (as Dollimore argues in relation 81. to *Dr Faustus*) a Marlovian awareness of the limitations of pastoral doctrinaire systems of belief. Hesperus appeals to the "Eternal people of the lower world" (II.vi.50), to use the words of J.W. Smeed, in order to gain the "command over nature".⁷⁶

Braving the conclusion of the Faust legend, Hesperus is liberated within the expectations of his new role, and becomes free to seek revenge upon those who have supposedly wronged him. The young noble exposes a force in nature which exists (unlike Goethe's Faust) outside Christian philosophy. Hesperus claims kinship with the unnatural in nature, confidently awaiting a solution to the contending, yet similar claims which divine and socio-economic pressures impose upon him. There is, almost, an inverse attempt to restore the elements to a state where the lawful nature of his secular suit, the murder, will be recognised. On one level, then, Hesperus is a grudging necromancer, and one of literature's most reluctant and unlikely Faust figures. Beddoes' joke in implicating him in this mythos verges on the slapstick in the supremacy of the contradiction it exposes. As we have seen, Hesperus' quest has been anti-intellectual from the outset, seeking only to further his own social position. The murder is an attempt to 'escape back' into a previously held security. The invocation of an alter-ego is to this end only: to assume culpability and to thus protect the original investment.

It is, of course, possible to read Beddoes' invocation of the Faust legend as a means of touching upon issues which he does not want to address at any level:

appropriating a vague and tantalising ethos of anarchy which may involve the contemporary vision of an Elizabethan vigour. The variety of the allusions to Renaissance texts, however, does not appear to bear this out. The following diverse comparisons drawn from Henry Vaughan's poem *The Retreat* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* bring a productive element to the questioning of Christian-pastoral perspectives, and the quest for secular authority. As Hesperus moves easily between one allusion and the other, it may be argued that Beddoes suggests a similar authoritative discourse as foregrounding the institutions of organised Christianity, and secular monarchy.

The echo of Vaughan's poem examines the status of the Christian-pastoral retreat, and invokes the gentle mockery of the original. The nineteenth-century writer reflects Vaughan's baptismal metaphor of physical death and spiritual rebirth:

Hesp. For when our souls are born then we will wed;
Our dust shall mix and grow into one stalk
(*The Bride's Tragedy*, (II.3.76))

Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move,
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came return.
(*The Retreat*, 1650)⁷⁷

The plea for renewal in Christ in the Vaughan poem sits uneasily within verse which would re-order heaven's ordering of time such as to bring on death and seclusion. The Renaissance poet simultaneously displays his sin, and exults in the wit of the poetical conceit. Hesperus' bewilderment involves him in a black comedy of blasphemy. Not only is he about to call up demons: the pure robe of innocence is desired as a balm for the very secular agonies of the believed cuckold.

The very next scene echoes the guilt of Shakespeare's Claudius in *Hamlet*:

Hesp. (starting from his couch) Who speaks? Who
whispers there? A light! a light!
(II.4.1)

Beddoes then proceeds to offer a direct and lengthy echo of the dagger scene in *Macbeth*²⁸. Hesperus' dagger is woven in a tapestry, and is brought to life through its association with his desire to rid himself of Floribel and live in resplendent contentment with Olivia. This marriage would constitute a form of promotion in patriarchal terms. Floribel, by contrast, is an ignoble match. This allusion, then, works at a deeper level than a mere deferential echo. Beddoes' play, like Shakespeare's, is concerned with the issues of heredity and continuity. Macbeth is prepared to murder to "be king hereafter", and so is Beddoes' Hesperus, within the confines of his own expectations. *The Bride's Tragedy* takes as its subject systems of authority, and the means by which they are perpetuated. Shakespeare's play about kingship is recalled, on one level, in the form of a conceit. Hesperus' small world, is clearly representative of the lower echelons of the aristocracy in general. His activities are thus less likely to be personified in the individual protagonist. In this sense, then, *The Bride's Tragedy* is a pointed and pertinent, if subtle, critique. The 'dagger' references are given below.

Hesp. Yon stout dagger
Is fairly fashioned for a blade of stitches,
And shines, methinks, most grimly; well, thou art
An useful tool sometimes, thy tooth works quickly,
And if thou gnawest a secret from the heart,
Thou tellest it not again: ha! the feigned steel
Doth blush and steam. There is a snuff of blood.

[Grasps his dagger convulsively.]

Who placed this iron asp in my hand
Speak! who is at my ear?

(He turns, and addresses his shadow.)

I know thee now,

I know the hideous laughter of thy face.
'Tis malice' eldest imp, the heir of hell,
Red-handed murder. Slow it whispers me,

Coaxingly with its serpent voice. Well sung,
 Syren of Acheron!

I'll not look on thee;

Why does thy frantic weapon dig the air
 With such most frightful vehemence? Back, back,
 Tell the dark grave I will not give it food.
 Back to thy home of night. What! playest thou still?
 Then thus I banish thee. Out, treacherous torch,
 Sure thou wert kindled in infernal floods,
 Or thy bright eye would blind at sights like this.
 [*The Bride's Tragedy* (II.4.47)]

Once Floribel is murdered, she presents no threat, and returns to her symbolic position of feminine purity. Hesperus sacrifices her as a means of redeeming the ideal against which she has supposedly transgressed. Beddoes examines the nature of the delusion, and exposes the murder as politically motivated. Once again, Hesperus gains comfort from invoking biblical metaphors (which in this case are pre-Christian) in order to justify his actions. It is intriguing that he seeks a form of redemption from the pre-Christian "first mother" who is the emblematic source of Floribel's failing. The Garden of Eden is presented as the central 'pastoral' symbol in western literary tradition, and it is the source of many of Hesperus' readings of his own experience.

Look what a face: had our first mother worn
 But half such beauty, when the serpent came,
 His heart, all malice, would have turned to love;
 No hand but this, which I do think was once
 Cain, the arch-murderer's, could have acted it.
 (III.3.145)

Olivia's future becomes a wait for death in the company of her husband, and her lines reflect Beddoes' most damning comments in his investigation of the pastoral process. She constructs a nostalgic shrine to her past life, in order to resign her intellectual future. The image of sorcery in "Memory's wizard pencil" exposes the vulnerability of the ritualistic vision she constructs, in order to palliate her

self-abasement.

Henceforth I'll look upon my maiden years
As lovely pastoral pictures; all of you
Shall smile again 'neath Memory's wizard pencil
(III.4.60)

The attendant's response introduces her own conception of pastoral perfection, the Biblical mythos of life before the fall. The intertextual life of the Eden metaphor, however, ensures that the image of the inviolate garden cannot be sustained as a protective force: as a retreat.

Content and holy peace, the twins of Eden
Draw round the curtain 'twixt you and the world ...
(III.5.74)

"Memory's wizard pencil" has long been at work, and outlines a skilful paradox as the play draws to a close. Floribel's mother Lenora attempts to sustain the fragile vision of her daughter's inviolate perfection in the face of its fragmentation: her daughter lies murdered, and has been offered no protection from it. Lenora, in one sense, to recall Dollimore's phrase "make[s] a rod for her own back"⁷⁹ in seeing Floribel's death as a necessary sacrifice. This restores a form of universal order; yet it is the event of her death which has disrupted her vision of justice, continuity and the status quo. Floribel's demise, then, questions the nature of these constructs.

My Floribel! Oh they have ta'en her soul
To make a second spring of it, to keep
The jarring spheres in melody.
(III.5.84)

Olivia's fantasy of death as a sylvan idyll mirrors Floribel's outlook upon the nature of her life. The following passage contains an ironic seed of rebellion, perhaps, as, in death, she envisages herself as having some control over aspects of her environment. Nevertheless, we are made aware of the authoritarian direction

which will manifest itself beneath the prospective fantasy of ideality and non-intervention. Olivia's spirit is to be joyfully consumed into the landscape, yet it is to retain its aristocratic brief in directing the vision Violetta will experience; she comments:

Then if you sing, I'll take up Echo's part,
 And from a far-off bower give back the ends
 Of some remembered airy melody;
 Then, if you draw, I'll breathe upon the banks
 And freshen up the flowers, and send the birds
 Stammering their madrigals, across your path
 Then, if you read, I'll tune the rivulets,
 (V.3.61)

The dissembling nature of the "wizard pencil" is, however, all too familiar to her companion Violetta:

Well, I'll bear it then,
 And even persuade myself this intercourse
 Of disembodied minds is no conjecture,
 No fiction of romance.
 (V.3.80)

The final scene invites contradictory readings, yet Lord Ernest's desire to retain a vision of a providential order in the face of its disruption is inherently comic. He presents a perverse inversion, entering the scene of his son's execution "in the dress of a peasant".

L. Ern. To Despair;
 Away! I know thee not. Henceforth I'll live
 Those bitter days that Providence decrees me
 In toil and poverty. Oh son, loved son,
 I come to give thee my last tear and blessing;
 Thou wilt not curse the old, sad, wretch again?

Hesp. (falling upon the ground -and covering himself
 with loose earth) Oh trample me to dust.

L. Ern. (lying down beside him) My own dear child;
 Aye, we will lie thus sweetly in the grave,
 (The wind will not awake us, nor the rain,)
 Thou and thy mother and myself; but I,

Alas! I have some tearful years to come
 Without a son to weep along with me.
 (V.4.49)

Beddoes may be seen, at this point, to offer a mockery of the concept of providential justice, when expressed in the form of a dramatic idealist mimesis. As a former "sooner of the poor", Ernest's reversal is a form of cliché: he puts on poverty as a deliberately distressed covering, something which has been manufactured for the precise occasion. Beddoes' irony recalls the black humour of Tourneur's D'Amville in *The Atheist's Tragedy*, who sends up the process of providentialist intervention by accidentally decapitating himself at the close of the play, on the brink of his own rise to power. Lenora's businesslike intervention in Hesperus' death again recalls Tourneur's play in an indirect way, as she questions their position in the ongoing fiction of the dramatic text. Hesperus and Lenora appear to be searching for stage directions and cues which will order their actions for them. At this point, however, their situation is vague and confused. Ultimately, Lenora chooses to act herself, in order to claim a victory for providence and poetic justice. She cheats the judicial axe in favour of poisoned flowers, which she has Hesperus smell. As this act absolves the establishment of instituting the death-blow to one of its own, the pastoral discourse suggests a decorous form of execution, with many nostalgic echoes of past joys. It is, therefore, positioned in the play as acting on behalf of established authority.

Len. Where's Hesperus? Not gone? Speak to me
 loud,

I hear not for the beating of my heart
 We're not both dead? Say thou hast 'scaped the headsman,
 Nor felt the severing steel fall through thy neck.

Hesp. I stay one moment for the signal here,
 The next I am no more.

Len. Then we have conquered.
 Friend, leave us: I would speak a private word

Unto thy prisoner. Look upon these flowers;
 They grew upon the grave of Floribel,
 And when I pulled them, through their tendrils blew
 A sweet soft music, like an angel's voice.
 Ah! there's her eye's dear blue; the blushing down
 Of her ripe cheek in yonder rose; and there
 In that pale bud, the blossom of her brow,
 Her pitiful round tear; here are all colours
 That bloomed the fairest in her heavenly face;
 Is't not her breath?

Hesp. (*smelling them*) It falls upon my soul
 Like an unearthly sense.

Len. And so it should,

For it is death thou'st quaffed:
 I steeped the plants in a magician's potion, *
 More deadly than the scum of Pluto's pool, ...

Hesp. 'Tis true: I feel it gnawing at my heart,
 And my veins boil as though with molten lead.

Len. What is it rushes burning through my mouth?
 Oh! my heart's melted.—Let me sit a while.

Hub. Hear ye the chime? Prisoner, we must be gone,
 Already should the sentence be performed.

Hesp. On! I am now past your power.
 (V. 4. 77, 103)

Beddoes footnotes his reference to the poisoned flowers (1.96) with the comment, "The reader will recollect Massinger's *Duke of Milan*"*, a reference to which I will return. Hesperus' actual confrontation with physical death shows him abandoning the vision of death as a form of eternal sylvan harmony. His death recalls the horrors of Faustus' glimpse into the nature of the hell he is to experience, in Marlowe's play, although his pusillanimous reaction is perhaps closer to that of Tamburlaine.

Hesp. I see not those; but the whole earth's in
 motion;

I cannot stem the billows; now they roll:
 And what's this deluge? Ah! infernal flames! [Falls.]

Hub. Guards, lift him up.

Hesp. The bloody hunters and their dogs! Avaunt—
 Tread down these serpents' heads. Come hither,
 Murder;
 Why dost thou growl at me? Ungrateful hound!

Not know thy master? Tear him off! help! Mercy!
Down with your fiery fangs! - I'm not dead yet.

[Dies.

(V.4.117)

The most obvious echo of Renaissance tragedy in Beddoes' play, is the invocation of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*. This text exposes the legalised corruption built into the institution of kingship, and the contradictions which constitute the position of women within the play-society. There is, clearly, a parallelism of plot with between the play and *The Bride's Tragedy*.

In the opening scene of *The Maid's Tragedy*, the king's brother Lysippus, and Strato discuss a forthcoming entertainment. Strato defines the constraints within which he will be working, if he produces a masque. This speech, and Lysippus' reply, offer an ironic representation of the extent of the power which the monarch is able to exercise. The excessiveness of this power is underlined in heightened metaphors of Olympian control. Lysippus gives us an example, then, of the means by which the basis of this power is actually distanced from those who are affected by it. The concept of power and social control become transposed within a mythos which obscures and even rejects outright any question of a possible intervention or alteration of the status quo. These Olympian figures are involved in a process of pastoralisation that is, justifying the nature of contemporary power-relations, owing to the comforting sense of order inherent in the ethos of classical mythology, and its place in literary tradition.⁸⁰

The interrogative nature of Beaumont and Fletcher's play is more direct than Beddoes', but the central plot theme is certainly very similar. Aspatia, the daughter of a Lord, has been betrothed to Amintor. The marriage, however, has been blocked by the king, who replaces the bride with Melantius' sister Evadne, his mistress.

Aspatia remains a disruptive figure within the play, displaying her emotional distress and the social displacement she has to contend with now that she has been rejected, as she passes along the corridors of power. Melantius views the king's interference as the harbinger of a conflict between himself and Aspatia's father Calianax, which will destabilise the state. Lysippus, however, aims to put the situation into perspective, by positioning Aspatia as the archetypal spurned woman, who is merely self-destructive. It is her duty to respect the authoritative decision, and not to implicate it in any infringement of her own wishes. This results in Lysippus' comforting vision of Aspatia preparing for an idyllic release in "unfrequented woods".

Melantius. Tis royall like himselfe,
 But I am sad, my speech beares so infortunate a sound
 To beautiful Aspatia, there is rage
 Hid in her father's breast, Calianax,
 Bent long against me and 'a should not thinke,
 If I could call it backe, that I would take
 So base revenges as to scorne the state
 Of his neglected daughter: holds he still
 His greatness with the King?

Lysippus. Yes, but this lady,
 Walkes discontented with her waterie eyes
 Bent on the earth: the unfrequented woods
 Are her delight, and when she sees a banke
 Stucke full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell
 her servants, what a prittie place it were
 To burie lovers in, and make her maides
 Pluck 'em, and strow her over like a corse.
 (I.1.78)

Aspatia's own cursory retort to Melantius' comment on her supposed marriage, is particularly reminiscent of the structural device which Beddoes employs, when Floribel is faced with Hesperus' boundless diatribe on female depravity.

Aspatia. My hard fortunes
 Deserve not scorne, for I was never proud
 When they were good.
 (I.1.63)

Amintor's initial reaction to the change of partner is singular, an amoral adaptation to circumstances over which he has no control, and thus one for which he has no direct responsibility. The king's intervention enacts a curious and paradoxical liberation for the young noble, which he intends to appreciate for years to come.

Aminor. She had my promise, but the king forbad it,
And made me make this worthy change, thy sister,
Accompanied with graces about her,
With whom I long to loose my lusty youth,
And grow old in her armes.
(I.1.135)

Amintor is the probable dramatic model for Beddoes' Hesperus. Although Hesperus is imbued with a level of responsibility for the crime which is characteristic of Romantic tragedies, he does, as we have seen, act in response to a sense of filial duty: a facet of the patriarchal system which Beaumont and Fletcher's monarch heads. Hesperus' individual accountability can clearly be read on two levels, which makes *The Bride's Tragedy* a particularly intriguing text. It is possible to view the murder of Floribel as an individual act which absolves authority of any culpability. Alternatively, it is the very internalisation of pressures imposed by establishment authority which result in Hesperus' ultimate belief in his own supreme guilt, and individual execution. Hesperus is clearly the agent of patriarchal authority, steeped in an essentialist notion of the pre-social validity of its values and moral codes. Hesperus sees, like Amintor, the socio-political necessity of the alternative marriage-partner, yet he is betrayed by the extent of the institutionalised hypocrisy which his actions expose. In this sense, then, *The Bride's Tragedy* does appear, on balance, to appropriate radical elements represented in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Amintor's questioning of his position, facing marriage to Evadne, arguably foregrounds Hesperus' situation, as he weighs the rejection and murder of Floribel

against the demands of filial duty and his own future status as a wealthy patriarch.

Aminor. Much happiness unto you all. *Exeunt Ladies.*
 I did that Lady wrong, me thinks I feele
 Her griefe shoot suddenly through all my veines,
 Mine eyes runne, this is strange at such a time.
 It was the King first moved me too't, but he
 Has not my will in keeping,—why doe I
 Perplex my selfe thus? something whispers me,
 Goe not to bed: my guilt is not so great
 As mine owne conscience, too sensible,
 Would make me thinke, I onely break a promise,
 And twas the King that forst me: timerous flesh,
 Why shakst thou so?
 (II.1.126)

Hesp. Oh thou sad self, thou wretched half of
 Hesperus,
 Thou'rt lost indeed, there's nought of life about thee,
 But the one thought, that thou hast saved a father.
 Now I do think that if I meet a goodness
 In woman's shape, a fair one I'd not ask,
 But something that would soothe and comfort me,
 I could almost love her.
 (*The Bride's Tragedy* (II.3.1))

On discovering that Evadne is not a virgin, and, what is more, refuses to sleep with him, Aminor expresses his outrage in the apocalyptic metaphors which his successor Hesperus lays claim to in (II.6) of *Beddoes' play*.

Aminor I know too much, would I had doubted still,
 Was ever such a marriage night as this?
 You powers above, if you did ever meane
 Man should be us'd thus, you have thought a way
 How he may bear himselfe, and save his honour:
 Instruct me in it, for to my dull eyes
 There is no meane, no moderate course to runne,
 I must live scorn'd or be a murderer:
 Is there a third? why is this night so calme?
 Why does not heaven speake in thunder to us,
 And drowne her voyce?
 (*The Maid's Tragedy*, (II.11.240))

Both playwrights examine the issue of a fractured ideal of marriage as representative of an actual threat to patriarchal order. It is only when the protagonists

become personally threatened that the dream turns sour, and the relationship between the ideal and the real is brought into focus. Beaumont and Fletcher's Amintor is willing to accept the neatness of the substitution, which appears to offer an even return, until he discovers an underlying situation which demeans his own social position and masculine identity. Hesperus, as we have seen, is unable to distinguish between fantasy and material reality, as they are inextricably interwoven in the prevailing discourse of establishment authority. The theme of the wife as property, to be guarded from others, is familiar in Renaissance tragedy. Amintor, indeed, may have provided a model for Middleton's Leantio in *Women Beware Women*.

Beddoes' major diversion from *The Maid's Tragedy*, however, is seen in relation to Olivia and Evadne's sexual status. In Beaumont and Fletcher's play, Evadne is viewed by Amintor as having committed a form of pre-marital adultery. This play, then, questions and shifts the position of the female tragic victim, in a way which suggests a widening of the arena for debate on this subject. Evadne's desire for Amintor, she tells him, is unbidden and biological, only her promise to remain faithful to her lover exists as a social contract. When mention of the king deprives him of the institution of revenge, Amintor's sense of his own masculine identity is irreparably fragmented.

Evadne. Alas Amintor thinkst thou I forebeare
 To sleepe with thee, because I have put on
 A maiden's strictnesse? looke upon these cheekes,
 And thou shalt finde the hot and rising blood
 Unapt for such a vow; no, in this heart
 There dwells as much desire, and as much will,
 To put that wished act in practise, as ever yet
 Was known to woman, and they have been showne both.
 But it was the folly of thy youth,
 To think this beauty, to what hand soe're,
 It shall be cald, shall stoope to any second.
 I doe enjoy the best, and in that height

I have sworne to stand or die, you guesse the man.

Aminor. No, let me know the man that wrongs me so,
That I may cut his body into motes,
And scatter it before the Northren winde.

Evadne. You dare not strike him.

Aminor.

Doe not wrong me so,
Yes, if his body were a poysonous plant,
That it were death to touch, I have a soule
Will throw me on him.

Evadne.

Why tis the King.

Aminor.

The King.

Evadne. What will you doe now?

Aminor.

Tis not the King.

Evadne. What did he make this match for dull *Aminor*?

Aminor. Oh thou hast nam'd a word that wipes away
All thoughts of the revengefull, in that sacred name,
The King, there lies a terror, what fraile man
Dares lift his hand against it? let the Gods
Speak to him when they please, till when let us
Suffer and waite.

Aminor. What Divell hath put it in thy fancy then
To marry mee?

Evadne.

Alas, I must have one

To father children, and to beare the name
Of husband to me, that my sinne may be
Most honourable.

Aminor.

What a strange thing am I?

(*The Maid's Tragedy*, II.1.284))

As the scene progresses, Aminor sees the only escape from dishonour as his own murder: a form of martyrdom which will revive his contribution to the virtue-ideal.

Curiously, in Beddoes' play, it is Lenora who rescues Hesperus from the headsman's axe. Although this is a form of legitimate revenge, it does suggest an intriguing closure at work within the play, which remains as a residual echo of Floribel's innocence. In relation to this point, however, it is necessary to consider Beddoes' source of the Oxford student's story. The latter's desire for social preferment negates the question of his wife's innocence as an issue in the action which follows. Nevertheless, Lenora's reaction remains problematical, as her act of

revenge, as I have argued, focuses her as an agent of the patriarchal order which is implicated in her daughter's murder. Beddoes' Floribel and Olivia do, however, suggest a parallel with Beaumont and Fletcher's Aspatia and Evadne, although Olivia does not come close to the Renaissance protagonist to the same extent as Floribel mirrors Aspatia's experience. Olivia's anti-intellectual Arcadian fantasies are markedly distant from Evadne's vibrant self-advocacy, and sexual frankness. The nature of the appropriation of *The Maid's Tragedy* remains problematical on this level, suggesting a form of domestication. Nevertheless, the allusion to the text, in general, is a powerful one, and fuels the argument that Beddoes is more interested in the radical implications of recalling seventeenth-century tragedies than his contemporaries under discussion in this study.

It is Evadne, after all, who commits regicide in the Renaissance text, and who articulates the crimes of authority against her. Her own suicide, nevertheless, reflects a residual concession to the patriarchal order, a form of payment for the Pandora's box of jealousies and metaphysical castrations which she has inflicted upon her masculine adversaries within the play-society. Her final lines are a barbed reference to the half-heartedness of Amintor's attempt to prevent her death after she has actually stabbed herself.

Amintor. I have a little humane nature yet
That's left for thee, that bids me stay thy hand.

Evadne. Thy hand was welcome but it came too late,
Oh I am lost, the heavie sleepe makes hast.
(V.3.172)

The parallel with Floribel and Aspatia is furthered in that both are killed by their promised husbands. (In Floribel's case she is married, but not socially recognised as such, as the marriage is secret.) Aspatia is killed by Amintor in a

sword-fight, whilst she assumes the identity of her brother, in order to gain revenge. Beaumont and Fletcher's text is clearly more inventive and interrogative in its portrayal of corrupt and limiting systems of authority. Beddoes, nevertheless, does focus Hesperus as directly responsible for planning and executing his wife's murder, and so, on one level, distances the implication of the fated outcome (which Aspatia experiences) in his own text. Authority concentrates the punishment for the specific crime upon Hesperus, but there is no sense in which its involvement is absolved within the play-text by a representation of a form of poetic justice.

In his concluding comments on *The Bride's Tragedy*, H.W. Donner distances Beddoes from any direct contamination by his Elizabethan forebears. Their relationship, such as it is, is oblique and peripheral. He makes particular reference to Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* in order to emphasise his point.

The reminiscences of the Elizabethans, on the other hand, are conspicuous in all Romantic drama, and it is only natural that Beddoes' love of piquant phrasing and picturesque detail should have made him an avid reader of the old drama. What he read and liked he could not forget, and it left its stamp on his own writings. The title of his play, like others later, is Elizabethan, and some of the dramatis personae owe their sonorous names, worthy of a study in themselves, to the same glorious tradition. The women give an impression of suffering from an inferiority complex, because they must live up to this tradition and masquerade as 'silly girls.' And all the characters obey the commands of a stage which no longer existed. Only where Beddoes puts a note: "The reader will recall Massinger's *Duke of Milan*" he seems to be following Romantic practice, for at this point there is little likeness between the two plays except that Hesperus, like Massinger's hero, dies in the 'Ercles' vein', but so does not only Senecas Hercules, but everybody else poisoned in an Elizabethan play.⁴¹

This quotation, then, demands a brief analysis of Beddoes' invocation of Massinger's play. The extremity of the Duke's jealousy in the Renaissance text results in the decision that his Duchess, Marcellia, must be murdered if he does not

return from battle. The task is given to the villainous and ambitious Francisco, who is a figure reminiscent of Iago. He informs the Duchess of Duke Sforza's plan. The resulting shock for Marcelia, and Francisco's intimations of adultery, result in the Duke stabbing the innocent Marcelia to death. Francisco has a sister who has been "seduc'd and foo'ld" by the Duke (5.2.236) prior to his marriage.⁴² In revenge for this, both of them poison the Duke by painting poison on the dead Duchess' lips.

There is, arguably, much more than a "little likeness" between Beddoes' and Massinger's texts. The linguistic echo of Sforza's death-agonies is evident in Hesperus' speech, once he has inhaled the poison. It is, however, worth questioning the twentieth-century critic's desire to generalise instances of Renaissance tragic poisoning, in order to draw the comparison which Beddoes himself makes away from the critical representation of the nineteenth-century play. Massinger's text offers a striking and stylised version of the patriarchal/masculine discourse within which Hesperus operates, and Hesperus' murder is equally calculated. Both protagonists are prepared to sacrifice their wives in order to reinforce their controlling position over the feminine 'other': a concept which, in itself, lessens the seriousness of the crime in the protagonists' eyes. It is this calculating pre-meditation which Beddoes has arguably borrowed from Massinger, and it appears to threaten Donner's version of a romantic tragic decorum in Beddoes' play. "Romantic emotion", we recall, "enlivens the Elizabethan situation" (p.106). Another allusion which is disruptive of a wholly Romantic reading, is the invocation of the death of the courtesan Bellamira in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, which Lenora's flower-imagery recalls.⁴³

H.W. Donner, then, aims to domesticate Beddoes' relationship with Renaissance tragedy. In so doing, his aim is to promote a "love of piquant phrasing"

(p. 107) over any socio-political inference. This domestication relies on a version of the revival of seventeenth-century drama within which Beddoes is circumscribed, but which he is also commenting upon. It is possible to suggest that this critical obliviousness and/or evasion of the nature of Beddoes' interest in his predecessors, might elicit a particular charge from his subject. In striving to restrain the dramatist within a specific reading of the scope of both nineteenth-century and Renaissance tragedy, the critic "paints lovely pastoral pictures" with the aid of "Memory's wizard pencil".

FOOTNOTES

- 1 H.W. Donner, *Thomas Lovell Beddoes, The Making of a Poet*, Basil Blackwell, 1935. Unless otherwise stated, further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.
- 2 Hazlitt, p.110.
- 3 Paul Ranger, *Terror and Pity Reign in Every Breast*, p.4.
- 4 Paul Ranger, p.5.
- 5 H.W. Donner, p.18.
- 6 H.W. Donner, p.19.
- 7 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, p.44.
- 8 See *A Series of Plays*, edited by D. Reiman, Vol III. p.xxix; M.S. Carhart, *The Life and Works of Joanna Baillie*, pp.106-7; Paul Ranger, p.89.
- 9 Andrew Rutherford, *Byron, a Critical Study*, p.129.
- 10 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, edited by Leslie A. Marchand, Vol. 8, p.57.
- 11 Marchand, Vol. 8, pp.56-7.
- 12 W.H. Marshall, *Byron, Shelley, Hunt and the Liberal*, p.63.
- 13 Marchand, Vol. 8, p.103.
- 14 Marchand, Vol. 7, p.194.
- 15 Marchand, Vol. 5, p.222.
- 16 *Lady Blessington's Conversations of Lord Byron*, edited by Ernest J. Lovell Jr., p.86.
- 17 Preface to *Sardanapalus*, in *Byron's Works*, edited by E.H. Coleridge, Vol. 5, 1905.
- 18 *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, pp.95-6.
- 19 Marchand, Vol. 4, p.290.

- 20 Allardyce Nicoll, p.9.
- 21 Allardyce Nicoll, p.9.
- 22 Allardyce Nicoll, p.11.
- 23 Allardyce Nicoll, p.17.
- 24 "Reynold's *The Caravan* (D.L. 1803) brought success to Drury Lane at a moment of impending disaster, not by reason of its characters or its wit, but because a real dog, Carlos, after a good deal of coaxing, was persuaded nightly to rescue a heroine from a tank of water". Allardyce Nicoll, p.25.
- 25 Marchand, Vol. 8, p.57.
- 26 Marchand, Vol. 4, p.290.
- 27 Marchand, Vol. 8, p.90.
- 28 Marchand, Vol. 8, p.152.
- 29 *A Series of Plays*, Vol. 1, p.72.
- 30 Marchand, Vol. 6, p.106.
- 31 See *Radical Tragedy*, Ch. 14, pp.218-30.
- 32 *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Peter Alexander, new edition, Collins 1985, p.843.
- 33 Marchand, Vol. 6, pp.106-81.
- 34 Marchand, Vol. 8, p.80. Another powerful example of Byron's invocation of Coriolanus is found in Vol. 9, p.213: "I am worth 'forty on fair ground' of the wretched stilted pretenders of your advertisements".
- 35 Andrew Rutherford, pp.183-4.
- 36 a) "I have been for reform always ... but not for the *reformers*. I saw enough of them at the Hampden Club, Burdett is the only one of them in whose company a gentleman would be seen. (Rutherford, p.184).
- b) I am out of all patience to see my friends sacrifice themselves for a pack of blackguards, who disgust one with their cause, although I have always been a Voter for reform. (Rutherford, p.184).
- c) It is not against the pure principle of reform that I object, but against the low, designing, dirty levellers, who would pioneer their way to a democratical

- tyranny. (Rutherford, p.186).
- 37 Preface to *Sardanapalus*, *Byron's Works*, Vol. 5.
- 38 As above.
- 39 I.2.549.
- 40 I.2.551.
- 41 *Radical Tragedy*, p.195.
- 42 *Four Jacobean Tragedies*, edited by Andor Gomme, paperback edition, 1984, p.151.
- 43 *Radical Tragedy*, p.141.
- 44 Marchand, Vol. 8, p.152.
- 45 *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by Roger Ingpen and W.E. Peck, Vol. 2, p.70. Further references to *The Cenci* relate to this volume, and are given after quotations in the text.
- 46 *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Vol. 7, p.111.
- 47 *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Vol. IX, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- 48 "To occupy an intermediate place or middle place or position; to be between; usually, to form a collecting link or transitional stage between one thing and another ... 1850 MRS BROWNING *Poems* II.388. No twilight in the gateway to mediate twixt the two ...
3. to act as a mediator or intermediary; to intercode, or intervene for the purpose of reconciling. ... 1837 MACAULAY *Ess.*, *Bacon* 1899) 303 Bacon attempted to mediate between his friend ... and the queen. *O.E.D.*, Vol. IX, p.544.
- 49 Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, p.205.
- 50 *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The New Mermaids* edition, edited by Elizabeth Brennan, 1967.
- 51 *T's Pity She's a Whore*, *The Revels Plays*, 1975.
- 52 4.11.269.
- 53 Allardyce Nicoll, p.213.

- 54 H.W. Donner, pp.87-8.
- 55 *Plays and Poems*, p.xiviii.
- 56 *Plays and Poems*, l.xii.
- 57 *The Psychiatric Quarterly*, 1943, p.450.
- 58 Allardyce Nicoll, pp.201-2.
- 59 *Plays and Poems*, p.lxvii.
- 60 Hazlitt, p.4.
- 61 *Plays and Poems*, p.xi.
- 62 Further references to Lytton Strachey's criticism refer to this article in the *New Quarterly*.
- 63 Hazlitt, p.11.
- 64 *Plays and Poems*, xii.
- 65 H.W. Donner, pp.293-4.
- 66 *Plays and Poems*, p.lxvi.
- 67 *The Letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, edited by Edmund Gosse, 1894, p.24.
- 68 *Letters*, p.159.
- 69 *Letters*, pp.159-60.
- 70 See *Letters*, pp.7-8.
- 71 H.W. Donner, pp.84-5.
- 72 *The Changeling* (II.1.81-2), in *Four Jacobean Tragedies*, p.255.
- 73 Nicholas Brooke coins this term in his book, *Horrid Laughter In Jacobean Tragedy*.
- 74 *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral*, p.151.
- 75 Patrick Cullen, p.3.
- 76 *Faust in Literature*, p.59.

- 77 *Henry Vaughan, The Complete Poems*, edited by Alan Rudrum, p.173.
- 78 See *Macbeth* (II.2.33) *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Peter Alexander, p.1006.
- 79 *Radical Tragedy*, p.223.
- 80 **Lysippus.** The Breath of king's is like the breath of gods,
My brother wisht thee here and thou art here;
(I.1.15).

Beaumont and Fletcher, Dramatic Works, edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. 2. Further references to *The Maid's Tragedy* relate to this volume and are given after quotations in the text.

- 81 H.W. Donner, p.107.
- 82 *The Selected Plays of Philip Massinger*, edited by Colin Gibson, 1978.
- 83 *Bella.* How sweet, my Ithamore, the flowers smell.
Ith. Like thy breath, sweetheart; no violet like 'em.
Pilia. Foh, methinks they stink like a hollyhock.
Barabas. so now I am revenged upon them all
The scent thereof was death; I poisoned it.
(IV.4.38)
- The Jew of Malta, The Revels Plays*, edited by N.W. Baureitt, 1978, p.169.

Conclusion

I will offer a brief account of the echoes of Hazlitt's version of Renaissance texts, which can be traced in the works of modern critics on the seventeenth century. The critics who I intend to focus upon are T.S. Eliot; A.C. Bradley; Samuel Schoenbaum; Irving Ribner and Robert Ornstein, who are generally considered to be amongst the most influential figures who set the conceptual parameters for the critical reception of Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline drama from the beginning of the twentieth century.

One aspect of Hazlitt's problematical relationship with seventeenth-century drama, we recall, is his insistence upon distancing the "men themselves", in certain cases, from the disruptive nature of their plays. This is an approach which remains active in the works of certain modern critics, and A.C. Bradley is perhaps one of the most obvious examples to consider. In *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) Bradley raises an issue which had previously interested Hazlitt in his *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth &c.* (1820). This is an issue of the suspected interpolations in *Macbeth* of Middleton's play, *The Witch*. Bradley maintains Hazlitt's deification of Shakespeare in relation to his contemporaries, but evolves, in his own writing, a more extreme form of isolationist criticism than his predecessor was prepared to offer on the subject of Middleton and Shakespeare in this context. Whilst Hazlitt stresses the superior product of Shakespeare's "stupendous agency", he acknowledges Middleton's thematic priority.¹ Bradley, in contrast, not only removes the responsibility for the re-emergence of Middleton's witches from Shakespeare himself, but suggests that the allusion has, in fact, been imposed upon Shakespeare by future generations of

composers and critics.² Bradley's critique, then, in this example, appears to be contingent upon an appreciation of the critical ethos which Hazlitt has nurtured and perpetuated; yet is also an attempt to ratify the contradictions inherent in a view of Renaissance drama which sets Shakespeare out of alignment with his contemporaries, yet which proceeds to offer evidence of their independence.

T.S. Eliot is an intriguing figure in a debate of this nature, as subsequent critics, such as Ribner and Ornstein, acknowledge their indebtedness to his observations on Renaissance drama. Eliot opens his essay *Four Elizabethan Dramatists* (1924) with an account of the theoretical framework within which he is working. Moreover, he tells us that rather than "supplement the criticism of Lamb, Coleridge and Swinburne on ... Webster, Tourneur, Middleton and Chapman", he will "define and illustrate a point of view towards the Elizabethan drama which is different for the nineteenth-century tradition".³ The essay in question, however, is both less provocative and productive than this opening might lead us to anticipate. The "accepted attitude to Elizabethan drama" which Eliot views as "established on the publication of Charles Lamb's *Specimens*" is merely described as the development of a "distinction between drama and literature"; and Eliot sees this as "the ruin of modern drama". This ruin, he continues, is based upon the formulation of the principle that "a play may be a good play and bad literature—or else ... it may be outside of literature altogether".

Although he does not state explicitly, Eliot appears to question the outcome of this distinction for both his own and a nineteenth-century critical and theoretical audience. The practical outcome of this division between poetry and drama, which he does not outline precisely, is the division of texts into 'reading' and 'acting'

dramas which became popular in the early nineteenth century. I have given much space in this study to the ideological implications of such a division, in relation to drama which was not intended for the stage. As I have shown, these plays are primarily intended for a select audience, which will minimise the risks of misappropriation. *Sardanapalus* is a prime example of this form of amelioration, as Byron insists that any reference to the contemporary monarchy are unforeseen and unpredictable.

For Eliot, the result of this conceptual demarcation between "drama" and "literature" is manifest in any modern attempt to stage an Elizabethan play. In a rather opaque passage in *Four Elizabethan Dramatists*, he appears to be moving towards the view that the nineteenth-century critics have laid down a stylised version of how such a play ought to be staged. The ethos which these critics aim to perpetuate, nevertheless, comes into conflict with the series of irrecoverable and undocumented nuances which identified the plays for their contemporary seventeenth-century audiences. To be aware of this conflict, however, suggests that we retain some form of residual understanding, which characterises the Renaissance texts as inherently Elizabethan and Jacobean. Whilst, then, Eliot emphasises that an Elizabethan ethos is something which is fluid, readily revised and appropriated by subsequent generations of critics and managers, his idea that somehow the plays are able to "betray" this method of misappropriation in revival is particularly intriguing. This suggests that by separating the concepts of "poetry" and "drama", we are in danger of losing contact with an essence of Elizabethanism. The essence is, nevertheless, preserved for us in a residual contexts, in the form of the textual resistance which the critic proceeds to describe. If the Elizabethan plays stage a form

of protest against future productions, then they cannot truly be seen to represent "a lost art" (p.12), but merely one which has been progressively distracted by being placed in a later temporal setting. It becomes clear, then, in reading this essay, that any indication that Eliot might be moving towards a post-structuralist reading of the question of influence and revival, described so succinctly by Tony Bennett as a "future determination" of a series of past conditions, is inherently precipitous. Eliot's position, in the following comments, reveal him as a descendant of Coleridge's "true critic": a cognisant interpreter whose idealism is tempered by the knowledge that he can never wholly recover or replicate the original which he chooses to comment upon.

And when I say convention, I do not necessarily mean any particular convention of subject-matter or technique; any form or rhythm imposed upon the world of action. We will take the point of view of persons accustomed to this convention and finding the expression of their dramatic impulses in it. ... For the drama, the existence of which I suppose, will have its special conventions of the stage and the actor as well as of the play itself. an actor in an Elizabethan play is either too realistic or too abstract in his treatment, whatever systems of speech, of expression and of movement he adopts. The play is forever betraying him. An Elizabethan play was in some ways as different from a modern play, its performance is almost as much a lost art, as if it were a drama of Aeschelus or Sophocles. And in some ways it is more difficult to reproduce. For it is easier to present the effect of something that was aiming, blindly enough, at something else. The difficulty in presenting Elizabethan plays is that they are liable to be made too modern, or falsely archaic ... I know that I rebel against most performances of Shakespeare's plays, because I want a direct relationship between the work of art and myself, and I meant the performance to be such as will not interrupt or alter this relationship ... I object, in other words, to the interpretation, and I would have a work of art such that it needs only to be completed and cannot be altered by each interpretation. (p.112)

The source of our modern misrepresentation of Elizabethan tragedy, in Eliot's

criticism, is once again subtly reminiscent of the unwelcome but relieved conclusion which Hazlitt comes to, when commenting upon such writers as Middleton and Beaumont and Fletcher: a critical paradox which is also perpetuated in a striking manner in the writings of H.W. Donner. The dramatists themselves are isolated as the original perpetrators of our modern dislocated vision of the sense of order which their plays reflect, and which we perceive as a condition of the age in which the plays were produced.⁴ Eliot proceeds to divert the focus of his theoretical debate on the issue of what constitutes a convention, by invoking a more mundane analysis of the aesthetic validity of Shakespearcan spectres. His contribution to the debate which questions the basis of nineteenth-century representations of Renaissance drama is inherently problematical. On the one hand, he pinpoints our modern readings of the plays as perpetuating an ethos which is by nature metamorphic and insubstantial. Whilst raising this issue, however he endeavours to retain the familiar benefits of the idealist emblem of social and artistic order which the playwrights were appropriated to represent for a school of critics which can be traced back to Lamb, Hazlitt, and even Joanna Baillie. One aspect of Baillie's relationship with Renaissance tragedy, we recall, is to select a diluted form of Jacobean decadence and social criticism in order to endow her plays with an ethos of imitating a legitimate historical source. The legitimacy of the Renaissance playwrights in an issue which has received a detailed investigation in the body of this thesis. For Eliot it is a question which appears to foreground his own problematical view of the writers, and the opinions of his critical contemporaries.

The Elizabethans are in fact a part of the movement of progress or deterioration which has culminated in Sir Arthur Pinero and in the present regiment of Europe.
The case of John Webster, and particularly *The Duchess*

of Malft, will provide an interesting example of a very great literary and dramatic genius directed towards chaos ... if we can establish the same consequence independently by an examination of the Elizabethan philosophy, the Elizabethan dramatic form, and the variations of the rhythms of Elizabethan blank verse ... we may come to conclusions which will enable us to understand why Mr Archer, who is the opponent of the Elizabethans, should also be unconsciously their last champion, and why he should be a believer in progress, in the growth of humanitarian feeling, and in the superiority and efficiency of the present age. (pp.116-17)⁸

Eliot's comments on Middleton offer an example of a critical desire for a form of dramatic convention which is, at the same time, essentially 'non-dramatic' and aesthetically pleasing. By representing Middleton's morality as emblematic and "eternal", Eliot invokes the spirit of Shelley's poetic principle, and re-forms the circle which the nineteenth-century critics have breached in isolating the concept of "poetry" from its central position in a vision of ideal drama.

The Changeling is not merely contingent for its effect upon our acceptance of Elizabethan good form or convention; it is, in fact, no more dependent upon the convention of its epoch, than a play like *A Doll's House*. Underneath the convention there is the stratum of truth permanent in human nature. The tragedy of *The Changeling* is an eternal tragedy, as permanent as *Oedipus* or *Anthony and Cleopatra*; it is the tragedy of the not naturally bad but irresponsible and undeveloped nature ... Beatrice is not a moral creature; she becomes moral by becoming damned. Our conventions are not the same as those which Middleton assumed for his play. But the discovery of morality remains permanent. (p.163)

Middleton is a useful example to take, in charting the perpetuation of Hazlitt's critical representations of Renaissance plays. As I have previously argued, the nineteenth-century critic has difficulty in retaining a writer such as Middleton within his vision of the age in which the playwright belongs. This is the resistance which Eliot describes as a form of "betrayal", perhaps, on the part of the seventeenth-century dramatists. The necessity of defining Middleton in moral terms is uppermost

in Lamb's writing, and, in Hazlitt's comments, resulting in the simplification of his principal personae into precise moral emblems. The cuckolded husband in *Women Beware Women* becomes the archetypal innocent dupe, the "fine manly independent character of Leantio"; a reading which robs the playwright of the ironic social commentary which the dramatic situation exposes. Hazlitt remains ill-at-ease with Middleton, however, and cannot persuade his audience that the dramatic presents an ordered vision of providential justice. This results in the allegation that Middleton is unable to control the forces which he chooses to engage with in his dramas.

A critic writing at the mid-point of the twentieth-century, Samuel Schoenbaum, offers a remarkably similar critique of Middleton to that which is espoused by Hazlitt, and disseminated within the writings of Bradley and T.S. Eliot. Schoenbaum presents Middleton as morally handicapped, because he is seen to shy away from the transcendent conclusion which the critic himself prescribes.⁴ Writing on *Women Beware Women*, he argues:

It is noteworthy that Middleton's morality would not permit—as Meslier's or Ford's would—investing perversity with pathos. Thus a sympathetic tale of love thwarted by an inscrutable destiny becomes a sordid study of betrayal and vengeance. (p.115)

Schoenbaum disputes Lamb's view of Middleton's Livia, which I have discussed in the opening section of this study. This critic, however, does not view Lamb's approach as a domestication of Middleton's powerful investigation of the social conditions which foreground the bourgeois tragedy of *Women Beware Women*, for example. He sees Lamb as shielding the audience from the worst propensities exhibited by the dramatist himself. In misreading Middleton, Lamb is actually shown to be sparing him, and depriving us of an insight into his true nature. What the

earlier critic is involved in, then, is an inappropriate defence of Middleton's morality as reflected in his tragedies. Lamb is shown as being manipulated by the "moral sense of [his] ancestor".⁷

Middleton's own unsparing detachment, maintained throughout the play, is largely responsible for the chilling effect of *Women Beware Women*. His characters are moral idiots whose utter inability to comprehend the sinfulness of their own careers makes them ultimately repulsive. To Lamb, the bawd Livia is "a good neighbour ... as real a creature as one of Chaucer's characters. She is such another jolly housewife as the Wife of Bath". He fails to perceive that beneath the amiability and enormous vitality lies a nature almost completely amoral, a disposition sinister in its capacity for evil ... Having only the faintest or most outrageous notions of good and evil, these personages fail to understand that the universe is governed by an inexorable moral order, that someday they will be called to judgement. (pp.124-6)

For Schoenbaum, nevertheless, "these personages" are fundamentally unfit to receive and assimilate the ramifications of the "inexorable moral order" which he sees awaiting them. He encompasses Hazlitt's reaction to the play, in the sense that he represents the dramatist as unable to limit and restrain the moral disintegration which his plays describe. For Hazlitt, we recall, Middleton's "power is *in* the subject, not over it; or he is in possession of excellent materials which he husbands very ill".⁷ Schoenbaum's commentary mirrors Hazlitt's opinion of Middleton's poor husbandry.

But no account of forced ingenuity or brilliant verse could save so preposterous a denouement. The last act is a failure, and with it the play collapses.

There are other faults as well, faults that are obvious enough. If far too much happens in the last act, not quite enough happens in the earlier scenes: the exposition is drawn out and needless, occasionally tedious, length. The scenes involving the idiot Ward have all the dullness of obscenity unrelieved by humour or wit. After Hippolyto's incestuous affair with Isabella has been initiated, subsequent events afford few opportunities for effective drama. (p.131)

Irving Ribner perpetuates the ethos of Shakespearean harmony, and maintains

the paradoxical division between him and his contemporaries in *Jacobean Tragedy, The Quest for Moral Order* (1962).⁸

In *Patterns of Shakespearean Tragedy* I suggested that to be truly great tragedy must spring from the artist's moral concern, his need to come to terms with the fact of evil in the world, and out of his exploration of disaster to arrive at some comprehensive vision of the relation of human suffering to human joy. I suggested also that the great ages of tragedy have been those in which an established system of values was being challenged by a new scepticism, and that Shakespeare was able to affect his tragic reconciliation by affirming in poetic terms the validity of his age's Christian humanism. His tragedies lead to a sense of order, justice and divine purpose in the universe.

(Preface, p.xi)

Middleton is subtly domesticated by both Hazlitt and Ribner by means of a curious devaluation of his worth for future generations. This devaluation takes the form of an attack upon what we view as the nature of his originality. Originality itself, we recall, is a concept which was particularly important to both critical and dramatic writers in the early nineteenth century. It is firmly enmeshed within an ethos of a potential national energy which will react to both domestic and international issues in the form of the "island voice" which Hazlitt describes.⁹ The priority of this voice is central to the Shakespeare mythos: Hazlitt tells us that "if ever an author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakespeare".¹⁰ I have argued that Hazlitt advertises the originality of lost texts as a solution to the general decline in theatrical standards, and as a general response to pervasive continental stylistic influences. Joanna Baillie holds a similar position when she stresses the originality of her own dramatic project. The nineteenth-century dramatist impresses upon her audience the serious import of her version of originality, as it is intended to convey either a "warning" or an "example", in refreshing and vigorous terms.

Hazlitt's *Middleton* is deprived of this sense of potential energy which the ethos of originality represents. The implication is that the dramatist will abuse the power which is available to him, and so his individual originality and contribution to the seventeenth-century dramatic canon must be limited and contained. This is effected by means of an invocation of his fellow tragedians. "Middleton's style", Hazlitt tells us, "was not marked by an particular quality of his own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences of his contemporaries".¹¹ Irving Ribner enacts a remarkably similar de-politicisation of *Middleton*, by stressing his proximity to Shakespeare on a 'psychological' level. "Among his tragedies [is] a depth of psychological penetration and insight such as we find only in Shakespeare" (p.123). The playwright's ironic and interrogative representation of contemporary social institutions is further developed, by being represented by Ribner as a one-dimensional and profoundly aggressive "Calvinistic bias" (p.125).

There is no suggestion of a divine providence guiding the affairs of men, in spite of their own indirection, to a re-birth of good, and there is little of Tourneur's confidence in a true felicity to be attained in heaven. Middleton's attention is fixed steadily on hell". (p.125)

This comment is reminiscent of Hazlitt's version of *Leantio* in *Women Beware Women*, who "treads on the brink of perdition". For Hazlitt, it is Shakespeare who justifies his own interest in "the age" in general, and who absolves his eccentric interest in Thomas Middleton.

The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in possession of excellent materials which he husbands very ill. This character, though it applies more particularly to Middleton, might be applied generally to the age. Shakespeare alone seemed to stand over his work, and to do what he pleased with it.

Robert Ornstein gives us a more incisive critique of Renaissance tragedy than

his contemporary Ribner.¹³ Nevertheless, he shies away from a reading of Middleton which would confirm the anti-establishment impulse in *Women Beware Women*, although this is an element in the play which obviously interests him. Once again a critique of Middleton loses its incisive emphasis by being displaced into an account of his "satiric comedy", and the works of his contemporaries. Ornstein's critics of *Women Beware Women*, then, breaks off in a similar manner to Hazlitt's commentary on the play. The nineteenth-century critic, we recall, switches unexpectedly to a discussion of *Macbeth* and *The Witch* after giving a lengthy quotation from *Women Beware Women* which actually confound his vision of the "manly independent character of Leantio".¹⁴ What is ultimately at stake for both critics is the issue of Middletonian intent: the question, indeed, of Ornstein's "moral vision of Jacobean Tragedy". This is a distant but recognisable descendant of the "moral sense of our ancestors" described by Lamb in 1808. Ornstein concludes that "Middleton's irony has an astringent virtue" (p. 199).

Ornstein is a particularly intriguing figure, in that he may be seen to deflect the consequences of the contradictions which plague Hazlitt's criticism, in relation to his own writing. In his account of Middleton's "astringent virtue", he implies that there is a sense in which Middleton retains what Hazlitt regards as a deficiency: his "power over the subject". When we compare the example of Ornstein's Middleton to his critical portrait of the early seventeenth century in general, a ratification of Hazlitt's problematical vision of the age becomes increasingly plausible. Ornstein, too, institutes a form of revival of interest in Renaissance tragedy, but in a sense which Roger Sales might describe as a form of "restitution": even "requiem".¹⁶ If Hazlitt may be seen to provoke the unforeseen exhumation of writers which Ornstein

refuses to view as "subversive" and "antihumanist", the twentieth-century critic insinuates that he intends to re-design the boundaries for the dramatists' critical reception. In this sense, he echoes Eliot's conclusion in *Four Elizabethan Dramatists*.

Instead of hunting subversives and antihumanists, our goal in succeeding pages will be to discover how humanistic interests in the world of man led to the search for intrinsic values in experience which we find in Jacobean tragedy. Then it will become clear that the "crisis" which Jacobean tragedy reflects is epistemological, not moral or ideological. The dramatists are not torn between humanistic and antihumanistic views of man. They are caught between old and new ways of determining the realities upon which moral values rest. In an age of rapid intellectual and cultural change, they—and not they alone—confound knowledge with knowledge.¹⁷

It is possible to argue, then, that such critics as Ribner and Ornstein have perpetuated what is fundamentally a nineteenth-century mythos of seventeenth-century drama. It is, nevertheless, clearly outwith the parameters of this study to give an in-depth account of subsequent movements in this area. This issue is addressed in detail by John Drakakis in his introduction to the volume of critical essays *Alternative Shakespeares* (1985). Drakakis comments upon the nineteenth-century legacy which foregrounds the critical position held by such figures as Bradley, Eliot, and their successors, and charts the evolution of contending perspectives which result in a reaction against their critical school.

Two contributors to the aforementioned volume, Jonathan Dollimore and Catherine Belsey, have also broken with this tradition in their respective works *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare And His Contemporaries* (1984) and *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (1985). Dollimore mounts a historically detailed and scholarly challenge to the ordered vision of Renaissance tragedy espoused by his critical

forebears, and he defines his opposition to what he sees as their limited traditional view. Dollimore's criticism institutes a deeper interrogative analysis of the period in question than the critics he succeeds, as he refuses to isolate the dramatic texts from the issue of their response to a series of historically determined conditions.

Unlike the influential movements in recent literary criticism, the response of the drama to crisis was not a retreat into aesthetic and ideological conceptions of order, integration, equilibrium and so on; on the contrary, it confronted and articulated that crisis, indeed, it actually helped precipitate it. Every major theme of the plays ... explore[d] in this book transgresses or challenged the Elizabethan equivalent of the modern obsession with a *telos* of harmonic integration.¹⁸

Catherine Belsey approaches the question of reading the seventeenth century by means of a multi-faceted investigation of the construction and representation of the tragic subject. From this perspective, she offers an incisive analysis of the fictional representation of women within the tragic genre. "Subjectivity", she argues,

as liberal humanism defines it, is not natural, inevitable, or eternal; on the contrary, it is produced and reproduced in and by a specific social order in the interests of specific power-relations. In addition, it is apparent that discourses fail to control the definitions they propose, to arrest the play of meaning precisely where it threatens their deployment. Women disrupt the discourses designed to contain them; tyranny and resistance to tyranny trouble the case for absolutism.¹⁹

In both his recently published critical works, Jonathan Bates is specifically concerned with nineteenth-century critical representation of Shakespearean drama.²⁰ As I have argued in the body of this thesis, Bate is a particularly provocative figure in a debate of this nature, as he recognises the progressive conservatism in the critical writing of Coleridge and Wordsworth yet seeks to distance Hazlitt from their views. Furthermore, he aims to promote a radical impetus in Hazlitt's writing on the seventeenth century, by claiming that "it is a misunderstanding to say that he was a

character critic in the tradition that runs from Morgan to Bradley".²¹ Bate's reappraisal of Hazlitt's criticism implies an approval, nevertheless, of his predecessor's ordered vision of Renaissance texts when viewed as a consistent whole. This is a vision which he sees such critics as Johnson attempting to fragment.

By isolating his forebear from a nineteenth-century critical tradition, the complex and contradictory relationship which emerges in Hazlitt's encounter with Shakespeare's contemporaries is in danger of becoming domesticated. Despite his attempts to recuperate him for a radical position, Jonathan Bate may, with some justification be viewed as Hazlitt's ideological successor since his criticism seems to move towards a summary re-assertion of the inherent conservatism which is disclosed in Hazlitt's own critique.

Footnotes

- 1 Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, pp.64-5. See Chapter One, note 39.
- 2 *Shakespearean Tragedy* (second edition 1905) this reprint 1964.
- 3 T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (third enlarged edition, 1951) this reprint 1961. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. All quotations in this paragraph refer to pages 109-110.
- 4 "What is fundamentally objectionable is that in the Elizabethan drama there has been no firm principle of what has been postulated as a convention of a ghost on a plane on which he is inappropriate; and with the confusion between one kind of ghost and another. The three witches in *Macbeth* are a distinguished example of correct supernaturalism (Eliot, pp.115-16).
- 5 Ian Jack views John Webster from a similar perspective in *Scrutiny*, 1949; the playwright is seen as having "no profound hold on any system of moral values" (p.42). Jack both recalls and reaffirms Lamb's comments on *The White Devil* and contrasts Webster's moral vision with the unity which he values in Shakespeare's plays.

As Lamb remarked, 'This White Devil of Italy sets off a bad cause so speciously, and pleads with such *innocence-resembling boldness*, that we ... are ready to expect, when she has done her pleadings, that ... all the court will rise and proffer to defend her in spite of the utmost conviction of her guilt'. Vittoria is dishonourable: Webster simply makes her behave as if she were honourable. This is an artistic insincerity—a lie in the poet's heart—of which Shakespeare would not have been guilty.

Scrutiny (reissued 1963) Vol.XVI, no.1, pp.41-2.
- 6 *Middleton's Tragedies, a Critical Study* by Samuel Schoenbaum (1955) reprinted 1970. Further references to this later edition are given after quotations in the text.
- 7 Lamb, we recall, coins the phrase in the preface to his *Specimens* (1808).
- 8 Reference to this text refer to the 1979 reprint, as detailed in the bibliography.
- 9 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.11.
- 10 Hazlitt, preface to the new edition of *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, p.ix. See also Chapter One, note 39.

- 11 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.60.
- 12 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.60.
- 13 Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (1960). Further references to this text refer to the paperback edition, 1965.
- 14 See Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p.198 paragraphs two and three.
- 15 *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, p.61.
- 16 Roger Sales, p.15.
- 17 Ornstein, p.6.
- 18 *Radical Tragedy*, p.5.
- 19 *The Subject of Tragedy*, p.223.
- 20 *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (1986) and *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (1989).
- 21 *Shakespearean Constitutions*, p.151.

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