HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON : A REAPPRAISAL

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PREFACE

In this reappraisal of Henry Handel Richardson's work I have tried, as far as possible, to take into account certain possible sources of guidance to which not much attention had previously seemed to be paid. Perhaps the most useful have been Richardson's letters to various friends and business acquaintances. For their assistance in making these and other manuscript materials available I am grateful to the staffs of the Mitchell Library; the Melbourne Public Library; and the Australian National Library, Canberra.

I also wish to thank Professor Leonie Kramer of the University of New South Wales for providing me with some information about Henry Handel Richardson's school-days; my further debt to her will be apparent in the number of references to her work on Richardson.

Finally, I should like to thank my supervisor, Professor G. A. Wilkes, for his many helpful suggestions and criticisms.

E.A.Loder.

REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in references to Henry Handel Richardson's works:

"A Danish Poet"	"A Danish Poet", Cosmopolis, November 1897, as reprinted Southerly, XXIII (1963), 40-51.
Maurice Guest	Maurice Guest (1908); all quotations from the 1950 reprint (Heinemann, London).
Myself When Young	Myself When Young (1948); all quotations from the 1964 reprint (Heinemann, London).
"Some Notes"	"Some Notes on My Books", Virginia Quarterly Review, Summer, 1940, as reprinted Southerly, XXIII (1963), 8-19.
The End of A Childhood	The End of A Childhood (1934, Heinemann, London).
The Fortunes of Richard Mahony	The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, 1930 (1954, Heinemann, London).
The Getting of Wisdom	The Getting of Wisdom, 1910 (1931, Heinemann, London).
The Young Cosima	The Young Cosima (1939, Heinemann, London).

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CHAPTER I

THE ARTIST'S LIFE

"And my idea of authorship is to bury the writer so deep that the reader is never reminded of him" Henry Handel Richardson told a friend,[1] so acknowledging her kinship with Flaubert. She scrupulously refrained from giving any strong expression of her personal beliefs and preferences in her novels; and wrote scathingly of anybody who dared to assume that she had. Unfortunately for her biographers this restraint, like the other articles of her artistic creed, accorded perfectly with her temperament. Intensely shy, she hated personal publicity and, when forced to give interviews, seems to have been concerned to conceal, even to the extent of slightly falsifying, the facts of her past. Her own comments on her life and work, her unfinished autobiography Myself When Young (1948) and "Some Notes on My Books", are almost as objective in tone as her novels. These works do, however, contain some hints of Henry Handel Richardson's inclinations which, together with information culled from her other articles and private letters, provide a foundation for the reconstruction of her beliefs about art and life.

The main source of information is Myself When Young,

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[1] Letter to Mary A. Kernot, 24 June 1936. Richardson's letters to Mrs. Kernot are not accessible at present; my source is a notebook in which Mrs. Kernot made extracts from some of these letters. (In the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325) All references to Richardson's letters to Mrs. Kernot are to the extracts in this notebook.

though it is incomplete not only in the literal sense but in the extent to which it reveals Richardson's personality. We are, perhaps, lucky that it reveals as much as it does. Richardson thought it "too dull - and also too intimate" ever to be printed in her lifetime,[2] and told Mrs. Kernot in a letter of 10 April 1945 that "If ever Reminiscences published they'd need to be relentlessly cut." One of the most interesting passages in Myself When Young is that where Richardson, after describing how a remark made by her husband led her to see how much of her own experience had been incorporated in Maurice Guest, writes

> But the light thrown by my husband's words did not stop there. It cleared up other knots and tangles in my life, which at the time of their happening had seemed stupidly purposeless. Now I began to sense a meaning in these too, to see them as threads in a general pattern. And gradually the conviction deepened that, to a writer, experience was the only thing that really mattered. Hard and bitter as it might seem, it was to be welcomed rather than shrunk from, reckoned as a gain not a loss. - Since then, I think I may say that the natural rebel in me has been considerably less to the fore. (p.62)

Although this revelation came after she had written her first two novels, Richardson's discovery that she could write had earlier given her a sense of purpose in life, a feeling that she, too, had a "calling". Up till then, as a result of the "hard and bitter" experiences of her childhood and schooldays and her failure to become a

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[2]Letter to Oliver Stonor, 26 December 1943. (In the Henry Handel Richardson collection in the National Library, Canberra) All references to Richardson's letters to Stonor are to this collection.

musician, Richardson had felt rather a misfit in life. Born in Melbourne on 3 January 1870, to "two widely differing parents" who were later to serve as models for the main characters in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, her childhood was a disrupted and insecure one. At the time of her birth her father was fairly wealthy - when she was "somewhere between three and four"[3] she and her younger sister Lil went to England with their parents. This trip, like that of the Mahonys in The Way Home, was abruptly terminated by the news of her father's financial collapse. From then until his death in 1879, the Richardson family, impelled by Dr. Richardson's increasingly desperate attempts to make a living, moved from one part of Victoria to another. At eight Richardson had had as many homes as birthdays, and her childhood was further disturbed by the arguments between her parents and her father's illness and insanity. His death "came rather as a relief"[4]; was a relief, too, from the frequent changes of abode. Mrs. Richardson had become a postmistress and, around 1880, took up a position at Maldon. Richardson writes in Myself When Young

> With the move from Koroit our migrations came to an end. The new home was to remain home for the next six years. And though eventually I had to exchange it for a Melbourne boarding-school, it was always there to come back to. In it I spent the happiest days of my childhood, free at last of unchildish anxieties; and when, of a sleepless night, my thoughts turn homewards, it is usually in these carefree, sunlit surroundings that I find myself. (pp.34-35)

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[3] Myself When Young, p.8

[4] Ibid., p.24

This exchange was made in 1883, when Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson was enrolled as a boarder at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, East Melbourne.[5] She remained there for five years, passing her Matriculation Examination in 1886, and leaving at the end of 1887. On the surface, she would appear to have had a successful school career. Mrs. Kernot, who was at P.L.C. at the same time, writes "the first memory I have of the thin slip of a girl called Richardson was that learning seemed no difficulty to her and she glided along taking all subjects and whereas most of us gave up music and other arts for the year she not only studied music but composed a cantata."[6]

Richardson's name figured in the College prize lists throughout her school years and in her final year she was Dux in English and History.[7] The cantata mentioned by Mrs. Kernot was performed at the College's end-of-year concert and reviewed very favourably in the Melbourne papers.[8] Yet the account of her schooldays in The Getting of Wisdom emphasises failure rather than success and she seems to have found little happiness at school. Mrs. Kernot recalls that "From my superior two years of advanced age I regarded her as a very intelligent but not very happy child and

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[5] For the dates and other details of Richardson's school career I am indebted to Professor Leonie Kramer who kindly allowed me to see the results of her research into the College records.

[6] In one of her reminiscences, "School Days with H.H.R.". (In the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325) All references to Mrs. Kernot's reminiscences of Richardson are to the papers in this collection.

[7] From the College Prospectus for 1888.

[8] An abridged account of a review in The Age given in the College magazine Patchwork (January 1887), p.388.

christened her The Infant."[9] For Richardson never seems to have felt that she "belonged"; she writes in Myself When Young "At school I was considered odd and unaccountable. Often to my own bewilderment, for I tried hard to adapt myself to my companions' way of thinking." (p.69)

And this bewilderment continued after she had left school: Few young things can have felt so lost and bewildered as she. Her natural self-confidence crushed, not knowing what to be at, with nobody to guide her, and at constant war with her surroundings. (Myself When Young, p.73) Richardson spent a term as a governess in Melbourne which convinced her that she had no talents as a teacher, then was released from "her surroundings" by her mother's decision to take her and her sister on a visit to Europe. Leaving Australia sometime in mid-1888, they arrived in England in the autumn, and early the next year went to Leipzig.[10] Here Richardson was to study the piano; it was Mrs. Richardson's hope, based no doubt on her musical success at school, that she would afterwards return "to Australia a finished pianist, there to make not only money but a name for myself."[11] For a time she found happiness in her studies and ceased to be "the aimless, ill-adjusted girl who had begun to feel herself odd-man-out, and to judge people and things from that angle."[12]

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[9] In one of her reminiscences.

[10] No date is given in Myself When Young but Matilda C. Washburn Freund, one of the contributors to Henry Handel Richardson : Some Personal Impressions (ed. Purdie and Roncoroni, 1957), is said to have been a friend of Richardson's from "1889 until 1946".

[11] Myself When Young, p.117.

[12] Ibid., p.98.

But a gradual slackening of interest in her work, together with the discovery of her hatred of the publicity of the concert-platform, contributed to her decision to renounce a musical career. Further reasons for this decision, as she told Mrs. Kernot, were that Her health was not equal to the strain and Germany produced such brilliant musicians she could never hope to be their equals in technique. She left Germany much to her mother's disappointment and for some time had to recover from over work. [13] In Myself When Young Richardson also refers to "the cruel blow to her (mother's) dreams and ambitions" (p.117); she appears to have felt rather guilty about her poor return for her mother's many sacrifices. This, indeed, may explain why the idea of the "wasted sacrifice" - one not seen as necessary by the person for whom it is made and so unappreciated - recurs throughout her work.

Richardson's references to her failure as a musician imply that this affected her more on her mother's behalf than on her own. Perhaps for her its bitterness was allieviated by the fact that her abandonment of a musical career had a further cause in her decision to marry J.G. Robertson, a university student she had met in Leipzig. But as Robertson, who had also abandoned one career for another, was as yet in no position to support a wife, their engagement was a long one. [14] In this interim the Richardsons went to England; there Henry Handel's old feelings of despair returned: "The truth was I felt as

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[13] In one of Mrs. Kernot's reminiscences.

[14] The marriage did not take place until the end of 1895 and Richardson presumably left Leipzig sometime in 1892.

much of a misfit here as I had ever done - even in Australia. Indeed there were moments when I could imagine myself back there, all the rich Leipzig years wiped out." [15] Then

... one day when I was feeling particularly low, there came a letter that abruptly switched my thoughts off myself. The writer was one of our old shipmates on the Ormuz, since then but seldom heard from, and, for me, she could not have chosen a luckier moment to break silence. For she wrote to ask if I would care to contribute to a Manuscript Magazine which she and some friends were thinking of starting. Why not, thought I, it might be rather fun, and would at least give me something to do.[16]

Commencing with a piece, "Christmas in Australia", in the style of Lamb, Richardson became more ambitious as she felt her "pen come alive again" and graduated from an appreciation of Ibsen's Master Builder to a translation of J.P. Jacobsen's Niels Lyhne. When Robertson heard about this he persuaded her to undertake a more thorough translation than she had intended in the hope that it might be published. Richardson doubtfully assented, to find that "To sit alone and unobserved, behind a shut door, and play with words and ponder phrases" was what she "liked best to do".[17] From this time on she was to spend a considerable part of her life - and for her the most important and pleasurable part - behind just such a shut door. With the discovery of her true inclinations, she was able to attain that meaningful relationship to life which had eluded her in her "misfit" phase.

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[15] Myself When Young, p.123.
[16] Ibid., p.124.
[17] Ibid., p.125.

Several of the articles written about Richardson after the success of Ultima Thule in 1929 state that she had always been more interested in writing than in music :

"Miss Richardson was ambitious, and her father was ambitious for her. She herself rather leaned towards writing even then. As a child she was always scribbling - writing songs and stories. But the hopes of the family carried the day." [18] There is a reference to her childhood practice of "making-up" stories and "poems" in Myself When Young (p.27), while The Getting of Wisdom contains an account of a schoolgirl's grapples with literary art which was presumably based on her own experiences. And in a letter of 4 March 1934 she wrote to Mrs. Kernot that she was "destroying all her juvenilia", mentioning a "poem at the age of 8." But it would seem unlikely that she had ever seriously considered writing as a career before her marriage and her successful translation of Niels Lyhne, which was published in 1896 under the title Siren Voices. The first period of her married life was spent in Germany, mainly at Strassburg where her husband was lecturing; it was here that she commenced work on Maurice Guest.[19]

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[18] Alice Henry, "Who is Henry Handel Richardson?", The Bookman (New York), LXX (1929), p.355. See also Jane Mander, "Henry Handel Richardson", The Bookman (London), LXXVI (1929), p.104 and Louise Morgan, "Henry Handel Richardson", Everyman (14 August 1930), p.69

[19] 27 September 1897 is often given as the date of Maurice Guest's commencement, since it was on this date that the word "novel" first appeared in Richardson's diary. (Olga Roncoroni, Myself When Young, p.143.) But in "Some Notes on My Books" Richardson says "I began to write Maurice Guest a few months after my marriage." (p.9)

Professor Robertson noted that " 'Possibly the first suggestion of such creative writing had come to her from her husband, namely that she should utilise her Leipzig experiences to form a novel of a musician who failed to make good.'"[20] But Richardson owed more to her husband than the idea for her first novel; in a letter of 15 May 1934 she gave Mrs. Kernot an account of her "entry into the art of writing" and mentioned that she was "guided there by her husband's wisdom and understanding". Maurice Guest was published in 1908, by which time Richardson was living in London, for in 1903 Robertson had been appointed Professor of German at London University. She lived in London until her husband's death in 1933, writing The Getting of Wisdom (1910), Australia Felix (1917), The Way Home (1925), Ultima Thule (1929), and the stories included in The End of A Childhood (1934). Afterwards she moved to Sussex, where she wrote The Young Cosima (1939), and where she died on 20th March, 1946.

It is fitting that an account of Henry Handel Richardson's life after her return to England should consist of a list of her books. For art not only provided her with a purpose in life, but became more important than life itself: she sacrificed all ordinary interests and activities to a single-minded concentration on her writing. The work "sacrifice" may be a misnomer; it is hard to say how much of Richardson's seclusion was imposed upon her by the necessities of her art, and how much of it was the

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[20] Quoted by Olga Roncoroni, ibid., p. 143.

result of her own temperament - her shyness and her hatred of public occasions, her lack of ready conversation and her dislike of strangers. In her personal "Notes and Memories" book she wrote in September, 1941

> Had I been 'taken up' at the time of Maurice Guest, everything might have turned out differently for me. I was quite ready then to be sociable. But the long, hard years of neglect did their work, and by 1929 I had lost the desire to come out of my shell.[21]

But it is doubtful whether she could ever have enjoyed the publicity given to the successful novelist. Whatever the reason for it, Richardson lived and worked in a seclusion that recalls the cliche of the "artist in an ivory tower". In fact, as we learn in Myself When Young, she always liked to work in a room where she could "overlook her surroundings" (p.90): in the various houses in which she lived Richardson's study was always on the top floor, with double doors to aid her withdrawal from the rest of the household. To this study she retired every morning, following a strict routine:

> By 9.30 she had shut her study door (and the specially made sound-proof door outside it); and heaven help anyone who intruded or disturbed her before 12.30 or 1 p.m. . . . At about 11 a.m. a small cup of Mocha coffee with cream and a dish of fruit were taken up to her. But the tray was put into the study silently, and, unless spoken to, the bearer retired (without banging the door!).[22]

This ordering of existence was applied with equal rigor to the rest of Richardson's activities, as well as to those of the people who lived with her. Any upset to this schedule disturbed her, as can be seen in her explanation of the reason for the gap between the

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[21] Quoted by Olga Roncoroni in Some Personal Impressions, p.136.

[22] Ibid., p.74.

publication of Australia Felix and that of The Way Home:

> Setting aside a state of almost chronic ill-health - illness cost me at least three months out of every twelve - the war turned my well-ordered life upside down. And I am not one of those lucky people who can write amid confusion or under discomfort. Or in strange surroundings. I need not only my own room, with its perfect quiet, but also to know that, beyond it, the machinery of the house is running smoothly. Now, all was change. I lost my trusted and experienced secretary, servants became unprocurable, the house was invaded by relatives from the continent; and in addition came my own intense emotional revulsion against a country that had meant so much to my development and with which I still had numerous ties. Under this strain it went beyond me to begin a new book, and one on so remote a subject. ("Some Notes", p.16)

This dislike of any interruption to her routine was another reason for Richardson's dislike of publicity, which entailed interviews and reporters - strangers coming to see her at any hour of the day. When Jacob Schwartz, who was publishing two of her short stories under the title Two Studies, asked if she would consent to an interview, she replied

> About this Mrs. Sergeant. I'm very jealous, as you know, of my freedom; but if it is going to help in any way with the sales of my stuff, I would consent to see her one afternoon. Where does she live? And would you arrange it for me? I'd like it made clear that I don't, as a rule, care for strangers, and that nothing further would come of it. I don't go out at all - to other people's houses.[23]

She also did her best to discourage visits from people with no professional motives. When Oliver Stonor asked if a friend of his might come and see her, she answered very guardedly

> I'm an unsatisfactory person to try to get to know : it has to be all give and no take. My day is mapped

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[23] Letter of 3 March 1932. (In the J.K. Moir collection in the Public Library, Melbourne) All references to Richardson's letters to Schwartz are to this collection.

rigorously out in work, rest and exercise; and I don't let anything or anyone interfere with it. So you are - - - Between 5.30 and 7 is my freest time, and I like to be rung up beforehand.

I expect you will laugh. (Letter of 12 March 1937)

This last remark shows that Richardson was not unaware of what the normal reaction to this rather grande dame manner of permitting audiences must be.

A further reaction might be to condemn as utterly selfish this determination to put the artist and her art before everything and everybody else. Such a note of selfishness would seem particularly strong in two letters written after her husband's death, where she refers to this event in terms of the upset it has made to her routine of work. On 12 June 1933, she wrote to Stonor

"My husband was ill, as I think you knew, from the beginning of May, and one of the things that fretted him most was that I was being hindered from getting to my own work, by having to look after things for him. I wonder what he wld say now."; while on 26 December 1934, she wrote to Nettie Palmer "How I envy Vance Palmer's steady production. . . . But then he has a wife to keep the troubles and worry of living from him - I mean the petty worries of everyday life. Which I now have to face alone."[24] Just how much Professor Robertson did do to keep these "petty worries" from troubling Richardson may be gathered from Miss Roncoroni's comments in Some Personal Impressions:

He was her sheet-anchor: there was nothing he did not do to make her life as easy as possible and keep her happy; indeed, this was his sole object in working as he did - to make enough money to be able to send her away on

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[24] Quoted by Karl-Johan Rossing in Letters of Henry Handel Richardson to Nettie Palmer (1953), p.31.

voyages and holidays abroad in order that she could renew her energy when she had written herself to a standstill. To him she turned for advice and comfort; and though he never influenced her literary work in any way, his was the one opinion on this that she really valued. (p.82)

It would be unfair to Richardson, however, to leave the impression that her husband's death affected her only as an annoying upset to the trouble-free life she thought so necessary for the artist. On the night he died she wrote "In him I lose husband, father, brother rolled in one. He was everything to me."[25] In her work and her life Richardson counselled acceptance of change and suffering - she wrote to Stonor on 9 June 1934 "to sit and long for what has gone and is not to be recaptured is destructive" - which may be why her letters reveal no deep concern over her husband's death. In spite of this external stoicism, Miss Roncoroni says that "H.H. never really got over the loss of her husband - something seemed to go out of her after he died which never came back."[26] This, together with the loss of Professor Robertson's sympathy and critical guidance, may partly explain the poor quality of her last novel, The Young Cosima. Indeed, in a letter to Mrs. Kernot describing the difficulties encountered in writing this book, she said "And I don't even know that I've made a success of it. Without J.G.R. at hand to tell me what I have done I can only peg ahead and hope for the best." (17 October 1937)

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[25] Quoted by Olga Roncoroni in Some Personal Impressions, p.103.

[26] Ibid., p.112.

This idea of the sacrifices which the artist and those about him must make for his art has been seen as quite important for the interpretation of Henry Handel Richardson's work. There seems to be no question that Richardson herself believed that "Artistic talent is a gift and what matters most in that it should develop freely, whatever the sacrifice."[27] I doubt, however, that this belief is expressed in her books in exactly the way that has been supposed. The differences between Richardson's works are great enough to make any generalisation about them suspect, but it can be said that artists are not the only characters who are shown to have a single-minded devotion to getting what they want from life. All the characters attempt to achieve their own form of fulfilment; the difference between them lies not only in the ends they are seeking, but in the means they employ. Thus in Maurice Guest, the "ordinary characters", Dove and Madeleine Wade, are shown to be just as egotistical and determined in the pursuit of their aims, and just as successful in fulfilling them, as the artistic genius, Schilsky. Richardson appears to have thought that success at anything demanded the strength of will, singleness of purpose and resilience which were necessary for artistic success. The "failures" in her novels are those who attempt to find fulfilment in self-sacrifice. Of course, various qualifications need to be made even in

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[27] Leonie J. Gibson, Henry Handel Richardson and some of her sources (1954), p.15.

such very general generalisations as these; this will be done when Richardson's works are discussed individually. The point to be made here is that if one wished to see in Richardson's work a justification of the sacrifices which must be made for the artist, it would seem to reside not in the artist's difference from other people but in his similarity to them: Schilsky's attitude to Louise is no more selfish than Dove's to Ephie Cayhill.

Thus Maurice Guest's failure as artist and lover is as much the result of his lack of character as of his lack of talent; he does not have the strength of will Richardson thought necessary for success in any field, and for artistic success in particular. In an early article on Schubert, after deploring his "terrible facility in composition", she wrote

> . . . nor was he even of a strong nature; he impresses us as having been a somewhat colourless person who never had the strength of will to struggle against the adversities of life. He at least never learnt the lesson that all lasting work, work that is to endure, is only achieved by a determined effort of will, by a mastery of self. None of his music bears the stamp of victorious suffering that makes some of Beethoven's work divine, the impress of renunciation that has given Wagner's music its hold upon our hearts.[28]

That Richardson herself had this strength of will is evinced by the statements of various acquaintances. Nettie Palmer speaks of Richardson's "implacable will";[29] in Some Personal Impressions Miss Roncoroni tells of the

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[28] "The Schubert Centenary", The Speaker (30 January 1897), p.125.

[29] "Henry Handel Richardson", Meanjin, VII (1948), p.163.

"indomitable will to work" which drove Richardson to her study table until she was too weak to hold a pencil. (p.171) Richardson seems to have inherited her strength of will from her mother: in Myself When Young she writes of the conflict of wills which resulted

> On the other hand, when she tried to master me she came up against something of her own strength of will and determination. I refused to conform to her ideas of what I ought to do and to be; and the older I grew the more vigorously I fought against them. (p.48)

Without this inheritance, and her equally strong conviction that writing was her "calling", one imagines that it would have been impossible for Richardson to go on writing as she did for over thirty years in the face of the hostility accorded to Maurice Guest and The Getting of Wisdom and the complete failure of the first two books of her trilogy. For she was not indifferent to the lack of response to her work:

> And The Way Home was received so coolly and indifferently that I despaired; and for a time questioned both the use and the sense of going on with Mahony's story. . . .
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> William Heinemann once remarked that, if a writer still failed of success with his third book, his case might be considered hopeless. And here was I, with four books to my name, and as far from making good as ever. There was nothing for it, I saw, but to resign myself to the idea of failure in perpetuum.
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> And my fit of despair over, back I went to work. Only by completing the trilogy could I hope to rid myself of the subject. Also (like Maurice) I have a horror of loose ends. ("Some Notes", p.17)

This "horror" or, as she rephrased it in a letter to Vance Palmer, "a certain dogged something in me that will not allow me to leave a thing unfinished",[30] was rewarded by

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[30] Letter of 8 May 1929, quoted by Nettie Palmer in Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.191.

the totally unexpected success of Ultima Thule.

Henry Handel Richardson's strength of will must also have been essential to her attainment of the self-discipline needed for the methods of work she adopted. For, while the original idea for a work might arrive via that method of artistic inspiration described by her as "golden rain",[31] this would be followed by years of hard work. Like J.P. Jacobsen, Richardson must have thought that "'every new book must be produced by a struggle with oneself to get the utmost out of oneself.'"[32] Nettie Palmer quotes some words of Richardson's - "I can only write as it is given"[33] - which seem to imply that the ideas for her work came from a source outside herself; and there is a hint in one of her letters that the same source can just as easily reverse the process:

> "I am now settling down to work again, but it's too soon to speak of it to anyone. Not even my husband is in my confidence. When I begin a new book, I have to be very careful, for fear the ideas in it, which are as light as thistledown, blow away and never come back.[34]

But, once captured, these ideas underwent many changes in expression before Richardson was content that the book in which they were contained was fit for publication. Her insistence on complete accuracy of fact also helped to lengthen the time a book took to be written. "Never less than three years

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[31] The Young Cosima, p.83.
[32] Quoted by Richardson in "A Danish Poet", p.50.
[33] In "Henry Handel Richardson", p.163.
[34] Quoted by Nettie Palmer in A Study, p.183.

over a book",[35] she wrote; she was, in any case, a firm believer in the dictum that "Art is long". She advised "beginning writers" ...not to be in a hurry, not to try to write too much. I've seen so many talents go to pieces through hurrying. The publishers are to blame, clamouring for more books. Too many books are written altogether. I feel that a writer should spend three years at least on a book if it's worth writing at all.[36]

In two of her critical articles, the one on Schubert already referred to, and an examination of a translation of Ibsen's John Gabriel Borkman, she also criticises attempts at hurried production. She sees a fatal weakness in Schubert's failure to "discipline his talent" - how can one expect songs to last when they are produced at the rate of seven a day?[37] - and thinks that some of the defects in Archer's rendering of Ibsen's style may be explained by "the speed at which the translation of this play had probably to be executed."[38] But this belief does not seem to have been the sole reason for the length of time Richardson spent on her books. On 29 May 1932 she wrote to Jacob Schwartz "Oh, don't you begin to tease me about the coming of a new book. Remember, the only pleasure I get in life is from my writing. Why should I hurry over it? Especially when I'm so miserable 'between books.'"

This last statement makes one wonder about Henry

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[35] Quoted by Nettie Palmer in "Henry Handel Richardson", p.158.

[36] In Louise Morgan, "Henry Handel Richardson", Everyman (14 August 1930), p.70.

[37] "The Schubert Centenary", p.125.

[38] "Ibsen in Translation", The Speaker (10 July 1897), p.41.

Handel Richardson's general outlook on life; from the evidence of her books, with their emphasis on failure and harsh reality, it would not seem to have been a very cheerful one. In her youth, as we have seen, she felt herself an "outsider", and the world-picture of her first novel is decidedly pessimistic. Replying to a comment on Maurice Guest made by Mrs. Kernot, she said in a letter of 7 June 1939 "Yes, the agonies of youth is the phrase for it. I wrote many of my own out in the work and came out a saner and quieter person." Her husband referred to the difference between Maurice Guest and The Fortunes of Richard Mahony in similar terms: "it would seem as if, in the interval between the two works, the author had shaken off her pessimistic disharmony with herself, and come to see life in a more equable light."[39] And this would also seem to be demonstrated in the passage from Myself When Young quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The change in Richardson's attitudes towards life may have been connected with her interest in spiritualism and the similar change in her attitudes towards death outlined by Miss Roncoroni in Some Personal Impressions:

> In her early writings: Mary Christina, The Life and Death of Peterle Luthy, and in Maurice Guest, too, she portrayed death with a certain bitterness. But there is no bitterness in her description of John Turnham's death in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony; nor, indeed, in that of Mahony himself. By the time she wrote the trilogy her feelings had completely changed; she had arrived at the conviction that death was but the gateway to a fuller,

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39"The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, p.209.

richer life, in which so much that we do not and cannot understand while in this world would be explained and justified: suffering, frustration, apparent failure. (p.105)

Thus, it would seem certain that there was a change in Richardson's outlook on life in which rebellion against the meaninglessness of "hard and bitter" experiences gave way to an acceptance of them as events of utility to the writer, whose further meaning would be made clear after death. It was perhaps only logical for a person who found her "only pleasure" in life in an almost complete withdrawal from the real world to the fictional, to have believed that true happiness would be found when this withdrawal became absolute. After the completion of The Young Cosima, Richardson wrote to Mrs. Kernot on 5 December 1938 "Time to my own again, which is my idea of bliss. How I look forward in this respect to the next world where time (and money making) will cease to be and only work counts." This would indeed be Paradise to one who had devoted her life to her work. For, in spite of the many gaps and enigmas in Richardson's biography, there would seem to be no reason for disagreeing with her own view of her life : "You're wrong if you think I've had an interesting life and met scores of interesting people. My life has been mainly work. Everything has been made subservient to that."[40]

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[40] In a letter to Mrs. Kernot, 23 November 1941.

CHAPTER II

MAURICE GUEST :

Some Fictional and Factual Sources

Henry Handel Richardson's three years as a music student at Leipzig provided her, as we have seen, with the idea for her first novel and with a husband who encouraged her to write it. This period also enabled her to come in contact with the work of those nineteenth century novelists whose influence may be detected throughout Maurice Guest. Richardson began this novel with the intention of "pinning the happy Leipzig days to paper. But other forces were at work; and very soon the characters involved in the tragic love story had it their own way." ("Some Notes", p.9) Maurice Guest, a young Englishman of middle-class background, comes to Leipzig sometime in the 1890's to study the piano. He dreams of future fame, but this ambition is soon superseded by his love for Louise Dufrayer, the mysterious Australian femme fatale who is herself passionately in love with Schilsky, the local genius. When Schilsky leaves Leipzig to further his musical career, the distraught Louise is consoled by Maurice and eventually decides to accept him as her lover. But Maurice and Louise are too opposed in their beliefs and ideals for this affair to be a happy one. On Schilsky's return to Leipzig, Louise deserts Maurice and he, with all

his dreams destroyed, commits suicide.

Outlined thus baldly, Maurice Guest may seem little more than a fairly conventional love story; but for the English reader of 1908 it was anything but conventional. In "Some Notes" Richardson describes the unfavourable criticism, the cries of "morbid", "coarse", "erotic", which greeted "this book, built on European lines, with which, in my ignorance, I had invaded pre-War England." (pp.10-11) With its emphasis on sexual love, its objectivity and its "lack of morals"[1] Maurice Guest was indeed foreign to the English fictional tradition. The source of these un-English traits was, as Richardson says, the Continent, or, more particularly, the school of fictional "realism" developed there during the previous fifty-odd years. Richardson first became aware of this movement at Leipzig. She had always been a voracious reader - in Myself When Young she mentions the many books she read as a child (pp.49-53) - but at the beginning of her stay in Leipzig was unable to satisfy this craving. The growth of her friendship with Robertson, however, enabled her to obtain as many books as she wanted from the university library.

For the first time, too, I had books in abundance: Russian, French, Danish, Norwegian, in those admirable translations for which the Germany of that time was famous.

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[1] Richardson's comment on Maurice Guest in a letter to Oliver Stonor, 19 May 1943. (In the Henry Handel Richardson collection in the National Library, Canberra.) All references to Richardson's letters to Stonor are to this collection.

And how I read! The hour-long grind of scales and exercises passed in a flash with, say, a play of Ibsen's or a volume of Tolstoi propped open on the rack. ("Some Notes", p.9)

The nationalities mentioned by Richardson are those of the writers who had most influence on her work : Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Flaubert and Stendhal, Jacobsen and Björnson.

The French influence on Maurice Guest, in contrast to the Russian and Scandinavian, may be seen more in the artistic principles followed in the novel than in its substance. Richardson does, however, like Flaubert in Madame Bovary and Stendhal in Le Rouge et le Noir, devote a large part of Maurice Guest to passionate love and its workings, a topic which till then, with the possible exception of Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, had not been of major concern to the English novelist. Flaubert's influence on Richardson was more pervasive than Stendhal's; from him she learnt not only how an artist should write, but how he should live: "The writer who undoubtedly carried most weight with me was Flaubert, an absorbed study of whose life and letters left an indelible impression on the young beginner."[2] Among the books on Richardson's reading-list for 1897-1898[3] are several volumes of Flaubert's letters and a few quotations from these will show the similarity between Flaubert's ideas about the artist and those attributed to Richardson in the previous chapter.

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[2] In an autobiographical note in Twentieth Century Authors (ed. Kunitz and Haycraft, 1942), p.1170.

[3] Extracted by Miss Roncoroni from Richardson's diaries for these years.

There we saw that Richardson believed the artist should be prepared to give up everything but his art. Flaubert wrote to his young disciple, Guy de Maupassant

> What you need are 'principles'. But that is easily said; the question is, what principles? Well, for an artist there is only one: to sacrifice everything to Art. Life for him must be no more than a means to an end, and the last person he must consider is himself.[4]

This same idea is expressed in a more elaborate form in an earlier letter to Louise Colet

> If you seek happiness and beauty simultaneously, you will attain neither one nor the other, for the price of beauty is self-denial. Art, like the Jewish God, wallows in sacrifices. So tear yourself to pieces, mortify your flesh, roll in ashes, smear yourself with filth and spittle, wrench out your heart! You will be alone, your feet will bleed, an infernal disgust will be with you throughout your pilgrimage, what gives joy to others will give none to you, what to them are but pinpricks will cut you to the quick, and you will be lost in the hurricane with only beauty's faint glow visible on the horizon. But it will grow, grow like the sun, its golden rays will bathe your face, penetrate into you, you will be illuminated within, ethereal, all spiritualized, and after each bleeding the flesh will be less burdensome. Let us therefore seek only tranquility; let us ask of life only an armchair, not a throne; only water to quench our thirst, not drunkenness. Passion is not compatible with the long patience that is a requisite of our calling. Art is vast enough to take complete possession of a man. To divert anything from it is almost a crime; it is a sin against the Idea, a dereliction of duty.[5]

Richardson followed Flaubert in this belief that the artist was a person cut off from ordinary life : in The Getting of Wisdom the embryo artist, Laura Rambotham, is set apart from her school-fellows by her inability to react to events

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[4] Letter of 15 August 1878. (Translated by J.M. Cohen in Gustave Flaubert: Letters (selected R. Rumbold, 1950), p.218.)

[5] Letter of 21-22 August 1853. (Translated by Francis Steegmuller in The Selected Letters of Gustave Flaubert (1954), pp.158-159)

in the "correct" way. Another similarity can be seen between Richardson's "ivory tower" existence and Flaubert's insistence on the artist's need for seclusion, tranquility and patience in the above passage and the following one:

I just go slowly on with my task, like a good workman, with his sleeves rolled up and sweat on his forehead, hammering his anvil regardless of rain or snow, hail or thunder. I was not like this in the old days. The change has taken place naturally. Willpower has had something to do with it, and it will lead me further, I hope. My only fear is that my resolve may weaken, for there are days when my lassitude appals me. But I think I have grasped one thing, one big thing: that for people of our kind happiness lies in the mind and nowhere else. Discover your true nature and harmonise yourself to it. 'Sibi constat', says Horace. That is everything. I do not think about fame, I assure you, nor much about Art. I try to spend my time in the least boring way, and I have found it. Do as I do: break with the outer world, live like a bear - a polar bear. To hell with everything, yourself included, everything except your intellect.[6]

Richardson would certainly seem to have tried to do as Flaubert did: like him she thought "willpower" essential to the artist's programme of patient and incessant work, like him she broke with the outer world. But, as I have said in the previous chapter, she had a personal predisposition to this way of life.

Flaubert's letters also seem to provide some clarification of Richardson's attitude towards artistic inspiration. He, like her, thought that "Art was long", and counselled patience and self-discipline:

Work patiently every day for a fixed number of hours. Get into the habit of a calm, studious life. You will immediately find a great charm in it, and then you will

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[6] Letter to Alfred le Poittevin, September 1845. (Translated by Cohen, op.cit., p.28.)

gain strength. I have also had a mania for working right through the night; but nothing comes of it except weariness. One must distrust anything looking like inspiration; it is often a mere self-deception, a factitious exaltation with nothing spontaneous about its origin, something, in fact, deliberately fostered. Besides, one does not live on inspiration. Pegasus trots more often than he gallops. The whole art is to learn how to drive him at the desired speed. But for this one must not force the pace, as the riding masters say. One must read, reflect deeply, and always be conscious of style. One must write as little as possible, and then only to appease the Idea, which demands a shape and which revolves in the mind until we have found it one, exact, precise and adequate to it. Remember that with patience and prolonged effort one does finally achieve good writing.[7]

But though he distrusted the free flow of inspiration and believed that the actual writing of a novel was a slow and exacting business, Flaubert also wrote

A good subject for a novel is one that rises complete, at a single spurt, a fertile idea, from which everything else springs. One is certainly not free to write on a given subject. That is a thing the public and the critics do not understand. The secret of a masterpiece lies in the conformity between the subject and the author's nature.[8]

It would seem likely that this idea of Flaubert's was what Henry Handel Richardson had in mind when she said "I can only write as it is given."[9]

In "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson"[10] Professor Robertson outlines Flaubert's influence on Maurice Guest:

From Madame Bovary comes the sombre conception of the devastating effects of a great passion on a soul that is

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[7]Letter to Louise Colet, 13 December 1846. (Translated by Cohen, op.cit., p.37)

[8]Letter to Madame Roger des Genettes, 1861(?). (Translated by Cohen, op.cit., pp.135-6.)

[9]Quoted by Nettie Palmer in "Henry Handel Richardson", Meanjin, VII (1948), p.163.

[10]Printed in Myself When Young.

not strong enough to bear it; from Flaubert, too - perhaps also from an older master, Stendhal - that striving after objectivity and 'distance'. Flaubertian is the untiring effort to find the juste mot, that patient moulding of period and polishing of style; that endeavour to avoid every betrayal of the author's feelings, to expurge every thought from its pages that is not thinkable by the actors in the drama. (p.163)

On the need for objectivity, Flaubert wrote to George Sand

> I expressed myself badly when I said that 'one must not write with one's heart'. I meant not introduce one's personality. I think that high Art is scientific and impersonal. One must, by an effort of imagination, transfer oneself into one's characters and not draw them to oneself.[11]

This objectivity is apparent in all of Richardson's work, though it might be said that, since all her main characters are drawn from herself, the imaginative effort she had to make was not a large one. Flaubert realised that this method of writing would not be found as pleasant as the personal and unscientific type, and that it would lead to charges of morbidity similar to those levelled at Maurice Guest. While working on Madame Bovary he wrote to Louise Colet

> I think you have no idea of what kind of a book I am writing. In my other books I was slovenly; in this one I am trying to be impeccable, and to follow a geometrically straight line. No lyricism, no comments, the author's personality absent. It will make sad reading; there will be atrociously wretched and sordid things.[12]

Sure enough, such charges were made, and we see Flaubert defending himself against them in this later letter to George Sand

> I do not 'enjoy spreading desolation', believe me, but I

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[11] Letter of 15-16 December 1866. (Translated by Cohen, op.cit., p.150.)

[12] Letter of 1 February 1852. (Translated by Steegmuller, op.cit., p.132.)

can only see through my own eyes. As for my 'lack of conviction', I am unfortunately choked with convictions - and spleen and half supressed fury. But, holding my ideas of Art, I believe that one has no right to reveal one's personal feelings; the artist should no more appear in his works than does God in nature.[13]

This method of presenting a story objectively, with none of the palliatives of sentiment or morality, was what Richardson, "in her ignorance", used in Maurice Guest. It was not acceptable to the English reading public of the time - indeed, they never seemed to become accustomed to it, she thought - and was continually misunderstood. All her life Richardson criticised those who took any of the pronouncements made by her characters as her own. Referring to The Young Cosima, she wrote to Oliver Stonor on 16 January 1939

Then, for all their cleverness, these reviewers aren't subtle enough. The "technique of the ivories" for example is what Hans is thinking, not what I am saying. (They are actually words culled from his own mouth.) But this method of writing has been a trap for the unwary ever since the days of Maurice Guest and I ought to be used to them falling into it.

Richardson, like Flaubert, realised that the use of the realist technique helped to make her novels unpopular. During World War II she wrote

It may be that this war will make so clean a break with the immediate past that I and my work will never be heard of again. But it may also be that the British mind will have better learnt to face realities, and that my hard, unsentimental books will come into their own.[14]

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[13] Letter written sometime after 20 December 1875. (Translated by Cohen, op.cit., pp.198-9.)

[14] In her "Notes and Memories" book, December 1940, quoted by Olga Roncoroni in Henry Handel Richardson: Some Personal Impressions (ed. Purdie and Roncoroni, 1957), p.133.

Richardson seems in her determination that the facts in her novels should be as accurate as possible to have departed from Flaubert's example. For in a letter to George Sand disclaiming any position as the head of a "school" of realist novelists he wrote "I set little store by exact historical detail, such things I mean as technical and typographical accuracy. My primary aim is beauty, which is only of moderate interest to my colleagues."[15] It is true that "exact historical detail" is not one of the fundamental aims of the realist theory of fiction, though in practice all realist writers, even Flaubert himself, as may be seen from his descriptions of visits to the localities in which his novels were set and of the numerous reference books he consulted, were careful to give their books a strong factual background. It has been said that Richardson's fidelity to factual detail, historical and otherwise, "imposes a restraint upon her writing, and makes for stylistic clumsiness."[16] But whether Richardson, like Flaubert's colleagues, did pay more attention to accuracy than to "beauty", is a question that must remain unanswered till a later chapter.

While Flaubert may have been Richardson's mentor in her concepts of the artist's life and the techniques of realist fiction, Maurice Guest itself, as Professor

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[15] Letter written sometime after 20 December 1875. (Translated by Cohen, op.cit., p.199)

[16] Leonie Kramer, "Henry Handel Richardson", The Literature of Australia (ed. G. Dutton, 1964), p.329.

Robertson says, "owes more to Russia and Scandinavia than to France":

> Without books such as Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamasov, it is safe to say that Maurice Guest would never have been written, or at least never have taken the form it took. And it is just this Dostoevsky element which gives Maurice Guest its particular niche in literature; it assimilates and reproduces in an English form all which Russia meant for the European novel in the foregoing generation. And as the story merges into tragedy, the Dostoevsky influence grows in intensity. No previous English writer had dared to unveil the holy of holies of the spiritual life, the agonising self-analysis and despair of a tragic, distraught nature with such frankness as here; and none, it is safe to say, could have ever done it without the figure of that 'outsider of life', Raskolnikov, before his eyes. (pp.164-5)

The dramatic presentation of character-through dialogue and through the self-contemplation of the major figures - in Dostoevsky's novels is closer to the method Richardson uses in Maurice Guest than is Flaubert's more descriptive presentation of character in Madame Bovary. Maurice Guest is like Raskolnikov in his lack of strong aims and convictions: he is as unable to resist the fascination of love as Raskolnikov the fascination of murder. Because of the contrast in the movement of the novels - Dostoevsky's moving to salvation, Richardson's to destruction - at the end of his story Maurice is most like Raskolnikov at the beginning of his; and so Dostoyevsky's influence on Maurice Guest is more apparent in its final section. Just as Raskolnikov's guilty fear of the discovery of his crime compels him to do and say things which will make this discovery certain, so Maurice's jealous fear of losing Louise compels him to do things that make this loss

inevitable. Both men suffer from the delusion that their secret fears are not, in fact, secret, and neither can bear the insecurity this produces. As a result they themselves bring about the thing they most fear - Raskolnikov gives himself up (though he has additional motives for doing this), Maurice tells Louise of Schilsky's return to Leipzig.

Another point of similarity between Richardson and Dostoyevsky lies in their use of a character's dreams to represent his psychological state. In Crime and Punishment, for example, before the murder Raskolnikov has a dream in which he sees peasants beating an old mare to death, and after it one in which the murder is reproduced with the difference that the old woman keeps laughing as he is hitting her. A series of dreams had by another character, Svidrigaylov, are also given in detail. Richardson does not make such an extensive use of dream material in Maurice Guest, but Maurice's "lilac" dream shows that her skill at dream presentation is equal to Dostoyevsky's:

> That night he had a vivid dream. He dreamt he was in a garden, where nothing but lilac grew - grew with a luxuriance he could not have believed possible, and on fantastic bushes: there were bushes like steeples and bushes smaller than himself, big and little, broad and slender, but all were of lilac, and in flower - an extravagant profusion of white and purple blossoms. He gazed round him in delight, and took an eager step forward; but, before he could reach the nearest bush, he saw that it had been an illusion: the bush was stripped and bared, and the rest were bare as well. "You're too late. It has all been gathered," he heard a voice say, and at this moment, he saw Ephie at the end of a long alley of bushes, coming towards him, her arms full of lilac. She smiled and nodded

to him over it, and he heard her laugh, but when she was half-way down the path, he discovered his mistake: it was not Ephie but Louise. She came slowly forward, her laden arms outstretched, and he would have given his life to be able to advance and to take what she offered him; but he could not stir, could not lift hand or foot, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Her steps grew more hesitating, she seemed hardly to move; and then, just as she reached the spot where he stood, he found that it was not she after all, but Madeleine, who laughed at his disappointment and said: "I'm not offended, remember!" - The revulsion of feeling was too great; he turned away, without taking the flowers she held out to him - and awoke. (p.96)

This dream draws on the events of the previous evening when Maurice, after waiting vainly at Madeleine's in the hope of meeting Louise, had gone to see Ephie and had a mild flirtation with her while she was bedecking him with sprigs of lilac. In the dream Ephie's transformation into Louise represents Maurice's desire to make love to her rather than Ephie; his inability to move, the inhibitions which hinder his attempts to obtain a consummation of this love; and Louise's transformation into Madeleine, his fear that this will prove impossible. The dream in its entirety provides a summary of Maurice's relationships with the three women up to this time - his friendship with Ephie, his, as it appears, hopeless infatuation with Louise, and his rejection of Madeleine's love.

Richardson herself was always interested in dreams and in abnormal psychology. On 18 May 1939 she wrote to Oliver Stonor "I read Freud and his works so early in life - before his <u>name</u> was even known in England - that his theories have become a commonplace to me."

Richardson's knowledge of Freud is confirmed by Olga Roncoroni who, when she first met Richardson in 1919, was subject to neurotic fears and inhibitions. She says in Some Personal Impressions

> H.H. was the first person who realized that my fears were very real to me: something which I could not help having, not something to be treated with ridicule or contempt. In forming this opinion she had, of course, the advantage of being far more widely read than anyone else I had known, and consequently aware of the theories formulated by Freud and his followers: that such nervous fears were a form of illness and not mere fancies, as had been the general idea up till then. (p.65)

Richardson was instrumental in obtaining psychiatric treatment for Miss Roncoroni, and asked her to keep a record of her dreams while undergoing analysis, for use in a psychological novel she intended to write. As Freud's Interpretation of Dreams first appeared in 1900, while Richardson was still living in Germany, it is reasonable to assume that she may have read it while writing Maurice Guest. And when the "lilac" dream is examined in the light of Freud's theories one is struck by its fidelity to his description of the characteristics of a dream. For example, Freud says that a dream is the fulfilment of a wish - in Maurice's dream Louise offers him her love; and he says that dreams always contain "a repetition of a recent impression of the previous day"[17] - here the incident of Ephie and the lilac, as well as the scene at Madeleine's. Other rules followed by what Freud terms the

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[17] The Interpretation of Dreams (Trans. and ed. J.Strachey, 1954), p.180.

"dreamwork" are that "the sensation of the inhibition of a movement represents a conflict of will";[18] and that "when anything in a dream has the character of direct speech . . . then it is derived from something actually spoken in waking life."[19] Maurice's inability to move toward Louise represents the conflict between his desire for her and the prohibitions of his moral code; Madeleine's "'I'm not offended, remember!'" had actually been said to Maurice the day before. Of course, the "lilac" dream lacks the most fundamental characteristic of an actual dream, unintelligibility. Like the dreams in Crime and Punishment, it must be capable of interpretation by the reader for it to fulfil its purpose in the novel. Freud writes

> Most of the artificial dreams constructed by imaginative writers are designed for a symbolic interpretation . . . they reproduce the writer's thoughts under a disguise which is regarded as harmonizing with the recognised characteristics of dreams.[20]

Maurice's dream is no exception to this rule, though Richardson has carried out the "harmonizing" much more thoroughly than most writers. The number of similarities between this dream and the dream as analysed by Freud would make it seem likely that Richardson was aquainted with his work when she wrote Maurice Guest. Her use of Freud's

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[18] Ibid., p.337.
[19] Ibid., p.183.
[20] Ibid., p.97

theories is in keeping with her realist insistence on fidelity to life.

Further instances of Freudian influence on Maurice Guest may, perhaps, be seen in the extent to which Richardson acknowledges the sexual element in the relationship of Louise and Maurice, and in the fairly open treatment of homosexuality. To the modern reader this all seems rather tame stuff but in 1908 was sensational enough for the novel to be called "coarse" and "erotic" and to be banned by several libraries. While Richardson's sympathetic portrayal of a "fallen woman" may have been influenced by Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina, her admission of Louise's physical need for Maurice is franker than anything Flaubert or Tolstoy say about their heroines. Although Louise begins her affair with Maurice in the hope of discovering the ideal happiness that has previously eluded her, she continues it after her disillusionment because love-making is for her a "means of escape from the cheerlessness of life." (p.407) Maurice's dismay at finding that Louise wants from him "neither affection nor comradeship, only the blind gratification of sense" (p.458) would seem to parallel that which greeted the appearance of Freud's theories of the importance of the sexual drive in everyday life.

Just as Richardson presents Louise not as a depraved woman insensitive to all but bodily pleasures, but as a sensitive and unhappy person who uses sexual pleasure as a

means of escape from reality, so she presents Krafft's homosexuality not as a perversion but as an intrinsic element of his character. The first description of him in the novel:

> His face was one of those, which, as by a mystery, preserve the innocent beauty of their childhood, long after childhood is a thing of the past: delicate as the rosy lining of a great sea-shell was the colour that spread from below the forked blue veins of the temples, and it paled and came again as readily as a girl's. Girlish, too, were the limpid eyes, which, but for a trick of dropping unexpectedly, seemed always to be gazing, in thoughtful surprise, at something that was visible to them alone. As to the small, frail body, it existed only for the sake of the hands: narrow hands, with long, fleshless fingers, nervous hands, that were never still. (p.32)

with its emphasis on Krafft's physical feminism, prepares for the revelation of his relationship with Schilsky, and also helps to make his homosexuality appear more natural. Even Maurice Guest who, blinded by his conventional moral ideas, fails to discern the truth about Krafft, is attracted to him. The description of their conversation at the bridge, in which Krafft is allotted words usually reserved for the romantic heroine, and Maurice's attitude is that of the male to the female in distress, clearly demonstrates this:

> Krafft stretched out his hand. As Maurice held in his the fine, slim fingers, which seemed mere skin and muscle, a hitherto unknown feeling of kindliness came over him for the young man at his side. At this moment, he had the lively sensation that he was the stronger and wiser of the two, and that it was even a little beneath him to take the other too seriously.
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> "You think so poorly of me then? You think no good thing can come out of me?" asked Krafft, and there was an appealing note in his voice, which, but a short time back, had been so overbearing.
>
> Had Maurice known him better, he would have promptly

retorted: "Don't be a fool." As it was, he laughed. "Who am I to sit in judgment? The only thing I do know is, that if I had your talent - no, a quarter of it - I should pull myself together and astonish the world."

"It sounds so easy; but I have too many doubts of myself," said Krafft, and laid his hand on Maurice's shoulder. "And I have never had anyone to keep me up to the mark - till now. I have always needed someone like you. You are strong and sympathetic; and one has the feeling that you understand."

Maurice was far from certain that he did. However, he answered in a frank way, doing his best to keep down the sentimental tone that had invaded the conversation. At heart, he was little moved by this new friendship, which had begun with the word itself; he told himself that it was only a whim of Krafft's, which would be forgotten in the morning. But, as they stood thus on the bridge, shoulder to shoulder, he did not understand how he could ever have taken anything this frail creature did, amiss. At the moment, there was a clinging helplessness about Krafft, which instinctively roused his manlier feelings. He said to himself that he had done wrong in lightly condemning his companion; and, impelled by this sudden burst of protectiveness, he seized the moment, and spoke earnestly to Krafft of earnest things, of duty, not only to one's fellows, but to oneself and one's abilities, of the inspiring gain of unremitted endeavour. (pp.161-2)

While Krafft is presented as the woman-man, another character in the novel is presented as the opposite, the man-woman. This is Johanna Cayhill, Ephie's older, blue-stocking sister, who, denied her wish for a university career, has decided to devote her life to her adored sister. (p.74) The Lesbian aspect of Johanna's affection for Ephie would seem to be implied in the image Dove applies to her: "She reminds me, if it doesn't sound unkind, of a faithful watch-dog, or something of the sort, which cannot express its devotion as it would like to." (p.75) Johanna's jealous watchfulness, her insistence that Ephie reveal all her thoughts and feelings to her, is an interesting foreshadowing of Maurice's later jealous

behavior towards Louise. The severity of Johanna's reaction to the news of Ephie's affair with Schilsky also indicates that her affection has been more than sisterly. The similarity between her reaction and that of Dove, who has fancied himself in love with Ephie, is commented on by Maurice :

> But Dove was inclined to take Johanna's sterner view, and to cry: "So young and so untender!" for which he, too, substituted "untrue"; and, just on this score, to deduce unfavourable inferences for Ephie's whole moral character. As Maurice listened to him, he could not help thinking that Johanna's affection had been of the same nature as Dove's, in other words, had had a touch of the masculine about it: it had existed only as long as it could guide and subordinate; it denied to its object any midget attempt at individual life; it set up lofty moral standards, and was implacable when a smaller, frailer being found it impossible to live up to them. (p.262)

In the attitude she took towards homosexuality, Richardson was probably influenced by her own boarding-school infatuation for another girl - "Evelyn" of <u>The Getting of Wisdom</u> - as well as by her reading of Freud. This attraction, which she describes in <u>Myself When Young</u> as "so strong that few others have surpassed it", (p.71), would have convinced her that it was possible to feel just as strongly for a person of one's own sex as for one of the opposite.

Returning once again to Professor Robertson's account of <u>Maurice Guest</u>'s literary parentage one finds him giving as the final "exotic element that went to the making of the novel" the influence of the Scandinavian writers:

> And this, if I am not mistaken, has exerted a softening influence on the borrowings from Dostoevsky. The psychological subtlety of <u>Maurice Guest</u> is not wholly

> Russian; a gentler, more delicate element mitigates the harshness of the great Russian's often morbid introspection; the reproduction of the impression of the outer world on these men and women is traced with an art, which, in so far as it is acquired at all, is Danish rather than Russian. (p.166)

A detailed examination of the traces in Maurice Guest of the work of one Danish writer in particular - J.P. Jacobsen - shows that his influence has been more pervasive than that of the French and Russian writers. For, while one can see Richardson's debt to Flaubert in the objectivity of the book, and to Dostoyevsky in its psychological insight, the debt to Jacobsen's Niels Lyhne, which she translated in 1895, is apparent in many aspects of the themes and characters of Maurice Guest.

While working on Niels Lyhne, Jacobsen wrote that "the only interesting thing was 'the struggle of one or more human beings for existence, that is their struggle against the existing order of things for their right to exist in their own way'."[21] Jacobsen had originally planned Niels Lyhne as the study of the "'half-hearted freethinkers'" of "'the generation that was as old as we are now, when we were born'"[22] - the first title for the book was "Niels Lyhne, the Story of a Youthful Generation" - so the struggle he mentions would presumably have been that of these free-thinkers against the champions of religion. But just as

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[21] Quoted in the introduction to Hanna Astreip Larsen's translation of Jacobsen's Marie Grubbe (New York, 1917), p.xi.

[22] Quoted by Richardson in "A Danish Poet", pp.45-46.

Maurice's love for Louise overshadows the musical background of Maurice Guest, so the story of the dreamy poet, Niels Lyhne, overshadows that of the group of freethinkers to which he belongs. The "struggle for existence", however, is still the dominant theme:

> Niels Lyhne might be called a book of unrealised ideals. Hardly one of the many people that cross its pages attains his heart's desire. All of these men and women aim too high; they are none of them satisfied with the lot that has fallen to them, they will have no tree but the sky, all have a touch of divine discontent. And they beat their wings and break them against the unyielding barriers of life, which hem them in as the idea of Fate hemmed in ancient tragedy. Too late Niels learns that the only thing to do is "to bear life as it is, and to let it take shape according to the laws that govern life." For most of them the lesson is too hard, and their hearts break in learning it . . . ("A Danish Poet", p.49)

Maurice Guest is equally concerned with this struggle against life, this struggle for the ideal: it describes the conflicts that result from a relationship of two people with opposing ideals, as well as the conflict between ideals and reality. This is shown in the relationships of Louise and Schilsky, and Ephie and Johanna, but is, of course, seen most strongly in the various phases of Maurice's affair with Louise. Here the conflict is between Maurice's ideal conception of Louise as goddess rather than woman, and of their love as something pure and fine, and Louise's attempt to find happiness in a total possession of him. Maurice is unable to accept Louise as she is; he persists in idealising her even when everything he knows about her contradicts this vision. In Niels Lyhne two of the female characters criticise men for their

unwillingness to accept women as human beings, with the same nature as themselves. Fru Boye, who has been deserted by the genius she loves in spite of her efforts to become his ideal woman, tells Niels

"We are compelled to adapt ourselves to man's ideal. Eradicate and destroy everything in us that does not harmonise with his ideal conception; it must be got rid of; if it cannot be suppressed, it must be overlooked, systematically forgotten and denied all chance of development. But what is not properly our own, what is foreign to our natures, is forced into the most luxuriant bloom by being lauded to the skies, by the constant assumption that we possess it in the highest degree, and by being made the head and corner-stone on which man's love is built. I call it an outrage upon our nature. I call it drill. Man's love is a course of drill." (pp.90-91)[23]

Fennimore, the beautiful young girl who has found nothing but suffering in her ideal marriage, says

"A woman cannot be pure, she is not meant to be - how could she? How unnatural! Did her Creator intend her to be pure? Answer me! No, and ten thousand times no! It is utterly absurd! Why will you exalt us to the stars with one hand when, with the other, you must drag us down? Can you not let us walk side by side with you on earth as fellow-mortals and nothing else?" (pp.198-199)

Louise makes a similar plea for acceptance in the first of the bitter scenes of recrimination between herself and Maurice:

"Did I not take you as you were, and love you - yes, love you! I knew you couldn't be different - that it wasn't your fault if you were faint-hearted and . . .and - But you? - what do you do? You talk as if you worship the ground I walk on: but you can't let me alone. You are always trying to change me - to make me what you think I ought to be."

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[23]All references to Niels Lyhne are to Richardson's translation, published as Siren Voices (London, Heinemann, 1896).

Her words came in haste, stumbling one over the other, as it became plain to her how deeply this grievance, expressed now for the first time, had eaten into her soul. "You've never said to yourself, she's what she is because it's her nature to be. You want to remake my nature and correct it. You are always believing something is wrong. -" (p.427)

Maurice's refusal to face reality is seen not only in his relationship with Louise, but in his unwillingness to believe that Ephie is having an affair with Schilsky and in his decision to visit his music teacher after the disaster of his Abendunterhaltung. The psychology which underlies this refusal to give up one's dreams is aptly described in this passage from Niels Lyhne:

Bigum knew very well what an unfavourable impression he made and how utterly hopeless his love was, but he knew it as we know a thing when we hope with the whole strength of our soul that our knowledge is false. The miracle still remains, and even though miracles do not happen- they might happen- Who knows? It may be that we are mistaken; it may be that our reason, our instinct and our senses with their lucid clearness are leading us astray; may be, we only need the ruthless courage to follow that will-o'-the-wisp, hope, that hovers above the tumultuous longing of our passions. It is only when we hear the door of decision slam, that the cold iron claws of certainty implant themselves in our breast and slowly, slowly, encircle within their grasp the delicate thread of hope on which our world of happiness hangs. The thread is cut; all it sustains falls, and is shattered - and the sharp cry of despair rings out through desolate space. (pp.38-39)

It is not only in this theme of "the struggle for existence", in which the participants cling fast to their dreams in the face of mounting opposition from reality, that Jacobsen's influence on Maurice Guest can be seen. The characters of Niels and Maurice have more in common than their inability to come to terms with life. Even their parental situations are similar though reversed.

Niels Lyhne is the "child of a commonplace, practical father, and a dreamy, romantic mother"[24]. But it is Mr. Guest who has been, like Richardson's own father, "a prey to certain dreams and wishes, which harmonised ill with the conditions of his life". (p.14) Like Maurice, Niels dreams of artistic success and, like Maurice, he can never consummate this dream; both men believe they have plenty of time in which to fulfil their ambitions but, unfortunately, for both time is not enough. Describing Niels' attempts to become a poet, Jacobsen writes:

> He is faithful to his studies, but they are more aimless than they used to be, and the thought of being ready to step forth and put his shoulder to the wheel only flickers unsteadily. . .
> Now and again he is seized with the creative impulse, with the desire to set part of himself free in a work of his own, and then, for days together, every nerve will be at a stretch with joyous Titanic efforts to amass the clay for his Adam. But he can never make him in the likeness of his image; he has not sufficient staying power to maintain the self-concentration that such an effort demands. (pp.177-178)

Maurice also lacks staying power; the successful musician, Schilsky, on the other hand, has an abundance of self-centredness and single-mindedness. In Niels' character, as in Maurice's, is "a certain paralysing discretion, child of an instinctive aversion to daring, and grandchild of a dim consciousness that he was lacking in individuality." (p.96) After the disastrous scene with his teacher, Schwarz, Maurice meditates

> For him, Maurice, the opportune moment simply did not exist; he was one of those people who are always inopportune,

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[24]"A Danish Poet", p.46.

come and go as they will. He might have waited for days; he would never have caught Schwarz in the right mood, or in the nick of time. How he envied those fortunate mortals who always arrived at the right moment, and instinctively said the right thing! That talent had never been his. With him it was a perpetual blunder. (p.437)

Niels Lyhne has the same envy of those "fortunate mortals": "How he envied others, both great and small, who, no matter where they chanced to seize upon existence, always got hold of some handle or other! - For never a handle could he find." (p.236)

In both novels, too, the central character is seen mainly in terms of his relationships with women; the difference being that while Maurice's relationship with Louise is more important than his others with Ephie and Madeleine, Niels' youthful infatuation for Edele Lyhne, his attraction to the witty and beautiful Fru Boye, his passionate affair with Fennimore and his brief period of happiness with his young wife are fairly equal in significance. In all except the last of these there are resemblances to the central passion of Maurice Guest. Niels' adoration of Edele, especially in its expression through religious imagery, recalls the first period of Maurice's love for Louise:

From this time forward Niels felt painfully happy in Edele's presence. She was no longer a mortal like the others, but a superior being made divine by the mystic power of a strange beauty. It made him wildly happy to gaze at her, to kneel before her in spirit and to crawl to her feet in abject self-effacement: but sometimes the craving to worship grew so strong that it had to find relief in an outward sign of subjection, and then, watching

> for a favourable opportunity, he stole into Edele's room and pressed a pre-arranged, interminable number of kisses on the mat beside her bed, on her shoe, or on any other relic that presented itself to his fanaticism. (pp.35-36)

Just so does Maurice worship Louise; lacking Niels' opportunities, he is reduced to kissing "the gravel where he thought she had stood." (p.43) This religious imagery recurs when Niels falls in love with Fennimore: "He longed to humble himself before her, to bend the knee and call her holy." (p.169) Niels at first has no opportunity, for Fennimore is herself in love with his friend, the painter Eric Refstrup. There is a further use of religious imagery in the description of this love: "She loved him with all her heart, with tremulous ardor and passionate anxiety; he was more than a god to her, far more - an idol that she worshipped without measure and without reserve." (p.184) This phrase enables us to trace another of Richardson's debts in the similarities between Louise and Fennimore.

One of the first glimpses we are given of Louise is of her "listening to the player with the raptness of a painted saint: her whole face listened, the tightened lips, the opened nostrils, the wide vigilant eyes." (p.30) The player is, of course, Schilsky - the idol Louise worships "without measure and without reserve." Richardson says of Fennimore in "A Danish Poet" that she is "touched with the fateful breath of passion". (p.47) Like Louise she can never do anything by halves; she loves Niels and repents of this love just as suddenly and completely as Louise falls in and out of love with Maurice. Fennimore's passionate nature is shown in this description of her singing:

She was no longer the little country girl when she abandoned herself to the sound of her voice. How she was carried away by these tones and how frankly and openly she breathed into them! He felt as if there were almost something unchaste about it; as if she were singing herself naked before him. (p.168)

Niels' disapproval of the way Fennimore sings is paralleled by Maurice's dislike of the lack of restraint with which Louise dances:

Louise, in particular, gave herself up to the rhythm of the music with an abandon not often to be seen in a ball-room. Something of the professional about it, said Maurice to himself as he watched her; and, in his own estimation, this was the hardest thought he had yet had of her. (p.311)

When Fennimore is deserted by her husband for drink and male companionship, Niels offers her sympathy and a passionate love affair develops between them just as it does between Louise and Maurice under somewhat similar circumstances. But after Eric has been killed returning home from a drinking bout Fennimore reviles Niels with a violence which he recalls after she has gone:

He seemed to see it still, that pale, vindictive face, which rage had stamped with such strange coarseness and vulgarity, robbing it of its usual delicate beauty as entirely as if all its lines had been plowed up by a pitiless and barbarous hand. (p.232)

In just this way Louise reviles Maurice when she learns of Schilsky's return; and he, too, later recalls a "pale vindictive face" : "her face rose before him - but not the face he had known and loved. He saw it as he had seen it for the last time, disfigured by hatred of him, horribly vindictive, as it had been when she had spat on the ground at his feet." (p.560) Once again a passage from Niels Lyhne seems to complement one from Maurice Guest; what we are not told about Louise's appearance at this time may be deduced from what we are told about Fennimore's.

Setting aside some incidental similarities - Niels and Maurice both wander alone through the streets on Christmas Eve - one other parallel between these books exists in the characters of Schilsky and of Eric Refstrup. Although the differences between these two are greater than those between the other characters who have been compared - Eric is much more limited as a painter than Schilsky is as a musician - they are both artists and both adopt "coarse pleasures" as a means of escape from the demands of their art. When, after his marriage, Eric finds that he can no longer paint, he spends an increasingly greater amount of time in such pursuits, but earlier we have been told:

> But, having faithfully served his god for eleven days, it would often happen that other powers within him gained the upper hand, and he would be seized with a desperate craving for the coarse pleasures of coarse enjoyments. He would give way to this, stricken by the purely human desire for self-destruction, which, when the blood burns, as only blood can, craves for degradation, dirt, and vice with the same degree of intensity that is peculiar to another equally human desire - that of keeping one's self greater and purer than one actually is.
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> At such times few things were coarse and violent enough for him, and, when the fit was over, it took him a long time to recover his balance, for he was so healthy and so little tainted with dreams that, to a certain extent, it was not natural to him. It was almost like a revolt against this devotion to the higher powers of art; it seemed the revenge that his aggrieved nature demanded for his choice of that more ideal life-work that circumstances had impelled him to follow. (pp.156-7)

While there is no such explanation of Schilsky's behaviour in <u>Maurice Guest</u> - although he plays such an important part in the plot, Schilsky's thoughts and actions receive none of the scrutiny given those of the other characters - a

similar idea can be seen in one of Richardson's short stories, "Succedaneum". The central character in this story, a musician who has lost his inspiration, reviews the methods employed by some of his colleagues when in this plight:

> Beard in hand, Arped taught that these blanks, these breaks in one's continuity, served an end: they obliged the artist to come to grips with life in the raw, from which he might distil further sublimates; had, in short, a reproductive value. Sven himself at such times sought the company of women; found, in women's simple, unsophisticated minds, a wholesome contrast to the subtleties of art, to the eternal and damnable preoccupation with colour and line. And, then, so wild were his extravagances that his name burned on men's lips. ... Again, there was Gregor Muthesius, the poet. Gregor drowned suspense in alcohol, went blind and deaf to his barrenness, till he could rise once more full of pristine vigour for his task of beating out a super-reality in words. [25]

From this one may assume that Henry Handel Richardson, like Jacobsen, thought that artists, or at any rate a good many of them, turned to the "coarse pleasures" of women and alcohol as a respite from the struggles of creation. Like the artists in "Succedaneum", Schilsky, and Krafft as well, have no morality, and no reality, but art. This view of the artist as a person who judges things only in terms of his art has been discussed earlier in this chapter and will be returned to in a later consideration of German literary influences on Maurice Guest.

The resemblances between Jacobsen's other novel, Fru Marie Grubbe, and Maurice Guest are not as extensive, though there are a few interesting similarities. The main one is that Marie Grubbe is in her essential character

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[25] The End of A Childhood (1934), p.238

very much like Louise. Marie's search for her ideal involves her, too, in a series of love affairs, and Richardson's description of her could well serve as a description of Louise:

> For Marie Grubbe is what Goethe calls a "problematical nature", and spends her life in a vain search after an ideal. A romantic, high-souled girl, she passes from disillusion to disillusion, ultimately to find, amid poverty and labour, as the wife of a poor ferryman, more true happiness than she has ever known before. It says much for Jacobsen's art that he could make her story not only probable, but also sympathetic to us. Marie's fate, as he describes it, is inevitable. Her character is worked out with infinite care; we realise that her desire to drink life in, in long draughts, to bear great suffering and taste great joy, her keen and ill-repressed vitality, must all inevitably make for unhappiness. Even in the sordid commonness of her later lot, we cannot but respect this strong nature, which has had the courage to live its own life, and is haunted by no weak regrets. ("A Danish Poet", p.43)

One episode is particularly reminiscent of Maurice Guest: Marie's affair with the dreamy intellectual, Sti Högh. Sti Högh helps Marie when she is in a situation like Louise's after Schilsky's desertion, and so appears to her to be stronger than he actually is. Sti's dilemma is similar to Maurice's : he worships Marie too much to be the masterful lover she desires; when she realises this Marie's revulsion from him is just as violent as Louise's from Maurice.

Richardson's reference to Marie Grubbe as being "what Goethe calls a 'problematical nature'" brings in a further source of influence on Maurice Guest, one which may have affected Jacobsen as well. For though Professor Robertson doubts that Maurice Guest was "materially

influenced by the German realistic novel", (p.166) he overlooks an influence from an earlier period of German literature: the romantic tradition of the problems of "problematical natures", and of the artist in society, which goes back to Goethe and the Sturm und Drang movement. Since one of the books Johanna Cayhill lends Maurice Guest is Spielhagen's Problematische Naturen, one wonders whether Richardson has purposely included this book as a clue to Maurice's character. The description of Problematische Naturen given by Robertson in his Outlines of the History of German Literature shows a connection between this novel and Maurice Guest in the theme of the pursuit of unattainable ideals:

> The phrase "problematic natures" was originally Goethe's, and is applied to those vacillating, indecisive people who are unequal to any situation in which they happen to be placed, and unable to obtain any satisfaction or happiness from life. Spielhagen's hero, Oswald Stein, who dies fighting in the Revolution of 1848, is such a nature, a dreamer of dreams, for whom the enigma of life remains to the end unsolved.[26]

For the German writers of the Romantic school, the pursuer of unattainable ideals, the struggler against life, was always the artist asserting the demands of genius against the demands of society. The predominance of this theme is demonstrated by R.B. Farrell in "The Artist in German Literature."[27] Here, after discussing Goethe's attempts in his classical period to demonstrate the superiority of

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[26] Op.cit. (1911), p.263.

[27] In Arts, I (1958), 7-16.

the active to the introspective life Farrell writes

> But the basic conflict or tension persisted in Goethe's life: the effort to reconcile the demands of his poetic genius, for unconditional freedom, total experience, with the ethical responsibilities of living in society. In its general form it is the tension between genius and the world of ethical action.[28]

In his play Tasso which, according to Farrell was "the first attempt to treat the problem of the artist in a comprehensive way",[29] Goethe showed that conflict between the artist and society seemed unavoidable. This theme was developed by the Romantics though, as Farrell says

> ... their point of view differed radically from that presented in Tasso. With their impulse to transcend the prosaic bourgeois world of everyday life and with it the moral order of society, the romantics upset Goethe's balance and saw in the artist the only true human being, since only he could live in a continuing state of imagination and so have contact with a higher world. Society with its practical tasks and moral restraints ceased to be a value. Whereas Goethe had shown Wilhelm Meister seeking a useful place in society after realizing that he was not a born actor, the poet Novalis in his Heinrich von Ofterdingen consciously sets out to show the opposite process - the growth of a poet, transcending society and re-creating the world in his own inner spirit. When the theme was the dissonance between the bourgeois world and an ideal realm of poetry, the sufferings of the poet in the midst of prosaic reality were ascribed not to his inability to achieve ethical values, but to his desire to escape to the ideal.[30]

While Richardson's view of the artist's relationship to society may not have been as extreme as this, she did, like Flaubert, believe that the artist's duty to art transcended his duty to society. In Myself When Young she describes her "earliest contact with a writer of the Romantic School" - "a translation of E.T.A.Hoffmann's

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[28] Ibid., p.8.
[29] Ibid., p.8.
[30] Ibid., pp.11-12.

Kreisleriana, purporting to relate the musical sufferings of a certain Kapelmeister Jahannes Kreisler." (pp.77-8) That this account of an artist's sufferings impressed her so much that she copied out the chapters "surreptitiously" in bed at night, points to an early interest in the artist and his problems. Schilsky, the genius of Maurice Guest, is not shown as suffering to any great extent but in other respects he is a typical romantic artist who cares for nothing but his art, is deaf to the strictures of society, and is by ordinary standards a rather unpleasant person. Some of the passages which Richardson deleted from the original version of Maurice Guest, such as the scene where Schilsky, while attending a performance of a Wagner opera with Louise, is seized by so strong an inspiration for some music he is writing that he is forced to leave the theatre, show even stronger traces of his romantic parentage.

Krafft, too, fits the romantic conception of the artist, though in his characterisation there is an overlay of ideas from another German writer, Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's work has been seen to influence far more in Maurice Guest than the presentation of Krafft as a Nietzsche-oriented rebel artist. Professor A.D.Hope has put forward a theory that Maurice Guest is basically a dramatisation of Nietzsche's ideas of the contrast between "free spirits" and "servile spirits". The first part of Hope's article discusses the book in general terms, reaches

the conclusion that it is not an autobiographical novel, and concludes:

> In spite of the fact that devastating and destructive passion takes up a very large part of it, it is a book about the musical temperament - or rather, about musical genius - and it is only a book about love inasmuch as the highest manifestations of love and of art have this in common that they require something that we call genius.[31]

Such an idea about love and genius is essential for Hope's division of the characters in the novel into two types : the "free spirits" - Schilsky, Krafft and Louise - who are geniuses with no respect for the values of society, and the "servile spirits" who have no talent and uphold conventional morality- Maurice, Madeleine and the rest. Krafft, who, as Hope says, "expounds to Maurice, to Madeleine and to anyone who will listen, ideas on art and morality which we recognise as coming from Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil and The Geneaology of Morals"[32] may probably, at least in his own opinion, be a free spirit, but it is he and not Richardson who claims that Louise has a genius for love. As we have seen, Louise is much closer in type to Goethe's "problematical natures" than she is to Nietzsche's "free spirits". For her, love is not a manifestation of genius but a means of escape from the realisation that she will never achieve the perfect happiness she desires. Far from being triumphant at the end of the novel as Hope asserts, Louise is shown to be as far from her ideal as ever, since marriage to Schilsky,

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[31] "Henry Handel Richardson's Maurice Guest", XIV (1955), p.191.

[32] Ibid., p.193.

going by the signs of her earlier relationship with him, would not seem destined to be very happy. Thus, since Louise can only be classed as a Nietzschean figure by interpreting her failure as success, and since Krafft is a consciously Nietzschean character, Hope's theory stands or falls on the characterization of Schilsky. We are not told very much about him in the novel - this in itself might make one wary of over-estimating his importance - but what we are told does not provide much support for Hope's theories.[33] It seems much more likely that Schilsky is based on the ideas about the artist's way of life which Richardson shared with Flaubert and on the presentation in German literature of the artist as a man outside society, than on Nietzsche's ideas.

As well as the evidence from the novel itself, evidence from other sources supports the conclusion that Professor Hope overestimates the extent of the Nietzschean influence on Maurice Guest. Hope states that Richardson, when writing The Getting of Wisdom, "was plainly much under the influence of Nietzsche at the time and it is not surprising to find the influence just as strong in Maurice Guest."[34] He bases this statement on Professor Robertson's remark that "The Getting of Wisdom is an 'Umwertung aller Werte' applied to the little world of childhood", and on the use of quotations from Nietzsche as

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[33] The description of Schilsky, Krafft and Fürst as "three young rebels out against the Philistines: three bursting charges of animal spirits" (p.67) would seem to be, in its context, ironic - one wonders, indeed, whether Richardson is not being "superior" to Nietzsche as well.

[34] "H.H. Richardson's Maurice Guest", op.cit., p.193.

epigraphs to some of the chapters. But Henry Handel Richardson has given a reason for using these quotations which makes one think that she was not as strongly "under the influence of Nietzsche" as Hope supposes:

> Unfortunately, however, its tone was ironic throughout; and this proved its undoing. I had believed that the subversively provocative quotations from Nietzsche, which head some of the chapters, would light the way. But it was not so: the irony passed unnoticed. Schoolmistresses rose up in fury: "This coarse and sordid libel on girlhood"; the educational press took it seriously and reviewed it ponderously; my old school outlawed me. And by way of contrast, Maurice Guest now became "that strong but wholesome book". ("Some Notes", p.13)

Possibly Hope should have heeded the warning written by Richardson in a copy of The Getting of Wisdom and quoted by him : "Wir hier nicht lachen Kann, soll hier nicht lesen." Although he does not insist that Richardson subscribed "to the views that Krafft express" Hope points out that, if she "had not subscribed to them ... it is remarkable that she has limited her pictures of genius to those types of people who met Nietzsche's views exactly."[35] But this would not appear to be supported by Richardson's remark on Nietzsche in a letter to Nettie Palmer: "I have always loved him best as a poet - prefer to look on Zarathustra simply as a magnificent specimen of poetic prose."[36].

This lengthy discussion of the varied literary influences which may be discerned in Maurice Guest has,

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[35] Ibid., p.196.

[36] Letter of 30 September 1930, quoted by Nettie Palmer, Henry Handel Richardson. A Study (1950), p.194.

perhaps, created the impression that the novel is nothing more than a pastiche of Henry Handel Richardson's reading. As Professor Robertson says, Maurice Guest is a product of the literary movement of its time",[37] but it is also, like most of Richardson's work, a product of her own experiences. Indeed, one critic has claimed that Maurice Guest is Richardson's best novel because it more completely based on personal experience than her later ones.[38] Richardson's years in Leipzig were, of course, the source of the setting and musical background of the novel. A view of this environment from a rather different angle to the one employed in Maurice Guest - that of an adviser to hesitating parents of the advantages and disadvantages their daughters would discover as music students at Leipzig - is given in Richardson's article "Music Study at Leipzig".[39] Here, one especially notices her comments that "a girl may be as idle as she pleases without fear of rebuke, for a master soon discovers which pupils are worthy of his interest"(p.34); that it is "imperative to take a private lesson at least once a fortnight, if the bond of sympathy essential to progress is to be maintained between master and pupil" (p.37); and that "if we are inclined to complain of slow progress and irksome drudgery, we must remember that no real benefit

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[37]"The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, p.162.

[38]Cecil Hadgraft, Australian Literature (1960), pp.155-156.

[39]First published in The Lady (13 June 1895), reprinted in Southerly, XXIII (1963), 33-39.

can be gained, or progress made, unless this conscientious thoroughness is the head-stone of the corner" (p.37). Maurice Guest may have been a more successful student if he could have read Richardson's article, or heeded the similar advice given by Madeleine Wade.

Some of the Leipzig experiences which Richardson incorporated in Maurice Guest are described by a fellow-student, Matilda C. Washburn Freund, in her chapter in Some Personal Impressions. These include the picture of the policeman who marched up and down "straightening his huge gloves, immaculately white, on his huge hands" while keeping order among the crowd of students queueing for seats for a Wagner opera (p.12); the scene on which the description of Avery Hill after her suicide was based - the taking from the Pleisse of the bodies of two lovers who had drowned themselves (p.12); and a funeral attended by Mrs. Freund and Richardson's sister Lil, which was the source of Richardson's description of the bleakness of Avery's funeral (pp.12-13). Mrs. Freund's account of the Sunday afternoon gatherings in the apartment she shared with the Richardsons, "which had become quite a feature of the Anglo-American circle, with outsiders frequently joining in and making our 'at homes' almost international" (p.5), recalls the Sunday afternoon gatherings at the Cayhills. The similarities between the Cayhills and the Richardsons is further demonstrated by Mrs. Freund's note that her brother "was rather in awe of H.H., as were, for the most part, the other men too" (p.9) - Ephie's admirers give Johanna a wide berth. On this point Professor Hope

writes

> She has plainly drawn on herself a good deal for the portrait of the elder sister, Johanna, with her serious and rather sombre mind, her love and jealousy of her attractive young sister, her formidable programme of intellectual studies, her retiring and diffident personality.[40]

And, one might add, her appearance: Johanna is dark and angular like Richardson, Ephie fair and dimpled like Lil. Hope refers particularly to the resemblance between Johanna's fear that "Ephie should become spoiled" and the description in Myself When Young of Richardson's fears for Lil:

> The men who clustered round her on the ship were of the same opinion, and found themselves further ensnared by a wistful naïvete of manner that went straight to their elderly hearts. Wit and brilliance were not demanded of her: enough for them if she sat still to be looked at.
>
> As a sister, it was difficult to see her with any but a sister's eye, and to understand the fuss made of her. I remained incredulous; and at the same time very fearful least her young head should be turned by all this open flattery. (p.82)

The closeness of the attitude of these elderly gentlemen to Lil, on which Richardson ironically, and presumably jealously, comments, to Krafft's towards Louise, and feminine beauty in general : "As long as she has her beauty, a woman is under no necessity to bolster up her conscience, or to be reasonable, or to think. . . . We don't ask our Lady of Milo to be witty for us, or to solve us problems." (p.501): should be noted. Louise is the Nietzcschean ideal woman, but it would seem unlikely that she was Richardson's, or that Richardson agreed with Nietzsche's attitude to women - she was, after all, a

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[40] "H.H. Richardson's Maurice Guest", op.cit., p.190.

suffragette.[41] It is perhaps significant that the resemblances between Louise and Richardson are slighter than those between Johanna and herself, or even, for they have in common a realistic and ironical attitude to life, those between herself and Madeleine Wade. Louise, as an Australian, shares Richardson's nostalgia for the smell of wattle; and her description of her feelings when, as "a little girl . . . in short dresses", she stood beside her father's grave, "I can't remember crying at all, or even feeling sorry" (p.420), recalls Richardson's own lack of grief at her father's death. Since Maurice Guest is dedicated to "Louise" Richardson may have intended - as in the dedications to The Getting of Wisdom and The Fortunes of Richard Mahony - to insist that "the experiences of Louise were not invented, that they were patterned on her own or those of someone near her."[42] The question of who this "someone" was seems, however, destined to remain unanswered. Richardson told Mrs. Kernot that "the life of a young couple in a flat in the building where the Robertson's lived first stirred the plan of Maurice Guest",[43] but this is a very slight clue.

The most striking resemblances between Richardson's experiences in Leipzig and those of the characters in

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[41] See Some Personal Impressions, pp.79-81.

[42] Nettie Palmer, op.cit., pp.153-154.

[43] In one of Mrs. Kernot's reminiscences. (In the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325)

Maurice Guest may be found in the presentation of Maurice himself. Like Maurice, Richardson came to Leipzig to make a name for herself as a pianist but found that she "shone but palely among the stars who were my contemporaries at the Conservatorium." ("Some Notes", p.9) As we saw in the previous chapter, Richardson's lack of outstanding talent was not the only reason for her decision to abandon a musical career. In Myself When Young she describes her reactions to her first public appearance:

> Like any pupil who reached a certain level, I too had been required to show my paces, by performing at a couple of the bi-weekly concerts held in our own concert-hall. And though to all appearances I came through the ordeal tolerably well, what it cost me inwardly nobody but myself knew. It wasn't alone having to face an audience consisting mainly of one's fellow-students, most censorious of critics, nor yet the novice's fear of tripping or blundering. No, what did for me, and utterly, were the eyes, the thousands of eyes, all fixed like gimlets on my miserable self, stuck up aloft before them and their helpless prey. The whole time my fingers automatically carried on, I could only think of getting out of range of these eyes, somewhere, anywhere, where they couldn't follow me. It was thus I first became aware of a kink, a mental twist in my nature, that was to prove a lifelong disadvantage. For the aversion to being stared at settled into a definite idiosyncrasy, which I never succeeded in conquering. -And as one cannot be a concert-player without presenting oneself to the public gaze, and such was the fond idea with which I had been brought to Leipzig, there was some reason for reckoning myself a failure all round. (pp.121-122)

At his Abendunterhaltung Maurice is also unnerved by the audience and plays "automatically" (p.416); this helps to destroy his chance for success, as it did Richardson's. Maurice's disinclination to make some use of his training by teaching is motivated by the aversion with which he recalls his previous experiences as a teacher (p.15), just as Richardson's was by her hatred of her brief period of

governessing: "For though I left my pupils where I found them, I myself discovered that there was nothing I would not rather do than impart, or try to impart knowledge to others."[44]

And more in Maurice's characterisation than his musical failure is based on Richardson's own past : "his most flagrant emotions - his dreams, hopes and fears, his jealousy and despair, his suffering under rejection and desertion - could all be traced back to my own unhappy experience."[45] This "unhappy experience" was her infatuation at the age of fourteen for the ultra-handsome Jack Stretch, a vicar at Maldon. She writes in Myself When Young

> It was not till the following Sunday that I had a real look at the newcomer - if look it could be called. Afterwards, an aunt who was staying with us let slip that he had asked who the brown-eyed little girl was, who listened so intently to his sermon. - Listened? I hadn't heard a word he said. My eyes had merely been feasting on a beauty of line and feature the like of which they had never seen -and, incidentally, were never to see in a man again. (p.54)

Maurice Guest, too, "feast his eyes" when he first sees Louise: like Richardson, he stares at the object of his adoration "with an intentness that soon became intensity, and feverishly grew, until he could not tear his eyes away." (p.28) Later, Maurice remembers this meeting:

> Something in the look of the face, blanched by the unreal light, made him recall the first time he had seen it, and the impression it had then left on his mind. While she played in Schwarz's room, she had turned and looked at him, and it seemed to him then, that some occult force had

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[44] Myself When Young, p.75.

[45] Ibid., p.62.

gone out from the face, and struck home in him. And it had never lessened. Strange, that so small a thing, hardly bigger than one's two closed fists, should be able to exert such an influence over one! For this face it was - the pale oval, in the dark setting, the exotic colouring, the heavy-lidded eyes - which held him; it was this face which drew him surely back with a vital nostalgia - a homesickness for the sight of her and the touch of her -if he were too long absent. (p.545)

It is significant that Richardson shows that it was Jack Stretch's personal beauty that caused her love; she refers specifically to "the face that worked all this havoc."[46] Richardson, too, found love a rather unpleasant emotion: "her little heart swollen with an ache that was much too big for it", she "paced round the dam, staring into its muddy yellow depths and wondering if they were deep enough to drown in; mocked at everywhere alike by the merciless southern moonlight."[47] Being made of sterner stuff than Maurice, however, she did not take this final plunge. Richardson's other "unhappy experience" of love - her infatuation for her older school-fellow, "Evelyn" - can also be seen as a source of her account of Maurice's passion for Louise, particularly in its jealous and possessive aspects. One interesting fact is that Louise, like the two recipients of Richardson's adoration, is said to be older than her lover.

From the foregoing discussion it can be seen that, for Richardson, the exclusion of the author's personality from his work did not mean the exclusion of his personal

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[46] Ibid., p.55. This resemblance has been noted by Colin Roderick in "The Personality of Henry Handel Richardson", Australian Quarterly, XX (1948), p.53.

[47] Ibid., p.61.

experiences. This does not make her any less a "realist": as Nettie Palmer writes, "in practice, most of the great naturalist writers tended to use experiences of their own and characters taken, wholly or partly, from their own social background."[48] She continues

> Thus Henry Handel Richardson was not pioneering any new path when she went directly to her own life for her subjects. Yet there seemed a dogged determination in her to pursue the method beyond the customary bounds, to invent as little as possible, to describe actual incidents as they occurred, people that once had actually existed. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that she was so absorbed by her own experience and had brooded so long and deeply upon it that she could hardly imagine going beyond it for materials for her art.[49]

This anaylsis of some of the literary and other sources of Maurice Guest supports Nettie Palmer's view. Even in her borrowings from the work and theories of earlier writers, Richardson took over only those elements which most accorded with her own personality, interests and experiences.

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[48] On.cit., p.151.
[49] Ibid., p.153.

CHAPTER III

MAURICE GUEST :

An Innocent Abroad

"In defence of the characters in Maurice Guest, and their general unlovableness, I should like to say that the work was written in my youth - at a time of life when one is usually rather hot and bitter."[1] "Lovableness" would seem a rather inappropriate epithet for any character, or at least any adult character, in Richardson's novels and certainly fits none of the assorted personages of Maurice Guest. There are no heroes, or villains, among them; they are differentiated by the extent to which they succeed in achieving their individual ends. The only villain that can be found in Maurice Guest is life itself. When Maurice hears of Louise Dufrayer's illness, aftermath of her desertion by Schilsky, he thinks

> Viewed in the light of the story he had just heard from Madeleine, life seemed too unjust to be endured. It propounded riddles no one could answer; the vast output of energy that composed it was misdirected; on every side was cruelty and suffering. Only the heartless and selfish - those who deserved to suffer - went free. (p.208)

And it is only the "heartless and selfish" - those who recognise and accept this truth about life, whose only concern is the single-minded pursuit of their own ambitions - who achieve success. The failure are those who, through innocence or ignorance, take a romantic view of their

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[1] Letter to Miss Ransen, 25 February 1935. (In the Mitchell Library)

world - those who believe that self-sacrifice, honesty, and other "accepted virtues" are rewarded. The chief of these is Maurice Guest, the young provincial Englishman who arrives in Leipzig "full to the brim of plans and projects", (p.497) to be stripped of them, along with his innocence and ideals, till he is as naked as the branches of the tree under which he shoots himself. But, as I shall attempt to show, his failure is given meaning by its place in the total pattern of the novel which, in keeping with its naturalistic ancestry, demonstrates the futility of any attempt to ignore the realities of life.

In its original form Maurice Guest was twenty thousand words longer, the reduction being a pre-publication requirement of Heinemann's. At the time Richardson was probably rather loath to cut out so much of her work - in "Some Notes on My Books" she comments "Home I went then and hacked at the book" (p.10) - though she later regretted that she had not made more extensive revisions. A study of the major deleted passages shows that their omission was, in fact, of advantage to the novel. These passages are of two types: those dealing mainly with characters other than Maurice and Louise; and those in which Maurice and Louise reveal an unnatural awareness of their own motives and defects. The removal of the first type results in a greater concentration on Maurice's point of view; the removal of the second in a more realistic and subtle presentation of Louise and Maurice. An example of the first type of delection is provided by some passages which originally appeared at the

end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth chapters of Part I. Here Schilsky's actions at the opera and his relationships with Ephie and Louise are presented from his point of view, something which occurs nowhere else in the novel. For it is not Schilsky's behavior itself which is of interest, but its effect on the other characters. Schilsky functions as a plot catalyst and as a point of reference for Maurice's dreams and ambitions - he does everything that Maurice is unable to do, and achieves everything that Maurice wishes to achieve. This method of comparison and contrast is used by Richardson throughout the novel; it is one of the techniques which enable her, without aid from authorial comment or unnatural exaggerations or simplifications, to attain a powerful presentation of her themes and characters. Maurice himself notices the similarities between his own reactions on first seeing Louise and Schilsky's as Madeleine describes them; and later, in a passage deleted from the published version, shows that he has also noted the differences. In this passage, which is of the second type mentioned, Maurice rails against the social conventions that prevent him from making his love known to Louise:

> In this moment the whole social structure seemed to him of a maddening artificiality. Here was some one, a fellow-being who attracted him more than any other that lived; some one to whom he believed he could say "friend"; whose soul-life he would understand through sheer intuitive sympathy; and between them rose an insurmountable barrier of convention. Good God! life was so short and would never be again; a chance once missed could never be made up for; and yet, in the face of this, one human being might not go up to another, take him by the hand, and claim mental

kinship with him. They must wait, these two, until a third person, indifferent to both, stood between them, and spoke their names. Was anything as ridiculous as this! How had such intolerable restraints arisen? Who had imposed them on mankind -long suffering mankind? He recalled cases he had heard of, where one bolder and more natural than the rest, had broken down the dividing bar; but he was not of these, and particularly in this case, where so much depended on this issue, he had not the courage to risk anything. He could only resolve feverishly, once more, likely and unlikely ways of bringing himself to her notice.[2]

Although Schilsky is not mentioned by name it would seem likely that he is the "bolder and more natural" person of whom Maurice is thinking.

This piece of soul-searching is too comprehensive to be believable, and the traits displayed in it are revealed much more subtly in the implicit comparisons of Maurice's and Schilsky's behavior. Although Louise is deeply involved with Schilsky by the time Maurice sees her, his reaction is described first. He encounters Louise at her piano lesson and is immediately spellbound by her beauty:

For one instant Maurice Guest had looked at the girl before him with unconcern, but the next it was with an intentness that soon became intensity, and feverishly grew, until he could not tear his eyes away. (p.28)

Afterwards, Maurice goes to hear Schilsky play at a concert; on Louise's entrance he again cannot help staring at her. When Madeleine Wade later relates the circumstances of Louise's first meeting with Schilsky the parallels are obvious:

"It was a Thursday evening, and a Radius Commemoration was going on at the Con. He went in late, and stood at the back of the hall. Louise was there, too, just before him, and, from the first minute he saw her, he couldn't take his eyes off her - others who were by say, too, he seemed perfectly fascinated. No one can stare as rudely as Schilsky;

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[2] Maurice Guest, original version, p.87. (Typescript in the National Library, Canberra)

> and he ended by making her so uncomfortable that she couldn't bear it any longer, and went out of the hall. He after her, and it didn't take him an hour to find out all about her. The next evening, at an Abend, they were both there again - it was just like Louise to go! - and the same thing was repeated. She left again before it was over, he followed, and this time found her in one of the side corridors; and there - mind you, without a single word having passed between them! - he took her in his arms and kissed her, kissed her soundly, half a dozen times - though they had never once spoken to each other: he boasts of it to this day. That same evening --"
>
> "Don't, Madeleine - please, don't say any more! I don't care to hear it," broke in Maurice. He had flushed to the roots of his hair, at some points of resemblance to his own case, then grown pale again, and now he waved his arm meaninglessly in the air. "He is a scoundrel, a - a --" But he recognised that he could not condemn one without the other, and stopped short. (pp.55-56)

The contrasts are even more obvious for, instead of following straight after Louise, "Maurice let a few seconds elapse, then followed. But the long white corridors stretched empty before him; there was no trace of her to be seen." (p.31) Furthermore, instead of learning all about Louise in an hour, Maurice is easily put off by Dove's indifference to his questions, misses an opportunity to be introduced to her when he is out with Madeleine, and takes weeks to find out who she is. This contrasting of Maurice and Schilsky occurs throughout the novel; when Maurice, by his envious comparisons of Schilsky and himself, goads Louise into admitting that "He was as different from you as day from night" (p.427), we are given a direct statement of all that has been implied. The "day-night" imagery is significant since Schilsky, with his active pursuit of success and his acceptance of reality, is the complete opposite of the hesitant and melancholy Maurice, who is

most active in his dreams.

That Maurice's lack of a strong, impulsive character is at bottom of his failure with Louise is shown by her favourable reactions on the few occasions when he ignores the proprieties and follows his desires. Although he has been her friend for months, it is not until Maurice forgets himself sufficiently to kiss her, that Louise thinks about letting him become her lover. (p.351) Much later in their relationship a temporary reconciliation occurs after Maurice has beaten Louise: she imagines that he may at last be the self-assertive and masterful lover she desires. For, once the novelty of the affair has worn off, it is the hesitancy and conventionality of Maurice's behavior which awakens Louise to the fact that she no longer loves him. This occurs during one of the trips they make to the country to try to recapture the happiness of their first weeks together. Louise asks Maurice to pick some rushes for her:

> On the path at the top of the bank, Louise stood and followed his movements. She watched his ineffectual efforts to seize the further reeds, saw how they slipped back from between his hands; she watched him take out his knife and open it, endeavour once more to reach those he wanted, and, still unsuccessful, choose a dry spot to sit down on; saw him take off his boots and stockings, then rise and go cautiously out on the soft ground. Ages seemed to pass while she watched him do these trivial things; she felt as if she were gradually turning to stone as she stood. How long he was about it! How deliberately he moved! And she had the odd sensation, too, that she knew beforehand everything he would do and would not do, just as if she had experienced it already. His movements were of an impossible circumstantiality, out of all proportion to the trifling service she had asked of him; for, at heart, she cared as little about the rushes as about anything else. But it was an unfortunate habit of his, and one that she

noticed more and more as time went on, to make much of paltry details, which, properly, should have been dismissed without a second thought. It implied a certain tactlessness, to underline the obvious in this fashion. (pp.449-450)

Louise's dissatisfaction with Maurice's treatment of her is brought out more explicitly in two passages from the original version of the book. The first describes her reaction to Maurice's habit of bringing flowers when he cannot stay long with her:

It left the impression that he himself had a guilty feeling about the shortness of his visit - as though it were a duty! - and strove in this way to make amends. She would have preferred a rough, overriding brutality that took no account of her feelings.3

The second occurs during a quarrel over Louise's wish to go to a ball. Maurice replies to Louise's accusation that he has never loved her

"I have loved every ... hair of your head. And I've done my level best to prove it. More I couldn't do. There was nothing in the world I wouldn't have done for you. I may have been foolish - I may not have understood what you wanted - no, that I've never understood - but I gave you your way in everything. I would have let you walk over me, if it had given you any pleasure to do it. And this is the thanks I get for it. To learn from your own lips that I have never loved you!"

"Given me my way in everything! - that's just what you shouldn't have done. You should have changed me, and made me what <u>you</u> wanted ... have gone your own way, not mine. Then we might have had some chance of happiness."

"Nice experiences I had, the few times I tried it! They were not encouraging to try again. - Besides I couldn't do it. I'm not made for that kind of thing. - And it's all very well to say so now, but I remember you once making me reproaches for just this very thing. You said I was eternally wanting to alter you - that I couldn't be satisfied with you as you were. - No, it's impossible,

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3. <u>Maurice Guest</u>, original version, p.407.

Louise. I never knew how to treat you - from one day to another."

"And you never would. For the one plain simple way is the only way you never think of taking."[4]

By removing these passages Richardson avoided an over-blatant presentation of the characters' motives and desires. The scene of the rushes, with the slow and repetitive style of its description, says all that is necessary about Louise's objections to Maurice's behavior. And, although this is presented here through Louise's biased eyes, the terms "ineffectual", "unsuccessfully", "cautiously" are descriptive of Maurice's actions throughout the novel. This scene might even be taken as emblematic of the story as a whole since Maurice finds it as difficult to attain his desires as he does to pick the reeds - and for the same reason. Immediately before the passage quoted comes the phrase "the finest were beyond his reach"; this is Maurice's tragedy. Not content with the things he might easily have, he must struggle ineffectually for something finer, though the "fineness" may exist only in his romantic imagination.

The care with which Richardson constructed Maurice Guest becomes apparent when one realises that all the reasons for Maurice's failure are depicted in the opening pages of the novel. It begins on "a blowy day in early spring", the day of Maurice Guest's arrival in Leipzig. After attending a concert, he wanders in the woods near the

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[4] Ibid., p.490.

town, full, like the spring day, of fresh promise and hope:

As he looked about, eager to discover beauty in the strip of landscape that stretched before him - the line of water, its banks of leafless trees - he was instinctively filled with a desire for something grander, for a feature in the scene that would answer to his mood. There, where the water appeared to end in a clump of trees, there, should be mountains, a gently undulating line, blue with the unapproachable blue of distance, and high enough to form a background to the view; in summer, heavy with haze, melting into the sky; in winter, lined and edged with snow. From this, his thoughts sprang back to the music he had heard that morning. All the vague yet eager hopes that had run riot in his brain, for months past, seemed to have been summed up and made clear to him, in one supreme phrase of it, a great phrase in C major, in the concluding movement of Beethoven's First Symphony. First sounded by the shrill sweet winds, it had suddenly been given out by the strings, in magnificent unison, and had mounted up and on, to the jubilant trilling of the little flutes. There was such a courageous sincerity in this theme, such undauntable resolve; it expressed more plainly than words what he intended his life of the next few years to be; for he was full to the brim of ambitious intentions, which he had never yet had a chance of putting into practice. He felt so ready for work, so fresh and unworn; the fervour of a deep enthusiasm was rampant in him. What a single-minded devotion to art, he promised himself his should be! No other fancy or interest should share his heart with it, he vowed to himself this day, when he stood for the first time on historic ground, where the famous musicians of the past had found inspiration for their immortal works. And his thoughts spread their wings and circled above his head; he saw himself already of these masters' craft, their art his, he wrenching ever new secrets from them, penetrating the recesses of their genius, becoming one of themselves. (p.5)

This passage is a good introduction to Maurice's romantic dreams and dissatisfactions, his refusal to accept "life as it is": just as he wishes for "something grander" in the scene before him, so his vision of himself as a great pianist and conductor is "grander" than his position as a novice student. Significantly it is a mountain, with "the unapproachable blue of distance", that Maurice superimposes on the Leipzig landscape. In his dreams he imagines

himself at the summit of his profession, ignoring the distance between this ideal and his present standing as he ignores the real features of his environment. The unrealistic nature of Maurice's outlook is emphasised in the next paragraph, which also shows that he sees the world in terms of his own ideals:

> Even when swinging back to the town, he had not shaken himself free of dreams. The quiet of a foreign midday lay upon the streets, and there were few discordant sounds, few passers-by, to break the chain of his thought. He had movement, silence, space. And as is usual with active-brained dreamers, he had little or no eye for the real life about him: he was not struck by the air of comfortable prosperity, of thriving content, which marked the great commercial centre, and he let pass, unnoticed, the unfamiliar details of a foreign street, the trifling yet insignificant incidents of foreign life. Such impressions as he received bore the stamp of his own mood. (p.6)

The predominant mood of the first chapter is, however, that of its opening - the crowds of eager, bustling students in the fresh spring sunshine. We can take Maurice's hopes and resolutions at face value and sympathise with his ambitious dedication of himself to art. The irony of such phrases as "undauntable resolve", "single-minded devotion to art" and so on only becomes apparent later, their over-enthusiastic tone being balanced in this chapter by Maurice's recognition that his dreams shall not easily be attained. (p.12) Of this "tragic irony", Leonie Kramer writes "the novel is full of episodes which gain significance from their prophetic quality, and their anticipation of the final tragedy."[5] These incidents which, like the details of Leipzig life, are "trifling yet

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[5] "Henry Handel Richardson", The Literature of Australia (ed. G. Dutton, 1964), p.323.

significant" enable Richardson to give a point to her naturalistic presentation. She emphasises her themes by anticipation and repetition, by contrast and comparison rather than by direct comments. At the end of this chapter Maurice has "a strange dream": he comes upon a crowd around an object which he immediately recognises as the thing he has been seeking. The crowd spring back in horror from this object, "shrieking: 'Moloch, Moloch!'", and he, unnerved by their behavior and the strange word, flees with them. (p.13) When it occurs this dream seems rather meaningless but, as we realise later, it foretells the main action of the novel. Louise, whom Maurice sees as the ideal he has been seeking, is truly Moloch. As we saw when discussing a similar use of symbolism in Niels Lyhne, Maurice's love for Louise is expressed through religious imagery: he worships her as idol and ideal and sacrifices to her continually.

The second chapter, in tracing Maurice's motives in coming to Leipzig, provides another of the reasons for his failure as a musician: his motives are not the pure ones of the true artist. Perhaps like Richardson herself, Maurice goes abroad less from a strong impulse to be a musician than from a desire to escape the stultifying atmosphere of his home and his job as a teacher. At the beginning of this chapter we are told that "In Maurice Guest, it might be said that the smouldering unrest of two generations burst into flame." (p.14) This unrest, symptom of a romantic desire to wander in search of the unknown,

underlies Maurice's decision to leave home for foreign parts. At first he imagines this quest to be an artistic one; but the unreal nature of his devotion to art is shown in his lack of the single-minded concentration, the egotism, that is characteristic of the real artist, Schilsky. This "selfishness" is, indeed, shown to be a prerequisite for any kind of success. Fairly early in the novel, Madeleine lectures Maurice on his lack of it:

> "I don't want to be officious but there's something I should like to say to you. It's this. You are far too soft-hearted. If you want to get on in life, you must try to think more about yourself than you do. The battle is to the strong, you know, and the strong, within limits, are certainly the selfish. Let other people look after themselves; try not to mind how foolish they are - you can't improve them. It's harder, I daresay, than it is to be a person of unlimited sympathies; it's harder to pass the maimed and crippled by, than to stop and weep over them, and feel their sufferings through yourself. But you have really something to occupy yourself with. You're not one of those people - I won't mention names!- whose own emptiness forces them to take an intense interest in the doings of others, and who, the moment they are alone with their thoughts, are bored to desperation." (pp.148-9)

It is not clear now much talent Maurice does have; certainly, if one may take Madeleine's word, enough to equal the success achieved by Dove, the "person" referred to in this passage. That is, if he could also have been Dove's equal in egotism, or could have been content with a success that fell short of his dreams.

The temperamental inadequacies and romantic ideals which prevent Maurice from achieving any kind of musical success also prevent his finding happiness and success in love. As we have seen, one of the reasons for this failure is that he is not "heartless and selfish" enough to be the

masterful lover Louise desires. An innocent in love as in art, he struggles to cram his relationship with Louise, and Louise herself, into the confining framework of his romantic ideals about love and women. There is a deliberately heightened romanticism in the description of his first meeting with Louise:

> For one instant Maurice Guest had looked at the girl before him with unconcern, but the next it was with an intentness that soon become intensity, and feverishly grew, until he could not tear his eyes away. The beauty, whose spell thus bound him, was of that subtle kind which leaves many a one cold, but, as if just for this reason, is almost always fateful for those who feel its charm; at them is lanced its accumulated force. The face was far from faultless; there was no regularity of feature, no perfection of line, nor was there more than a touch of the sweet girlish freshness that gladdens like a morning in May. The features, save for a peremptory turn of mouth and chin, were unremarkable, and the expression was distant, unchanging ... but what was that to him? This deep white skin, the purity of which was only broken by the pale red of the lips; this dull black hair, which lay back from the low brow in such wonderful curves, and seemed, of itself, to fall into the loose knot on the neck - there was something romantic, exotic about her, which was unlike anything he had ever seen: she made him think of a rare, hothouse flower; some scentless, tropical flower, with stiff, waxen petals. And then her eyes! So profound was their darkness that, when they threw off their covering of heavy lid, it seemed to his excited fancy as if they must scorch what they rested on; they looked out from the depths of their setting like those of a wild beast crouched within a cavern; they lit up about them like stars, and when they fell, they went out like stars, and her face took on the pallor of early dawn. (pp.28-9)

The change of style in this passage - Louise is first viewed objectively, after "but what was that to him" we see her as Maurice sees her - would seem to show that some of the melodramatic exaggeration of Richardson's language results from an attempt to present Maurice's romanticism. Unfortunately, as with the Victorianism of <u>The Fortunes of Richard Mahony</u>, this romanticism tends to be so pervasive -

how many times, one wonders, does the word "feverishly" occur? - that passages such as this lose some of their effect. The description of Louise as "a hothouse flower", "a wild beast" shows that she represents for Maurice the exotic unknown that he has been seeking. She is so far outside the range of his previous experience that he is unable to think of her as an ordinary mortal: he is cautious in his approach to Louise as if she were a fairy-tale princess who might vanish at any moment.

Maurice's picture of Louise is destined to be an unrealisable ideal of the first order since the real Louise in no way resembles the woman of his imagination. A victim of the romantic fallacy that spiritual beauty must be a concomitant of physical beauty, Maurice is able to dismiss or explain away anything that does not accord with this belief:

> He heaped on her all the spiritual perfections that answered to her appearance. And he did not, for a time, observe anything to make him waver in his faith that she was whiter, stiller, and more unapproachable - of different clay, in short, from other women. Then, however, this illusion was shattered. Late one afternoon, she came down the stairs of the house she lived in, and, pausing at the door, looked up and down the hot, empty street, shading her eyes with her hand. No one was in sight, and she was about to turn away, when, from where he was watching in a neighbouring doorway, Maurice saw the red-haired violinist come swiftly round the corner. She saw him, too, took a few, quick steps towards him, and, believing herself unseen, looked up in his face as they met; and the passionate tenderness of the look, the sudden lighting of lip and eye, racked the poor, unwilling spy for days. To suit this abrupt descent from the pedestal, he was obliged to carve a new attribute to his idol, and laboriously adapt it. . . . Hours came when he strove in vain to understand her. Ignorant of these things she could not be; was it within the limits of the possible that she could overlook them? - and he shivered lest he should be forced to think less highly of her. Ultimately, sending his mind back over

what he had read and heard, drawing on his own slight experience, he came to a compromise with himself. He said that most often the best and fairest women loved men who were unworthy of them. Was it not a weakness and a strength of her sex to see good where no good was? - a kind of divine frailty, a wilful blindness, a sweet inability to discern. (pp.46-48)

Maurice's rationalisation of Louise's affair with Schilsky shows, with a nice touch of irony, that the fair sex are not the only ones capable of "wilful blindness", of seeing good where no good exists. During one of their quarrels Louise accuses Maurice of never having loved her, and in a sense this is true. He has been enchanted by her face and in love with his ideal of her, but has never accepted or loved the real Louise. This is made clearer in the original version of the book, where Louise says

"We have never really cared for each other - that's all it is," she had flung at him in response to an accusation that, if she loved him as she professed, she would not treat him in this way. "Yes - it is quite true. - It was my face that caught your fancy - or something you imagined in me, that never, never was there. And I? - Oh, how do I know? I was lonely, and desperate. And there was no one else to turn to."[6]

Maurice's inability to accept facts that conflict with his ideals is shown not only in his relationship with Louise but in his "wilful blindness" to Ephie Cayhill's affair with Schilsky. Here, too, he is able to overlook abundant evidence: he sees Ephie and Schilsky exchange signs at the theatre; he sees them walking together in the woods; he learns that Ephie has been using him as an excuse for her meetings with Schilsky. Yet he allows his natural

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[6] Maurice Guest, original version, p. 490.

hesitancy and lack of confidence to prevent him from warning Ephie or her sister Johanna of the dangers of an association with Schilsky. Even after he has heard Schilsky give a full account of his affair with Ephie and has promised to bring her to Louise, Maurice hopes "to read from her frank eyes and childish lips the assurance of her innocence, or, at least, the impossibility of her guilt." (p.226) Again, as with Louise, Maurice assumes that beauty must equal goodness.

This willingness to believe that things are not as bad as they seem may also be seen in Maurice's reactions after the failure of his Abendunterhaltung. Richardson's pyschological penetration, the skill at depicting the working of her characters' minds which gives Maurice Guest much of its power, is well demonstrated here.

> Meanwhile, he recapitulated the scene in the concert hall, from the few anticipatory moments, when the 'cellist related amatory adventures, to the abrupt leave he had taken of Dove at the door of the building. And in the course of doing this, he was invaded by a mild and agreeable doubt. On such shadowy impressions as these had he built up his assumption of failure! Was it possible to be so positive? The unreal state of mind in which he had played, hindered him from acting as his own judge. The fact that Schwarz had not been effusive, and that none of his friends had sought him out, admitted of more than one interpretation. The only real proof he had was Dove's manner to him; and was not Dove always too full of his own affairs, or, at least, the affairs of those who were not present at the moment, to have any attention to spare for the person he was actually with? At the idea that he was perhaps mistaken, Maurice grew so unsettled that he rose from the piano. But, by the time he took his seat again, he had wavered; say what he would, he could not get rid of the belief that if he had achieved anything out of the common, Madeleine would not have made it her business to avoid him. After this, however, his fluctuating hopes rallied, then sank once more, until it ended in his leaving the piano. For it was of no use trying to concentrate his thoughts until he knew. (pp.430-431)

In order to "know" Maurice goes to see Schwarz and, through a combination of bad luck, tactlessness and misunderstanding, forfeits any chance of Schwarz's future interest or help. When told of this interview, Madeleine remarks

"To get on in life, one must have a certain amount of tact. You are too naïve, too unsuspecting - one of those people who would like to carry on social intercourse on a basis of absolute truth, and then be surprised that it came to an end." (p.440)

"Too naïve . . . too unsuspecting" - such are Maurice Guest's actions during most of the novel - his ideas of the requirements for artistic success, his relationship with Krafft, his behavior towards Ephie Cayhill, his confident assumption that what Louise has done in the past can have no effect on his love for her. After he has been initiated into the realities of love, innocent trust is replaced by jealous suspicion. The longing for certainty - for "absolute truth" - which drives Maurice to pay his luckless visit to Schwarz, compels him to force Louise's affirmation of all the insinuations about her. This makes his disillusionment complete; after the same desire to know has resulted in his losing the real Louise as well, Maurice has nothing further to live for.

Some criticism has already been given of the theory that the characters in Maurice Guest may be divided into Nietzschean "free spirits" and "servile spirits", into "those who live and abide by the standards and demands of ordinary life, and those who legislate for themselves."[7]

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[7]Leonie Kramer, "Henry Handel Richardson", op.cit., p.329.

Leonie Kramer, in fact, thinks that such a division is apparent in all of Richardson's work. My own views on this must be postponed till the final chapter, though they may perhaps be surmised from what I shall say here. In order to classify the characters in Maurice Guest as "conventional" or "unconventional" one must ignore another possible classification and also deal with the problem of where to put Maurice Guest and Ephie Cayhill, conventional - that is, non-genius - characters who act in a rather unconventional way. This other, and more radical, division is that between the successes and the failures: the realists and the romantics. The realists succeed because they accept the limiting conditions of the world in which they live and take a naturalistic view of life. Like nature they pursue their course with no thought for the "maimed and crippled"; they use other people as means to their end, which is self-fulfilment. The romantics fail because, through innocence, ignorance, or mistaken idealism, they cannot accept the facts of their world; they take what might be termed a humanistic view of life. They see other people as necessary to their fulfilment and have an impulse to self-sacrifice.

The person who most adequately fits my description of the innocent, idealistic, romantic victim is, of course, Maurice Guest. But his failure is foreshadowed by those of several other characters, a technique which Richardson was to employ again in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony.

Maurice's suicide is anticipated by that of Avery Hill who, though unconventional in her behavior and, if not a genius, highly gifted musically, finds as little happiness in her love for Krafft as Maurice finds in his for Louise. One cannot exactly term her a romantic innocent but she does appear to have the belief in sacrifice which is one of the characteristics of the failure. "Romantic innocent" is, however, quite appropriate to another of the victims in Maurice Guest, Ephie Cayhill. It is significant that Maurice has a brotherly affection for Ephie - she shows herself a true "sister-under-the-skin" by also becoming embroiled in a situation that she is too inexperienced to handle. In her affair with Schilsky, Ephie is the dupe of her conventional ideas about love: she believes that Schilsky will marry her since this is for her the only possible explanation of his attentions. She has, in any case, too confident a belief in her own attractions to doubt Schilsky's intentions. The parallels between Ephie and Maurice are numerous: both are young and innocent; both find themselves in a new and very different environment; both are betrayed as much by their mistaken ideals as by their lovers. The comparisons cannot, of course, be taken too far. Ephie's affair with Schilsky receives a much slighter treatment than Maurice's with Louise, and Ephie herself falls victim not to a bullet but "to her nerves". (p.259) After her meeting with Louise, Ephie does contemplate suicide, but in a way which shows

that her affair with Schilsky has not cured her of romanticism. This passage, incidentally, provides a good example of what Professor Robertson means when he refers to Richardson's "superior irony";[8]

> She sobbed to herself as she walked. Everything was bleak, and black, and cheerless. She would perhaps die of the cold, and then all of them, Joan in particular, would be filled with remorse. She stood and looked at the inky water of the river between its stone walls. She had read of people drowning themselves; what if she went down the steps and threw herself in? - and she feebly fingered at the gate. But it was locked and chained; and at the idea of her warm, soft body touching the icy water; at the picture of herself lying drowned, with dank hair, or, like the Christian Martyr, floating away on the surface; at the thought of their grief, of him wringing his hands over her corpse, she was so moved that she wept aloud again, and almost ran to be out of temptation's way. (p.250)

Ephie's nocturnal ramblings are prompted by her fear of returning home to face her elder sister Johanna, who has known nothing of her relationship with Schilsky. Johanna, thwarted in her wish for a university career, has determined to sacrifice her life to Ephie, to find happiness in her happiness. But, as Richardson shows throughout her work, such self-sacrifice usually results in the opposite of what was desired: far from winning her gratitude and affection, Johanna's stern guardianship makes Ephie dislike and deceive her. Johanna is too conscious of the sacrifices she has made for her to imagine that Ephie would do this; and so she fails in her task of protecting Ephie from life. Johanna's jealous watchfulness, which as we have seen has sexual overtones, is a foreshadowing of Maurice's later

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[8] "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, p.163.

behavior towards Louise. She comes to hate Maurice for this inquisitive possessiveness, this desire to regulate her thoughts and actions, as Ephie has hated Johanna. This is another example of the technique of comparison and contrast referred to in the discussion of Richardson's treatment of Schilsky.

Schilsky is, of course, the most outstanding example of success in the novel. He succeeds not only because he has more talent than anyone else - though this is something which is stated rather than demonstrated in the novel - but because his determination to succeed is unhampered by any conventional convictions about what he may not do or by any humane feelings. For him, the dedicated artist, anything which aids his advancement is allowable. His affairs with Ephie and Louise are mere diversions from, and at times annoying interruptions to, his devotion to art. But Richardson shows that conventional people may be just as selfish as artists, for the two other successful characters in the novel are Dove and Madeleine Wade. Commenting on one of his books, Richardson told Oliver Stonor that it was the author's duty to discover "some good" in his characters: "He must rise above hatred." She went on to say "All of which sounds rather bow-bow, no doubt. And you might point to "Dove" in Maurice Guest as an example of my not practising what I preach."[9] Dove, with his continual

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[9]Letter of 28 October 1939. (In the National Library, Canberra)

preoccupation with other people's problems, his lengthy musical dissertations and his frequent disappointments in love, is, indeed, presented as a rather ridiculous person. In the first description of him he is typed as the Englishman who makes no concessions to his surroundings and is conventional to the core:

> Maurice Guest had already, in dress and bearing, taken on a touch of musicianly disorder, but Dove's lengthier residence had left no trace upon him; he might have stepped that day from the streets of the provincial English town to which he belonged. His well-brushed clothes sat with an easy inelegance, his tie was small, his linen clean, and the only concession he made to his surroundings, the broad-brimmed, soft felt hat, looked oddly out of place on his close-cut hair. He carried himself erectly, swinging a little on his hips. (p.23)

Richardson's ironic attitude to Dove is also seen in the way in which she shows up his pretensions to love Ephie and to care for his fellow men. His reaction to the revelation of Ephie's affair with Schilsky is, like Johanna's, annoyance at having been deceived by someone he has professed to love; and, fearing that this may ruin his latest matrimonial hopes, he is reluctant to try to save Maurice from the disaster of his affair with Louise. It is, therefore, rather surprising to find Dove's Prüfung the success of the year, even though this is described ironically: "the runs and brilliant passage-work of the concerto left his fingers like showers of pearls." (p.527) Did Richardson have a change of heart at the last moment and decide to be kinder to Dove, or is his success an indictment of the whole Leipzig system? On the whole this seems a genuine enough success; Richardson's mention of Dove's "unshakable self-possession",

the lack of which, one remembers, contributed to her own failure at Leipzig, showing once again how important temperament is for success as a musician.

Madeleine Wade, too, makes "a highly successful exit, though without creating a furore like Dove. Since all she did was well done, it was not possible for her to be a surprise to anyone." (p.528) Madeleine is Dove's counterpart as the conventional Englishwoman, though a somewhat cynical one. The first description of her also has ironic touches: she is dressed in a very unbecoming manner, and eats "deliberately, and with an over-emphasised nicety." (p.8) Like Dove, Madeleine does not really care for people but makes use of them for her own ends. She has numerous correspondents all over the world because "One never knows when these people may be of use to one." (p.98) It is hard to say how much she loves Maurice Guest; she does try to help him, and towards the end of the novel even takes the very unconventional step of visiting him in his room, though this is qualified by her thought that "No one will ever know. And even if they do, I'm leaving, and it won't matter." (p.529) But as for her, and Dove and Schilsky, love is an incidental of life, her loss of Maurice is not a very serious failure. These three characters can, therefore, be termed successful in attaining their ambitions. All are realists and suit their aims to their abilities; all care more for themselves than for others. At their opposite poles they represent the two types of success that

would have been possible for Maurice Guest if he had had a stronger character and been either more talented or less idealistic.

The two other major characters in Maurice Guest - Krafft and Louise - do not fit into either category: they have the egotism and some of the realism of the successes, but they also have the idealism of the failures. It is interesting to note that they both threaten to commit suicide, but are both still alive when the two people who have been most closely associated with them are dead. Towards the end of the novel Krafft, while visiting Madeleine, drops "a tattered volume of Reclam's Universal Library . . . a novel by a modern Danish poet, who died young", of which he says "'One can study death in it, in all its forms.'" (p.495) It would seem likely that this book is Jacobsen's Niels Lyhne - "A Danish Poet" is the title of Richardson's article on his work[10] - Krafft himself being another character with Jacobsen-like "unrealised ideals". He is, however, realist enough to recognise that "The happiest man is the man whose wishes are never fulfilled" (p.86), so never engages in any active pursuit of them. Although he is a musical genius, he is not a success like Schilsky, apparently because he does not want

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[10] In a letter of 15 May 1934 to Mrs. Kernot, Richardson referred to "a book which changed her outlook upon life - this book is mentioned in M.G." (In Mrs. Kernot's notebook, Mitchell Library, Uncat. Mss Set 325)

to be. Homosexual and Nietzschean, a decidedly manic-depressive personality, Krafft drifts around Leipzig expounding his theories to anyone who will listen, the eternal wanderer who, knowing that all goals are worthless, is content merely to wander. In a passage omitted in the printed version, Maurice himself comes to see the truth of Krafft's contention that reality can never live up to the ideal:

> It would have been better for him, if he had never seen her, never known that she existed. Best of all, perhaps, for both of them, if she had been firm and held back; if he could have continued to worship her in the moonstruck way of the early months; if he had been able to retain all his romantic ideas of her, until the lawful moment.[11]

Once again Richardson rightly removed a passage which showed what she thought about her characters rather than what they would be likely to think about themselves. It is part of Maurice's tragedy that the only time he has a "lucid perception" of events and people is at the moment of his death. Then, when he sees Louise's face not as the vision he has loved but "as he has seen it for the last time, disfigured by hatred of him, horribly vindictive, as it has been when she spat on the ground at his feet" (p.560), he cannot bear this reality.

Louise, on the other hand, is able to withstand the seemingly inevitable thwarting of her desire for happiness, and clings to her ideals with what may appear to be a perverse delight in suffering. The first hint of what Louise

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[11] Maurice Guest, original version, pp.477-8.

is trying to win from life is given in her conversation with Maurice as they are walking home from the theatre: "'I have never even been passably content. Something is always wanting.'" (p.121) Later, reviling Schilsky for his desertion, she reaffirms her wish for a happy, pain-free existence: "'No, I paid for it all - I who hate and shrink from pain, who would do anything to avoid it. I want to go through life knowing only what is bright and happy; and time and again, I am crushed and flung down.'" (pp.300-301) This wish is common to many of Richardson's protagonists, though they may not express it as directly as Louise, and is always shown to be incapable of achievement because based on a false view of life. When Louise decides to accept Maurice as her lover she hopes that with him, so different from the other men she has known, she may find the peace and contentment that have been eluding her. In Louise's vision of the future we have another example of Richardson's tragic irony:

> The thought that she might possibly have scruples on his part to combat, crossed her mind. She stretched her arm straight above her head, then laid it across her eyes again. She would like him none the less for these scruples, did they exist: now, she believed that, at heart, she had really appreciated his reserve, his holding back, where others would have been so ready to pounce in. For the first time, she considered him in the light of a lover, and she saw him differently. As if the mere contemplation of such a chance brought her nearer to him, she was stirred by a new sensation, which had him as its object. And under the influence of this feeling, she told herself that perhaps just in this gentler, kindlier love, which only sought her welfare, true happiness lay. She strained to read the future. There would be storms neither of joy nor of pain; but watchful sympathy, and the fine, manly tenderness that shields and protects. Oh, what if after all her passionate craving for happiness, it was here at her feet, having come

to her as good things often do, unexpected and unsought! (p.360)

The illusory nature of Louise's idea of happiness is also brought out in the style of the passage which follows her telling Maurice that she loves him.

> Suddenly, with the unexpectedness that marked her movements when she was very intent, she leant forward again, and, with her elbow on her knee, her chin on her hand, said in a low voice: "Is it for ever?"
>
> "For ever and ever."
>
> "Say it's for ever." She still looked past him, but her lips had parted, and her face wore the expression of a child's listening to fairy-tales. At her own words, a vista seemed to open up before her, and, at the other end, in a blue haze, shone the great good that had hitherto eluded her.
>
> "I shall always love you," said the young man. "Nothing can ever make any difference."
>
> "For ever," she repeated. "They are pretty words." (p.361)

This longing for permanence is also shared by some of Richardson's other characters - most noticeably by Richard Mahony - and is, like the wish for unalloyed happiness, shown to be unattainable because against the laws of nature. Just as there is winter as well as summer, so there is in nature a continuous process of change and succession - nothing in life is "for ever". There is, of course, a repetition in nature, a repetition which Richardson employs very forcefully in the cyclic organisation of Maurice Guest. The most tragic of the tragic ironies of Maurice's story is provided by the parallels between the scene of his death and the opening scene of the novel. Maurice, before he commits suicide, has a vision of the coming day:

> He saw one of those early spring days of illimitable blue highness, and white, woofy clouds, which stand stationary where the earth meets the sky; the brightness of the sun

makes the roads seem whiter and the grass greener, bringing out new tints and colours in everything it touches. Over it all would run this light, swift wind, bending the buds, and even, towards afternoon, throwing up a fine white dust. (pp.559-560)

. . .

It was a blowy day in early spring. Round white masses of clouds moved lightly across a deep blue sky, and the trees, still thin and naked, bent their heads and shook their branches, as if to elude the gambols of a boisterous playfellow. The sun shone vividly, with restored power, and though the clouds sometimes passed over his very face, the shadows only lasted for a moment, and each returning radiance seemed brighter than the one before. (p.4)

The spring day is the same, as are the clouds, the trees, the sun and the blue sky, but Maurice himself is completely changed. With all his ideals shattered the spring day no longer holds for him "a fresh impulse to life"; even after death his eyes "stare, with an expression of horror and amaze, at the naked branches of the tree." (p.561) This ironic contrast of the two spring days is but one example of Richardson's use of the seasons throughout Maurice Guest. Maurice's "youthful promise" at the beginning of the novel is, as we have seen, paralleled by the promise of the new season. His love for Louise develops in the summer, Louise is deserted by Schilsky in the autumn, and the period of her death-like reaction coincides with winter. Louise's decision to take Maurice as her lover comes with the spring and is followed by a summer of passionate love, an autumn of disillusionment, and a winter of destruction. The spring which brings death to Maurice also brings a new life to Louise. Richardson's presentation of these correspondences is, while fairly obvious, not as unsubtle as my rough

description may seem to indicate. As well as the symbolic connections between "spring" and "hope", "summer" and "happiness", and so on, the moods of the characters are shown to be influenced by the moods of nature. This is especially true of Louise, whose vitality seems directly related to the vitality of nature - she does, of course, hate the winter.

The cyclic organisation of Maurice Guest is also apparent in the parallels between the opening scene and the vignette of Louise and Schilsky with which it closes. Once again it is "a fresh spring day, gusty and sunny by turns", and again some of those at "the public rehearsal of the weekly concert" (p.3) have lingered at "the back entrance to the Gewandhaus . . . in order to see, at close quarters, the violinist who had played there that morning." (p.561) But now the violinist is Schilsky, Louise his wife, and Maurice Guest's fate a rather stale subject of gossip. There is a hint, however, that, following the pattern of nature, his story is about to be repeated. Louise is accompanied by a young pianist who seems to be Maurice Guest reborn:

> - a shabbily dressed young man, with a world of enthusiasm in his candid blue eyes. He, too, was talking with animation. But Louise had no attention for anyone but her husband. . . .
>
> She was wearing a long cloak. The door, in swinging to, caught an end of this, and hindered her progress. Both she and her companion stopped to free it; their hands meet; and the bystanders saw the young man colour darkly over face and neck.
>
> The others had got into one of the droschkes that waited in line beside the building. The dark stranger put an impatient head out of the window. The two behind

quickened their steps; the young man helped Louise in, mounted himself, and slammed the door. (p.562)

This scene has been interpreted as one of triumph for Louise[12] but, considering what we know of her earlier life with Schilsky, she would not seem likely to have found her ideal happiness in her marriage. For this, Schilsky would need to value their love as highly as she does, and, as before, he is shown to pay Louise much less attention than she pays him. Thus while Louise has, in common with Schilsky and the other successes, the egotistical determination to pursue her course with no thought for the "maimed and crippled", the end to which she directs her life is shown to be unattainable in a world where nothing is "for ever", where suffering follows happiness as inevitably as winter follows summer.

This view of life, essentially a naturalistic one, is found in varying degrees in all Richardson's work, but is particularly noticeable in the close correspondences drawn between man and nature in Maurice Guest. Maurice Guest may, indeed, be said to be almost too naturalistic: it is hard to sympathise with any of the characters in a world where only the selfish are shown to be fit enough to survive. Richardson's "superior irony", while most apparent in her treatment of Dove, is applied to all the characters at one time or another; none of them are "lovable" or even

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[12] A.D. Hope, "Henry Handel Richardson's Maurice Guest," Meanjin, XIV (1955), p.196.

admirable. The value of Maurice Guest does not, however, depend as much upon Richardson's creation of memorable characters as does the value of her later work. It has been sometimes assumed that much of the first part of the novel - the detailed descriptions of Leipzig and of the doings of Maurice's acquaintances - is superfluous but, as I hope my analysis has demonstrated, the account of Maurice's relationship with Louise is given a great deal of its meaning, and irony, by what has gone before. The Leipzig background, though at times presented too unselectively, provides a context for the love story, which takes its place in the general pattern of success and failure, realism and romance. Richardson's success in Maurice Guest depends not only on the psychological insight she displays in the dissection of her characters but on the skill with which she uses "trifling yet significant" details to create a compelling, if depressing, picture of a world where failure is inevitable for those who put their trust in any other laws but the laws of nature.

CHAPTER IV

THE GETTING OF WISDOM :

A Lesson in the Nature and Variety of Truth

Henry Handel Richardson wrote of the genesis of her second novel, The Getting of Wisdom

> The first three chapters were written while I was still at work on Maurice, partly as a relief from that book's growing gloom, partly to fill the hours of a wet summer in the Bavarian mountains. As before, my original plan was merely to paint a milieu. But again the chief character took command: almost insensibly the book grew into what it is: a more or less subtle story of a young girl's inner growth.
>
> But a girl with a difference. For this particular one was a writer in the making; and, even thus early, the taint of her calling was in her, marking her off from her school-mates. ("Some Notes", pp.12-3)

Richardson's reference to her "'Portrait of an Author as a Child'"[1] as a "merry little book" may be explained, according to Nettie Palmer, by this "juxtaposition, in her own mind and experience" of it and Maurice Guest.[2] Certainly, compared to Maurice Guest and The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, it is both "merry" and "little" but no less than her more ambitious works The Getting of Wisdom has as its foundation Richardson's personal formulations about the nature of life. Richardson's protest: "How can people take it so seriously?"[3]: would seem to be directed

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[1] In a letter to Jacob Schwartz, 9 February 1932. (In the J.K.Moir collection in the Public Library, Melbourne)

[2] Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.29.

[3] In a letter to Nettie Palmer, 27 August 1931, quoted by Palmer, ibid., p.195.

mainly against those who, not recognising that "both place and people were seen through the eyes of a very young girl and judged accordingly",[4] read the book as a serious criticism of school-life. Richardson "had believed that the subversively provocative quotations from Nietzsche, which head some of the chapters, would light the way. But it was not so: the irony passed unnoticed." ("Some Notes", p.13) She wrote to Mrs. Kernot in a similar vein

> There are many excuses for those who don't understand Laura. It's a Nietzschean little book, and if German is not at the reader's finger tips what can he make of the chapter-headings which are the true source of guidance? In spite of its size I believe it asks more of the reader than the bigger book. - Oh dear, I remind myself, though, of a mother with a deformed and imbecile child.[5]

This, taken together with another extract from a letter to Mrs. Kernot:

> I always work from the particular to the general and never lose sight, so I hope, of the larger issue. Yes, I think I managed it in <u>The Getting of Wisdom</u>. It's something of an unconscious process of course, but that little book had a background both wide and deep.[6]

would make it seem likely that Richardson herself thought <u>The Getting of Wisdom</u> more than "a little school story".

Some idea of the "larger issue" which Richardson had in mind may be gained from her remarks on the novel's heroine:

> She lived among them, but was not of them; and, strive as she might, for she longed to be one with them, she never

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[4] <u>Myself When Young</u>, p.70.

[5] Letter of 21 May 1936. (In Mrs. Kernot's notebook in the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325) All references to Richardson's letters to Mrs. Kernot are to the extracts in this notebook.

[6] Letter of 18 December 1935.

succeeded in bringing her thoughts and feelings into line with theirs. She suffered where they laughed; enjoyed where they wept or condemned; took a lively interest in things from which they turned decorously away: meanwhile all unconsciously laying up, squirrel-wise, a store of her own particular brand of wisdom.

Of book-learning she got little; and that little hardly mattered: it was not what she was there for. In the light of her future, the mental and emotional crises she here went through were more important than any headwork. And in her small way the child came up against some of life's knottiest problems: crime and punishment; the workings of sex; passionate love. She was driven to ask herself Pilate's hoary question about truth; to put her faith to the test and find it wanting. Also, by dint of sad experience she discovered, unaided, the art and craft of realistic fiction. Did one set out to tell a tale, though nothing in it need be true, everything must sound as if it were. ("Some Notes", p.13)

This precis of the main themes of The Getting of Wisdom shows that the book is to be taken seriously in so far as it presents a view of life and a view of the artist which were seriously held by Richardson herself. The qualities which Richardson believed necessary for artistic success are outlined in this passage and, in greater detail, in the book itself: unconventionality; determination; the ability to learn from one's experiences, and to accept, the fundamental truths about life; a knowledge of the requirements of fiction. Differing so markedly in tone and scope from Maurice Guest, The Getting of Wisdom is yet equally based on the assumption that life is a hard, unpleasant business in which success comes only to those who are strong enough to reject their dreams, their ideals of a perfect life, and recognise this bitter truth. Like Maurice Guest and Richard Mahony, Laura Rambotham must face the conflict between illusion and reality - between the world as she would like it to be and as it is - and in much

the same fields of love and religion. Certainly, the comparisons cannot be taken too far: Laura's world is restricted by the grey stone walls of the school and the presentation of her problems is restricted accordingly: comedy not tragedy decides the development and outcome of her story. In Myself When Young Richardson writes that she "deliberately weakened" the account of "her headstrong fancy for the girl there called 'Evelyn'. To have touched this in other than lightly would have been out of keeping with the tone of the book." (p.70) The ending is one of success not failure for, though she may not, with memories of disgrace and humiliation, see it as such at the time, Laura's school career has been successful. She leaves school on the run into the future with the acquired wisdom that will enable her to keep on running forward to her true calling as an artist.

Richardson's use of the naïve observer in her presentation of the story through "the eyes of a very young girl" calls to mind the tradition of satirizing European society by describing it as it would supposedly appear to a visitor from a foreign land who is ignorant of its conventions in manners and morals. But, as Professor Robertson has pointed out, The Getting of Wisdom, like Maurice Guest, has its strongest literary affinities with some Scandinavian works and in particular with Björnson's Fiskerjenten which Richardson translated in 1896. Like The Getting of Wisdom, this is "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl": the heroine, Petra, is eventually to find

her true calling as an actress. Petra and Laura have many characteristics in common: both are rebellious and find it difficult to behave in the way they are supposed to; both are victims of their strong emotions and of their hidden talents. Just as Laura's natural literary ability enables her to deceive her schoolfellows, so Petra's ability to counterfeit love results in her finding herself engaged to three men at the same time. Miss Snodgrass's prediction of "a bad end" for Laura (p.243) is paralleled by the townspeople's prediction for Petra: "True to her own nature, she had recklessly plunged into a course which would only lead to her becoming an outcast from society, with the prospect of an old age in the house of correction." (p.101)[7] But for both girls the discovery of their particular calling enables them to find unexpected happiness and success since, as Petra is told, "the feeling that we possess a calling supports us under all misfortunes." (p.33) A further interesting resemblance to The Getting of Wisdom may be seen in the long discussion about truth held towards the end of The Fisher Lass between the pastor with whom Petra has been living, some of his strictly puritanical parishioners and Oedegaard, the man who has educated Petra and been one of her unfortunate suitors. The parishioners take a very narrow view of truth and argue that the arts which counterfeit reality must be regarded as sinful because of their deceitful

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[7] References are to Björnstjerne Björnson, The Fisher Lass, (translation ananymous), Heinemann, London, 1896.

nature. The pastor partly shares this belief: he refuses to let Petra become an actress because he thinks acting is sinful. All are forced to modify their views by Oedegaard, who argues that there is more than one kind of truth: he proves that frequently one is able to get a clearer understanding of life from fiction than from the confusion of actual events, and shows that these varieties of truth are dependent on each other:

> "If all those thoughts which are not absolutely necessary were lies, then those which are most necessary to us would very soon become lies as well. They would so hem you in in your earthly house that you would never reach eternity, and yet this was to be the goal of your life, and it was these very thoughts which, by faith, should bear you thither." (pp.242-3)

Like Laura's experiences in The Getting of Wisdom, as we shall see, this discussion points out the error in restricting one's view of truth to one aspect of it.

The most important source of The Getting of Wisdom was, of course, Richardson's memories of her years as a boarder at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne. It is difficult to decide just what she meant by her remark in Myself When Young that the book "contained a very fair account of my doings at school and of those I came in contact with." (p.70) Certainly, it was accurate enough to allow of easy identification of "both place and people".

Mrs. Kernot, the "Cupid" of The Getting of Wisdom,[8] who was even able to identify her old friend Ettie Richardson as the author, wrote to her on 3 October 1911 "The College people still ruffle and hump themselves when the book is mentioned." Feelings remained high enough in the following year for Richardson to be refused entrance to the College - she had to be content "with peering through cracks in the paling-fence."[9] But Laura Rambotham's school career is not an exact replica of Ethel Richardson's; presumably for purposes of compression, it lasts for four years instead of five, and differs in several other respects.[10] Laura does not share Richardson's musical achievements. Although we are told

> Since Christmas, she was one of the few permitted to do morning practice on the grand piano in Mrs. Strachey's drawing-room - an honour, it is true, not overmuch valued by its recipients, for Mrs. Gurley's bedroom lay just above, and that lady could swoop down on whoever was weak enough to take a little rest. (p.219)

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[8] Cupid is described as "A plain girl, with irregular features - how she had come by her nickname no one knew -". (p.213) In a letter of 26 January 1931, Mrs. Kernot, who also christened Richardson "the Infant", wrote to her "You say in your last that I was an angel not to resent portraiture in "The G of W". I think I have never hugged any illusions as regards my personal appearance . . ." (In the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325) All references to Mrs. Kernot's letters to Richardson are to this collection.

[9] Myself When Young, p.70. In a letter of 12 February 1929, Mrs. Kernot refers to a letter from one of the school authorities which "gave the college refusal to allow you to enter the school".

[10] See Chapter I for the source of these biographical details.

we have to turn to Mrs. Kernot's reminiscences to discover the reason for this: "H.H.R. in her last year being the musical genius of the school was permitted the use of the grand piano in Prof. Harper's drawing-room. We pitied her lofty isolation in a spot where no escape was possible."[11] Since Laura was to find future success as a writer rather than a musician, Richardson has played down her musical attainments in favour of literary ones. Then, too, Laura, at twelve, is a year younger than Richardson when she commences her school career. It should be noted that Laura's youth is emphasised in the novel and in Richardson's comments on it. Laura's tender age is used both as an ironic device and as a means of gaining the reader's sympathy for her: her behavior throughout the novel can be excused on the grounds of youth and inexperience. There is a certain basic similarity between the situations of Maurice Guest and The Getting of Wisdom. Both are "initiation" stories,[12] showing the impact of a new environment on a person ill-equipped to deal with it; and Professor Robertson's description of Laura's initiation as "the disillusionment of a sensitive, imaginative child in its naïve unpreparedness for life's buffetings",[13] could with equal validity be applied to Maurice's. But Maurice, though looking at life with a

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[11] In the Mitchell Library. (Uncat Mss Set 325)

[12] The Way of Initiation was one of the rejected titles for The Getting of Wisdom. (From the typescript in the National Library, Canberra)

[13] "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, p.170.

child-like innocence and belief in intrinsic goodness, is not a child, and his blunders do not command the same sympathy as Laura's.

One also has more sympathy to spare for Laura; her fate does not, as Maurice Guest's does, become overshadowed at any time by the fates of the other characters. In The Getting of Wisdom Richardson employs a method which she was later to develop more fully in The Fortunesof Richard Mahony: that of limiting the reader's interest to the central character by presenting events and people from his point of view. As I shall attempt to show in a later chapter, this restriction produces some of the best and the worst aspects of the trilogy, although no criticism can be made of its use in The Getting of Wisdom. Here it is in keeping with the other limitations in length and scope, and provides an additional interest in the humour that accrues from it. Richardson referred to The Getting of Wisdom "one of the most firmly-knit of my books" ("Some Notes", p.13) and there seems to be no reason for departing from her judgment. Laura Rambotham's school experiences are, as Professor Robertson says, presented as a series of "tussles with the truth", (p.170) though in saying that this might have been a more apt title for the book he seems to overlook the fact that Laura's wisdom is the outcome of just this tussle. The epigraph from Proverbs - "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" - indicates that Laura's wisdom is not to consist of the

facts and figures of the schoolroom but of the understanding of life she gains through the other lessons of her school-days. Professor Robertson gives this description of Laura's education:

> A 'story' it hardly is, merely a series of kaleidoscopic - almost too kaleidoscopic - adventures of a child's school life: sharply cut little cameos, each marking a distinct step upwards in the experience and worldly wisdom that is to fit it for life. All the steps - and it would detract from the charm of the book to attempt an enumeration or analysis of them - are at bottom concerned with the discovery that things are not what they seem; the note on which they harp is disillusionment . . . Laura's upward progress . . . is an education in disillusionment, a hardening of the skin against the pricks of an unkind outside world. It is a series of steps in the acquisition of the wisdom of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, that you must "mould yourself on those around you", and that "the unpardonable sin is to vary from the common mould." (pp.170-1)

Nettie Palmer fails to see how this "education in disillusionment" may be described as an "upward progress" and writes

> The steps "upward", then, are on a spiral, with widening view. The disillusion occurs only in the momentary spasm of discovery that the first foothold must be abandoned; it is obliterated in the conviction that the new foothold is more secure.[14]

The general tone of the book, together with the Nietzsche chapter headings, point, however, to a more than momentary disillusionment. For as well as being a "series of steps in the acquisition of the wisdom of Mr. Worldly Wiseman", The Getting of Wisdom is also a series of steps in the loss of illusions, both conventional and personal, about the nature of life. Laura's "upward progress" to wisdom and understanding proceeds because she is able to accept this

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[14] Henry Handel Richardson, A Study, p.34.

disillusionment without completely giving way either to despair or to the pressure on her to think and feel like her companions. Of Laura's growing ability "to distinguish between kinds of truth", Leonie Gibson writes

> There is the kind that is useful because it helps you to punish ruffians and preserve order, and the kind that is cramping and that, if adhered to rigidly, would deprive literature of its shades and nuances and ultimately of its power to move the mind.[15]

Besides moral truth and imaginative truth there is, as Laura discovers, another kind of truth which is ignored when one interprets events only in conventional terms or in terms of one's own desires. Laura seems to have been born with the gift, though to her it seems more like a curse, of discerning the actual behind the ideal and the conventional: she accepts moral truth as necessary not for its own sake but for its usefulness. It is perhaps just because this reality-perceiving power is so strong in her that she is able to survive, and profit from, her time at school.

On the surface The Getting of Wisdom is mainly concerned with truth in its black-and-white moral sense of honesty versus deceit. Laura's sins against this canon reach their culmination in her imaginative metamorphosis of the weekend she spends at the curate's, which has revealed to her the reality behind her romantic view of the curate, into a time of secret passion and attempted seduction. When her schoolmates turn on her in fury after the discovery of the truth, they reject Laura's protest that "You made me

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[15] Henry Handel Richardson and some of her sources (1954), p. 20.

do it. I should never have told a word, if it hadn't been for you." (p.188) As it is, her companions' outlook on life is shown to be responsible not only for this gigantic falsification but for all Laura's earlier and smaller lies. Laura is initially presented as a proud, rebellious, yet truthful girl, who has plenty of romantic illusions but a complete ignorance of the conventions of the school world. If she wishes to do a thing she does it, if she thinks a thing she says it. When the book opens she is seen as "Wondrous Fair", surrounded, on the eve of her departure for boarding-school, by a court of younger sister and brothers whom she regales with romantic stories. One example of the "firmly-knit" construction of The Getting of Wisdom is provided by the recurrence of scenes in which Laura appears as a story-teller, in preparation for the final revelation of her future career.

While journeying to Melbourne, Laura, like Maurice Guest on his arrival at Leipzig, dreams of being the centre of an admiring and applauding audience: an enlarged version of what she has been used to at home. This passage also demonstrates Richardson's skill in suiting her style to the idiom of her characters:

> She had arrived at school, and in a spacious apartment, which was a kind of glorified Mother's drawing-room, was being introduced to a bevy of girls. They clustered round, urgent to make the acquaintance of the new-comer, who gave her hand to each with an easy grace and an appropriate word. They were too well-bred to cast a glance at her clothes, which, however she might embellish them in fancy, Laura knew were not what they ought to be: her ulster was some years old, and so short that it did not cover the flouce of her dress, and this dress, and her hat

with it, were Mother's taste, and consequently, Laura felt sure, nobody else's. But her new companions saw that she wore these clothes with an elegance that made up for their shortcomings; and she heard them whisper: "Isn't she pretty? What black eyes! What lovely curls!" But she was not proud, and by her ladylike manners soon made them feel at home with her, even though they stood agape at her cleverness: none of them could claim to have absorbed the knowledge of a whole house. With one of her admirers she had soon formed a friendship that was the wonder of all who saw it: in deep respect the others drew back, forming a kind of allée, down which, with linked arms, the two friends sauntered, blind to everything but themselves. (pp.28-29)

Laura's fantasies, like Maurice's, are based on assumptions about herself and her environment which are soon shown to be incorrect. Her welcoming committee consists of the unbendingly authoritarian Miss Gurley who administers Laura's first lesson in keeping her thoughts and feelings to herself. When she eventually meets her schoolfellows Laura is ridiculed for her ignorance of dining-room manners and later subjected to a cross-examination on her family and social position. As a result of this treatment Laura again indulges in fantasy - one of revenge and destruction that is just as romantically impossible as her first one.

She did not even halt at poison or the knife: a big cake, sent by Mother, of which she invited all to partake, and into which she inserted a fatal poison, so that the whole school died like rabbits; or a nightly stabbing, a creeping from bed to bed in the dark, her penknife open in her hand... (p.51)

The first part of this sentence, incidentally, provides a good illustration of a stylistic clumsiness which occurs all too frequently in Richardson's writing.

Laura is, however, still unable to realise that she is too different from her companions ever to become the

admired creature of her dreams. The Biblical verse she learns before bedtime points to the way in which Laura now tries to achieve her wishes: "I wisdom dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions."(p.54) As well as providing a motto for Laura's future caution of conduct, this quotation echoes the epigraph from Proverbs and looks forward to the discovery about creative writing which is to be one of Laura's most important pieces of wisdom. Her efforts to conform, by concealing not only her thoughts and feelings but certain facts about her home and family that would be viewed with contempt by her companions, inevitably lead Laura into deceit. The theme of truthfulness appears once more in a letter from her mother:

> P.S. Another thing in your letter I dont like. You say you tell your governess you have finished your lessons when you have not done so. That is telling an untruth and I hope you are not going to be led away by the examples of bad girls. I have always brought you children up to be straightforward and I am astonished at you beginning fibbing as soon as you get away from home. Fibbing soon leads to something worse. (pp.59-60)

Unfortunately Laura does not heed this warning and her mother's prediction is soon proved true. She lies about her new dress and the darns in her stockings, and in the twelfth chapter finds that she must lie about her personal feelings. This chapter, which deals with the expulsion of a girl for stealing, is the first to be introduced by a quotation from Nietzsche. Besides indicating the fundamental irony of the book, these chapter-headings emphasize the events which are most important for Laura's growth in wisdom and understanding. The care Richardson

took in selecting them is made evident by the fact that, apart from title changes and a few textual amendments, alterations in these quotations are the only variations between the original typescript and the published version of The Getting of Wisdom.

The quotation for Capter 12 - "Da regiert der Nachbar, da wird man Nachbar" - is a comment on Laura's unsuccessful struggles with conformity. For instead of sharing "her companions' indignant and horrified aversion to the crime . . . their decent indifference towards the criminal" (p.125) Laura, the future novelist, is "deeply interested" and even entertained by this experience. She recognises the difficulty of narrowing the gap between her feelings and her schoolfellows'

> You might regulate your outward habit to the last button of what you were expected to wear; you might conceal the tiny flaws and shuffle over the big improprieties in your home life, which were likely to damage your value in the eyes of your companions; you might, in brief, march in the strictest order along the narrow road laid down for you by these young lawgivers, keeping perfect step and time with them: yet of what use were all your pains, if you could not marshal your thoughts and feelings - the very realest part of you - in rank and file as well? ...if these persisted in escaping control? (p.117)

but cannot yet see that this difference is ineradicable, nor that her reaction to Annie John's expulsion is more realistic than Bertha's, "whose tears had dried as rapidly as sea-spray." (p.123) This episode brings in the second of the kinds of truth - the realistic appraisal of a situation as opposed to illusory or conventional interpretations of it. Laura supposes that her better understanding of Annie's motives may be behind her different

view of the affair; another reason may be that she is able to see it as it is, while her companions can only see it filtered through their habitual prejudices. The value of this difference, one of the qualifications of the writer, is as yet unseen by Laura: as she falls asleep she prays that she "might be preserved" and dreams of herself in Annie's place, being denounced for her own breaking of the laws of the majority. (pp.126-7)

This prosecution is to come soon enough with the discovery of Laura's lies about her weekend at the curate's. The situation which leads up to Laura's telling of these lies begins with her debacle with Bob, the cousin of one of her schoolfriends, Tilly. Tilly says that Bob is "gone on" Laura but, not sharing her companions' almost single-minded devotion to the male sex and ways of attracting its attention, she completely fails to sustain this interest when she visits Bob's home. Young realist that she is, Laura is struck by the injustice of "the circumstances that, because he had singled her out approvingly, she was expected to worm herself into his favour". (p.146) Laura's lack of interest in the art of coquetry is linked to her heresy in refusing to accept marriage as the only goal in life: seeing the future as full of "marvellous perhapses", she feels that "it was impossible to limit your hopes to one single event, which, though it saved you from derision, would put an end, for ever, to all possible, exciting contingences." (p.153) But Laura finds that a pretence at interest in romance is essential "if you were to be able

to hold up your head with the rest." (p.159) As a further failure at flirtation makes Laura despair of the possibility of an actual romance, she decides to be in love with the curate. This pretence, acted on by her religious beliefs, comes to have a certain reality so that when, after the discovery that the curate is related to an old friend of her mother's, she is invited to spend a weekend at his house "it seemed a little like being asked out to meet God." (p.160) The invitation, which she allows her friends to believe is occasioned by the curate's reciprocation of "her silent adoration" (p.161), brings Laura the admiration she has desired.

The visit itself provides Laura with a further experience in the second kind of truth: the realities of his home situation, which Laura instantly perceives with her "sharp, unkind eyes'", destroy all her illusions about the curate:

> She had seen an overworked, underfed man, who nagged like any woman, and made slaves of two weak, adoring ladies; and she very well knew that, as often as her thoughts in future alighted on Mr. Robby, she would think of him pinching and screwing, with a hawk-like eye on a shadowy bishopric. Of her warm feelings for him, genuine or imaginary, not a speck remained. The first touch of reality had sunk them below her ken, just as a drop of cold water sinks the floating grounds in a coffee-pot. ... But did she confess this, confess also that, save for a handful of monosyllables, her only exchange of words with him had been a line of Virgil; and, still more humbling, that she had liked his wife and sister better than himself; did this come to light, she would forfeit every sou of the prestige the visit had lent and yet promised to lend her. - And, now that the possible moment for parting with this borrowed support had come, she recognised how greatly she had built on it. (p.170)

So Laura once more lets her desire to "belong" result in a

rejection of moral truth, with, as her mother had predicted, very serious consequences. Again she is the centre of an admiring court which listens eagerly to her fantasies. An embryo novelist, she has no difficulty in inventing the details for which her hearers clamour, and even adopts a critical attitude to her story: "she polished away at her flim-flams, bringing them nearer and nearer probability, never, thanks to her sound memory, contradicting herself or making a slip, and always able to begin again at the beginning." (p.174) Here she seems, indeed, to have an intuitive grasp of the need for probability in fiction which she is later to consciously formulate after her experiences in the school Literary Society. The only time her story is doubted is when she states "a fact, a simple little fact, an incident that had really occurred." (p.179)

This "top-heavy edifice" (p.179) is ultimately demolished from without when Mary Pidwall, "the rigid young moralist" (p.183) who is very reminiscent of Madeleine Wade in Maurice Guest, spends a weekend at the curate's and returns with the truth. After discovering how they have been duped, her companions can only regard Laura's actions as criminal and treat her accordingly, paying no attention to her protests that they have been the cause of her lies. Reality once again destroys Laura's dreams of admiration, which, like her early ones, have been founded on fantasy. The extracts from Nietzsche which head the two chapters dealing with Laura's rise and fall emphasize the most significant aspects of these events. The quotation for

Chapter 17 : "Ohnmacht zur Lüge ist lange noch nicht Liebe zur Wahrheit . . . Wer nicht lügen kann, weiss nicht, was Wahrheit ist", as well as carrying on the theme of the distinctions between kinds of truth, points to a difference between Laura and her listeners. They, content to accept what they are told about life, will always remain deluded, while Laura, through her defiance and questioning of accepted values, will achieve wisdom. Her schoolfellows' conviction of Laura as a criminal is ironically questioned by the quotation for Chapter 18: "Der Verbrecher ist häufig genug seiner Tat nicht gewachsen", which also indicates Laura's confusion about the whole business - she has lied almost on impulse and cannot see why her actions should be so strongly censured.

Laura looks forward to the holidays as a respite from the torment she is enduring at school; instead, she experiences another of the hard realities of life - that growth involves change in oneself and in others. Her sister Pin is no longer her unthinking admirer: she has opinions of her own which conflict radically with Laura's and which prevent any appeal to her sympathy. Once again it is the question of truth which shows Laura the change in Pin's attitudes. Realising that "Home was, alas! no longer the snug nest in which she was safe from the slings and shanghais of the world", (p.206) Laura gives up her resolve to beg her mother to allow her to leave school. Still unprepared to face the implications of her past and present experiences, she retreats into unreality, spending

the rest of her holidays "narrating to herself how things would have fallen out had her fictions been fact." (p.207)

On her return Laura again tries to conform to her companions' rules and is eventually successful, as announced by Nietzsche's "Wie sollte Strom nicht endlich den Weg zum Meere finden!" in stilling the animosity of Mary Pidwall, thus gaining a place in the school Literary Society which is led by Mary and her friend Cupid, now Laura's room-mates. Before this has been achieved, however, Laura once more adopts fantasy and pretence as protection against the unpleasant situation she encounters on her return. From seeing herself as totally belonging, she now sees herself as totally outcast - "a rebel, wrapping herself round in the cloak of bitterness which the outcasts of fortune wear, feeding on her hate of those within the pale" (p.209) - though at the same time continuing her pretence of total compliance with majority opinion. For Laura's outlook on life still diverges from that of her companions; in the discussion about truth which closes this chapter she protests to Mary's assertion "The Bible is truth" that "whales don't have big enough throats ever to have swallowed Jonah" (p.216) and can accept that moral truth is of value not for its own sake but for its usefulness. Cupid's final advice to "keep your ideas to yourself: they're too crude for this elegant world" (p.217) sums up what Laura has learnt throughout her school career: to belong one must renounce naked truth in favour of a version garbed according to the conventional patterns of belief.

Laura's next advance in knowledge about the varieties of truth comes with her endeavours to write something for the Literary Society meetings: she learns that "the truth of fiction is the truth of a lie."[16] She has, however, earlier made contact with another form of reality when she decides to read Ibsen's The Doll's House because the title "seemed to promise good things." (p.220) Though soon disillusioned, she continues to read "with an interest she could not explain". (p.221) This experience leaves her confused but also, one assumes, with an increased awareness of the different ways of seeing, and hence writing about, life. Thus the inclusion of Laura's first encounter with a writer of the realist school in the chapter which describes her first efforts at literary production is significant for other reasons than the stated one: in reaction against Ibsen's realism Laura attempts "the most romantic of romantic themes", a novel in the style of Scott. This, reflecting her ever-present tendency to romantic fantasy, is a failure; so too is her second effort, a faithful account of "A Day at School". Endowed with the patience and determination of the true artist, Laura perseveres and finds success with her third attempt - an imaginary incident set in a locality with which she is familiar. As a result, she discovers "a new and odd piece of knowledge", though one which, as we have seen, has earlier been demonstrated in the reactions to her tale about

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[16] Henry Handel Richardson and some of her sources, p.20.

the curate:

> In your speech, your talk with others, you must be exact to the point of pedantry, and never romance or draw the long-bow; or you would be branded as an abominable liar. Whereas, as soon as you put pen to paper, provided you kept one foot planted on probability, you might lie as hard as you liked: indeed, the more vigorously you lied, the louder would be your hearers' applause. (p.227)

Since a detailed analysis of this discovery and its implications is provided in Henry Handel Richardson and some of her sources nothing further need be said here beyond a reminder that, for the purposes of her study, Leonie Gibson has concentrated on this aspect of Laura's "enlightenment".[17] In the total context of the novel this is but one, although an important one, of the encounters with truth which prepare Laura for her future career.

In the remaining section of the novel Laura gains experience in two important aspects of life - love and religion. The love which Laura feels for the beautiful, good-natured Evelyn is very different from her fantasy love for the curate. Richardson, in keeping with the light tone of the book, emphasises the ridiculous and extravagant side of Laura's attachment: Nietzsche's words "Und vergesst mir auch das gute Lachen nicht!" reflect her treatment of Laura's love as well as the personality of Evelyn. But there is some intimation of the unpleasant side of love in Laura's jealous reaction to Evelyn's flirtation at the theatre and this aspect becomes more prominent in the following chapter, which has as its heading "Gut und Böse und Lust und Leid und Ich und Du". Here Laura learns, as Louise Dufrayer never does, that it is a distortion of the truth to expect one's

17 Op.cit., p.18.

life to be perfectly happy. Evelyn, on whom her happiness depends, also causes Laura profound misery: she is jealous of Evelyn's friendships with others, especially men, and knows that they must soon be parted, as this is Evelyn's last term at school. Laura's jealous cross-examination of Evelyn after she has been out for the evening recalls Maurice Guest's bitter scenes with Louise:

> Laura demanded to know where she had been, what she had done, whom she had spoken to; and woe to her if she tried to shirk a question. Laura was not only jealous, she was extraordinarily suspicious; and the elder girl had need of all her laughing kindness to steer her way through the shallows of distrust. (p.245)

In a further echo of Maurice Guest, Laura's love disrupts her school work and she seems headed for failure in the university examination which is to be the culmination of her school career. Like Maurice, Laura also fights hard against accepting "the lesson that there are events in life - bitter, grim, and grotesque events - beneath which one can only bow one's head." (p.249) Her propensity to fantasy reasserts itself when she pictures Evelyn's future in terms of her own desires

> She was of course reconciled, she sobbed, to Evelyn marrying some day: only plain and stupid girls were left to be old maids: but it must not happen for years and years and years to come, and when it did, it must be to some one much older than herself, some one she did not greatly care for: in short, Evelyn was to marry only to escape the odium of the single life. (p.246)

while in her unreasonable pleading for Evelyn to remain at school Laura tries to ignore the further lesson that "to live means to change":

> A further effect of the approaching separation was to bring home to her a sense of the fleetingness of things; she

began to grasp that, everywhere and always, even while you revelled in them, things were perpetually rushing to a close; and the fact of them being things you loved, or enjoyed, was powerless to diminish the speed at which they escaped you. (p.249)

That this "bowing of the head" does not mean defeat is shown by the Nietzschean heading to the next chapter: "Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker". For Richardson this would probably imply that by recognising and accepting the truth about life one gains the strength to endure the change and pain that are an unavoidable part of it. Maurice Guest, as we have seen, can never accept the realities of his world and so is unable to oppose the despair that ends in destruction for, as Laura has discovered, reality is continually waiting to destroy illusion. The burst of religious fervour by which, in her endeavour to find consolation for the loneliness of school life without Evelyn, Laura makes a final attempt to retreat from reality, reminds one of Richard Mahony's turning to spiritualism as a means of escape from his problems. As she had earlier begged God to prevent Mary Pidwall from going to the curate's, Laura now begs that he will help her to pass the examinations on which so much depends. The unreality of this view of religion as a "pact" - God will solve the problems of life in exchange for prayers and piety - is shown when the "help" turns out to be an opportunity for Laura to cheat in, and so pass, her History exam. This experience convinces Laura that God, like life, is not wholly pleasant, and cannot be relied on to conform to one's desires. Once again a view of life which tries to set aside reality ends in

disillusionment for Laura.

At the end of the novel Laura runs forward into life, leaving behind all the mistakes, miseries and joys of her school career, but taking with her, although she has not yet realised its significance, the wisdom she has accumulated from these experiences. With all her illusions about life destroyed, she has no idea of "where she really belonged or under what conditions she would be happy" (pp.268-9) and is unable to share Cupid's and Mary's clearly defined planning for the future; her only wishes are to "be with Evvy again and to travel - to see more of life." (p.270) But, as we are told in Richardson's momentary gaze into the crystal ball, Cupid and Mary are destined to succumb to the pressures of life, while Laura is eventually to discover the calling in which she will be able to dance, in the words of the final quotation from Nietzsche, not only beyond herself but beyond the cares of the everyday world:

> In Laura's case, no kindly Atropos snipped the thread of her aspirations: these, large, vague, extemporary, one and all achieved fulfilment; then withered off to make room for more. But this, the future still securely hid from her. She went out from school with the uncomfortable sense of being a square peg, which fitted into none of the round holes of her world; the wisdom she had got, the experience she was richer by, had, in the process of equipping her for life, merely seemed to disclose her unfitness. She could not then know that, even for the squarest peg, the right hole may ultimately be found; seeming unfitness prove to be only another aspect of a peculiar and special fitness. But, of the after years, and what they brought her, it is not the purport of this little book to tell. It is enough to say: many a day came and went before she grasped that, oftentimes, just those mortals who feel cramped and unsure in the conduct of everyday life, will find themselves to rights, with astounding ease, in that freer, more spacious world where no practical considerations hamper, and where the creatures that inhabit dance to their tune; the world

> where are stored up men's best thoughts, and hopes, and fancies; where the shadow is the substance, and the multitude of business pales before the dream. (pp.271-2)

This glimpse into the future, together with the Nietzschean quotation, give a value to Laura's "getting of wisdom" that would otherwise be lacking, since she is as yet unable to see the use of what she has experienced. Leonie Gibson's remark, in reference to Laura's "discovery of the _via media_ in writing", "it is fair to assume that she did not at the time see its implications"[18] can be extended to Laura's other discoveries about life, truth, love and religion. The understanding that must be wisdom's companion is not to come to her till later, but we are assured that it does come. By this device Richardson is able to close _The Getting of Wisdom_ on a confident note that was entirely lacking in her own feelings at the end of her school life: "Few young things can have felt as lost and bewildered as she. Her natural self-confidence crushed, not knowing what to be at, with nobody to guide her, and at constant war with her surroundings."[19] Since these unhappy sensations would have been at variance with the "merry" tone of the book, Richardson has suppressed them in favour of a glimpse into a successful future - comedies must always have happy endings.

In one way _The Getting of Wisdom_ can be regarded as the most successful of Henry Handel Richardson's novels,

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[18] _Henry Handel Richardson and some of her sources_, p.20.

[19] ~~"Some Notes", p.13.~~

[19] _Myself When Young_, p.73.

for she has in it a higher degree of control over her material than she has in her other books. "In its greater compactness of form and expression" it is free, as she says, "of the longueurs, the youthful desire to leave nothing unsaid that characterized Maurice Guest"[20] and, though she does not say so, of the equally-lengthening inclusiveness of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony. This, of course, is partly the result of the inherent limitations of her theme, limitations which prevent The Getting of Wisdom from achieving the depth and complexity which give these other two works their status. But, as I have tried to show, it is far from being a simple and artless school story. Its concerns, though they are presented in a slighter and lighter way, are those of her more important works: disillusionment; the conflict between the world as it is and as one would like it to be; the unpleasant realities that must be recognised if one is to achieve wisdom and success. Here "the agonies of youth" are made more palatable by their overlay of humour, a quality which is generally absent in Richardson's work. This, perhaps, explains why The Getting of Wisdom is the most immediately likable of Henry Handel Richardson's novels.

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[20] "Some Notes", p.13.

CHAPTER V

THE FORTUNES OF RICHARD MAHONY :

The Factual Framework

It is now well known that, as she wrote in Myself When Young, Henry Handel Richardson used some of the events of her father's life "as a sort of scaffolding for Richard Mahony's story." (p.17) When The Fortunes of Richard Mahony was first published, however, Richardson denied that it had a factual basis. Asked if her characters were "founded on real people", she replied "No, I should say they were all imaginary figures, even Mahony."[1] This reticence would seem to have resulted partly from Richardson's desire for personal privacy, partly from her determination to "insist that Maurice Guest and Mahony are works of fiction, not just essays in autobiography."[2] Even in Myself When Young she emphasises the slightness of her knowledge of her father: "Of the many dim shades from the past, his is one of the dimmest. I cannot remember what he looked like, or how he spoke or moved, or, in fact, anything at all about his outward appearance." (p.2) And in the original draft, called "Memories of my childhood", she wrote

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[1] In Louise Mander, "Henry Handel Richardson", Everyman (14 August 1930), p.69.

[2] Quoted by Nettie Palmer in Henry Handel Richardson: Some Personal Impressions (ed. Purdie and Roncoroni, 1957), p.48.

> The scaffolding only of course as it will by now be apparent how little I really knew of or remember him. . . . And when the scantiness of my knowledge of my father is considered, the verdict of the one who knew me best - that I had drawn Richard Mahony entirely from myself - may be accepted.[3]

In a reference to the same verdict in a letter to Mrs. Kernot there is a remark on her "Fitting this self portrait into the frame of Mahony's material existence."[4] Thus, when she wrote in the draft of Myself When Young "I was certainly not Cuffy, who I might add was drawn from quite another model" (p.33) Richardson was presumably thinking of this same distinction between the portrait and its frame. In this chapter I shall discuss the sources of the facts used in the construction of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, among which I include Richardson herself.

In "A Danish Poet" Richardson quotes Jacobsen's remark that Niels Lyhne "was to play in 'the generation that was as old as we are now, when we were born.'" (p.46) The same could be said of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony which opens on the Ballarat gold-diggings in 1854 and ends with Richard Mahony's death in 1880, and was begun in 1910 when Richardson was forty.[5] Richard Mahony, a doctor by profession, has come to Australia in the hope of redeeming the fortunes of his family; he soon discovers that he is physically unsuited to the hard labour of digging, but

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[3] Op.cit., p.33. (In the National Library)

[4] In a letter of 19 July 1938. (In Mrs. Kernot's notebook in the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325)

[5] "As soon as The Getting of Wisdom was off my hands I set to work, and by 1912 Australia Felix was finished in its first form." ("Some Notes", p.15)

manages to make a living as a store-keeper. After marrying, he resumes his medical work and builds up a considerable practice at Ballarat. But he finds the colonial environment uncongenial; he aspires to an intellectual and spiritual life which is not possible under these conditions and, at the end of the first volume, he goes to England in search of it. After two unsuccessful attempts to establish a practice there he returns to Australia to find that some mining investments have made him a wealthy man. Now, with the leisure and money to devote himself to the intellectual life, Mahony would seem to have found contentment. But his restlessness reasserts itself, he takes his family on a trip to Europe and, while there, learns that his agent has absconded with his fortune. The third volume traces his decline into insanity as, back in Australia once more, he moves from one corner of Victoria to another in an increasingly desperate attempt to earn a living. An attempt which ends with his incarceration in a lunatic asylum, prelude to his death and burial.

From this outline of the main events it can be seen that The Fortunes of Richard Mahony resembles Richardson's earlier work in certain aspects of its themes and characters: once more she is dealing with a dreamer, a misfit who is at odds with the society in which he lives. But the trilogy differs from Maurice Guest and The Getting of Wisdom in being a historical novel, set in a time and place of which Richardson had little personal knowledge. So, when writing it, she had to undertake a detailed study of the records of

the period in order to obtain an accurate background for her characters:

> Except for a vague memory, the only material I had to draw on was about a dozen old family letters. Thanks, however, to my husband, who was an accomplished book collector, I soon had all the data I needed: histories, volumes of travel, pictures, maps. Over these I pored, and I think to some purpose, for when I went to Australia, to try out my detail in point of landscape and locality, I found nothing to alter. Nor did any of those who afterwards put my knowledge to the test. ("Some Notes", p.14)

The results of Richardson's "poring" may be seen in four volumes - three of notes from historical works, one an index to the others - now in the National Library. For her pioneering work in this field we are indebted to Leonie Kramer (nee Gibson) who in Henry Handel Richardson and some of her sources demonstrated just how closely Richardson incorporated these notes in the text of her novel. In this study, and in her later work A Companion to Australia Felix, Leonie Kramer concentrates on Richardson's use of historical material in the descriptive passages of the trilogy. After showing how much of the description of the gold-fields in the Proem to Australia Felix is taken from the books Richardson consulted she writes

> What has been said about the derivative nature of this opening description is true of all the descriptive passages in the novel. . . . The careful indexing of the notebooks and the presentation of facts in the novel is an indication of the way in which Richardson worked. It is clear that at some stage of her writing -precisely when it is difficult to say - she consulted the index to the notebooks for the relevant entries and sorted them out and shuffled them about until she got what she wanted. But in all cases a certain amount of direct transcription -or unacknowledged quotation, according to one's point of view - is involved.[6]

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[6] H.H. Richardson and some of her sources (1954), p.25.

Examples of Richardson's use of "unacknowledged quotation" in the Proem can be multiplied : the phrase "a desert of pale clay" (p.10) comes from a description, which also employs the full-shot to close-up method of the Proem, in William Howitt's Land, Labour and Gold: Or Two Years in Victoria.[7] A further passage from this book where Howitt, after mentioning the coldness of the water in the diggers' holes, writes: "It is as black as ink, and has a stench as of a tan-yard, partly from the bark with which they line the sides of their holes",[8] can easily be recognised as the origin of "Not the strongest man could stand in this ice-cold water for more than three days on end - the bark slabs stank in it, too, like the skins in a tanner's yard". (p.8) But Richardson does not always take over her descriptions as literally as this, as another comparison between a passage from the trilogy and a passage from Howitt will show. Howitt describes the noise made by the "bull-frogs" as being

> exactly like that which the wheels of the Blackwall railway used to make, or which the steam engines make when they stand and are allowed to give free vent to their steam, - a loud sort of boiling sound which never ceased.[9]

As the Mahonys are driving back to Ballarat after their wedding, the homesick Polly hears a "well-known noise":

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[7] Op.cit. (1855), I, p.167, in Notebook I, p.33. Leonie Kramer gives the 1858 edition as Richardson's source, but as the few page-numbers in the notebooks are those of the 1855 edition all my references will be to it.

[8] Ibid., I, p.171, paraphrased in Notebook I, p.33.

[9] Ibid., I, p.32, in Notebook I, p.28.

"that of hundreds of bell-frogs, which were like hundreds of hissing tea-kettles just about to boil". (p.80) Here Richardson has derived the facts of her description from Howitt but replaced his simile with one more appropriate to Mary's limited experience, domestic outlook on life, and present homesickness. This is one example of the care Richardson took in adopting her characters' attitudes, in describing what they see in the terms they would be likely to use.

In "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson" Professor Robertson comments on the "rigorous and self-suppressing objectivity" by means of which she "made herself one with her people and their time; she writes of them with a Victorian mind and a Victorian sentiment." (p.206) That Richardson believed this "self-suppressing" transference to be the sign of a good historical novel may be gathered from her praise of Jacobsen's Marie Grubbe:

> In the matter of style, Fru Marie Grubbe is an acknowledged masterpiece. Jacobsen has caught the tone and reflected the spirit of the age in which he wrote, in a way which, in itself, is enough to set the book in the very front rank. No labour was too arduous for him, no ideal too high, and the result is an almost unequalled revival of the speech of a bygone day. But what makes Marie Grubbe unique as a historical novel is the vivid pictures it gives of the Danes and the Denmark of two and a half centuries ago. . . . the men and women who cross the stage are the true children of their time; they are not modern figures clad in the garb, and merely speaking the phrases of a bygone day; they live the life of the seventeenth century, and respond involuntarily to its sympathies and ideas. It is qualities such as these that make Fru Marie Grubbe the finest historical novel in the Danish tongue.[10]

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[10] "A Danish Poet", pp.43-4.

Here, I shall not attempt to discuss the merits and defects of Richardson's decision to write about Victorians as a Victorian, but merely point out that her heavy reliance on historical sources may be explained by this desire to be accurate to people as well as place. She wrote to Nettie Palmer

> Except in two places in the Trilogy I speak entirely for the generation of whom the works are written. One of these is the Proem to Australia Felix; the second the few sentences about the Bush and its colouring that occur in the first chapter of Ult. Thule. All the old settlers term the landscape colourless, the Bush silent. And for the time being their standpoint had to be mine.[11]

The complaint that "the whole environment is seen in the arid monotony of dun which oppresses one so much in the first two books that the blackness of Ultima Thule comes almost as a relief"[12] might have been taken by Richardson as a compliment to her power at recreating the effect the Australian landscape had on the early colonists. William Howitt, for example, refers to the gum-trees' "dusky hue, which creates a monotony" (I, p.14); and Ellen Clancy to the "want of freshness about the foliage, which always looks of a dirty, dingy green."[13] It is, perhaps, not surprising that Richardson's impressions on her 1912 visit should have been coloured by all the accounts she read before arriving. At one point in her diary she records "Gum foliage not so monotonous after all: tipped with red."[14] In any case, as

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[11] Letter of 30 November 1930, quoted by Palmer in Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.194.

[12] T. Inglis Moore, The Misfortunes of Henry Handel Richardson (C.U.C., 1957), p.13.

[13] A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-3 (1963), p.132.

[14] 1912 Diary, p.16. (In the National Library)

she says in the passage from "Some Notes" quoted earlier, this visit was made to verify her sources rather than to gather new impressions. The background to Mahony's story is subordinated to his characterisation as a mid-Victorian man, it is part of the frame rather than the portrait.

Part of "the frame of Mahony's material existence", too, are many other characteristics besides his dislike of the Australian scenery which may make Mahony unsympathetic to modern, and especially modern Australian, readers. These Richardson has also taken over fairly literally from her sources. William Howitt is as resentful as Mahony of the democratic familiarity and "uppishness" of the "new Hairystocracy": "The blunt rude independent manner of the common people. They find themselves in the majority. More money than at home, have horses, guns and dogs."[15] He, too, dislikes the pervading "slovenly colonial air" (I, p.261), and the lack of concern for anything but making money: "But the one great principle is the Dutchman's maxim:- 'Get honestly if you can; but at all events get!'" (I, p.37) Howitt's comments also show that Mahony's dislike of the crass materialism of colonial society is not as idiosyncratic as may appear:

> I may prefer the old country, and so may any one who looks for the picturesque and the beautiful in scenery, and for a high state of intellectual culture and taste, as the chief ingredients of the pleasure of existence. (I, p.284)

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[15] Richardson's notes on Howitt, op.cit, I, p.338, p.53 in the notebooks where they are underlined.

Richardson made a note of a similar view held by William Westgarth:

> The hustle and the bustle of colonial life are to many but a poor substitute for the social refinements and literary attractions of European countries and the hourly association with the great events and destinies of the old world. (cf. Mahony) The colony is the land of the many.[16]

Thus we see that in many respects Mahony is typical of the cultured, intelligent men and women who visited Australia at the time of the gold rush and found a society, completely different from the one they had known in England, in which the old rules and traditions were openly flouted since "money is the idol, and making it is the one mania which absorbs every other thought."[17] Howitt writes "it is a rarity here to meet with any one whose mind wanders a jot beyond gold or gain in some form" and speaks of a Swede he met who "declared that this country was an intellectual desert; that he was famishing for spiritual aliment, and for discourse on matters beyond mere nuggets, prospectings, and the price of gold." (II, p.78) This, not only in sentiment but in style, is very reminiscent of some of Mahony's utterances.

Several of Richard Mahony's opinions on colonial affairs are also derived from Richardson's readings. At his first meeting with John Turnham, Mahony criticises the "rose-water romance of the English press" which had enticed "many a young man of my day . . . away from a modest competency,

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[16] Notebook III, p.306, from Victoria and the Australian Gold Mines in 1852 (1857), p.266.

[17] Ellen Clancy, A Lady's Visit, p.22.

to seek his fortune here, where it was pretended that nuggets could be gathered like cabbages" (p.70), a criticism which is found in most of the books Richardson read. She made the following notes from Howitt:

Feeling very high about the inflated accounts that drew people to the colony. People declare that the only object has been to induce a large immigration. Drawbacks and difficulties kept out of sight.
The case of Dr. Godwin p.184. "Full of plans for the diggings, of the gold so plentiful and easy to procure; and now, already, he was sleeping on a hill in the Bush, one of a consid. company who had this early broken this virgin soil of the wilderness, with their vital remains.
(Notebook I, p.36.)

Mahony's opinion on the "land question", a matter of importance at this time, given in his discussion with Beamish who as an old shepherd takes the squatters' side, is derived from that expressed by Howitt in Volume II of his book - he, like Mahony, makes light of the squatters' arguments. And while, as Leonie Kramer says, "many of the details of the meetings on Bakery Hill in Chapter 2" are taken from William Kelly's Life in Victoria,[18] Mahony's attitude to the meeting and the contents of the speech he gives come mainly from Howitt's description of a diggers' meeting he attended at Bendigo in 1853. Then, after "a grand onslaught" had been made on the British flag by a republican who claimed that "Wherever any people had risen against their tyrants, that flag had waved in the van of the Englishmen who had gone to put the people down again", a Mr. George Thompson, one of the delegates, immediately rose and gave three cheers for the British flag, as the

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[18] A Companion to Australia Felix (1962), p.16.

ensign which had led the way to the pre-eminence of England all over the world, and to the liberty they were that day enjoying. To this there was a thundering response, in which I joined with all my might. (I, p.408)

Unfortunately, Mahony's similar action under similar provocation does not meet with a similar response:

"Mr. Chairman! Gentlemen!" he cried in a loud voice. "I call upon those loyal subjects of her Majesty who are present here, to join with me in giving three cheers for the British flag. Hip, hip, hurrah! And, again, hip, hip, hurrah! And, once more, hip, hip, hurrah!"

His compatriots followed him, though flabbily; and he continued to make himself heard above the shouts of "Order!" and the bimming of the chairman's bell.

"Mr. Chairman! I appeal to you. Are we Britons to sit still and hear our country's flag reviled? - that flag which has ensured us the very liberty we are enjoying this evening. The gentleman who has been pleased to slander it is not, I believe, a British citizen. Now, I put it to him: is there another country on the face of this earth, that would allow people of all nations to flock into a gold-bearing colony on terms of perfect equality with its own subjects? - to flock in, take all they can get, and then make off with it?" a point of view that elicited forcible grunts of assent, which held their own against hoots and hisses. Unfortunately the speaker did not stop here, but went on : "Gentlemen! Do not, I implore you, allow yourselves to be led astray by a handful of ungrateful foreigners, who have received nothing but benefits from our Crown. What you need, gentlemen, is not revolution, but reform; not strife and bloodshed, but a liberty consistent with law and order. And this, gentlemen, ---" (pp.22-3)

Richardson's debt to Howitt is evident when this passage is compared with the observations he made on the meeting he attended : he mentions the lack of gratitude shown by the foreigners in reviling "a system which here was, with open hand and heart, permitting all people of all nations to enter and gather its gold on terms of perfect equality with its own subjects" (p.408); asks "Would any other European government, if it had discovered gold in its colonies, have allowed all nations to come without restriction and gather it?" (p.409); and says of the more responsible of the

diggers "They wanted necessary reform not revolution. They had no thirst for blood, but rather peace and national liberty". (p.410)

Although Richardson, in the paragraph quoted earlier, says that her knowledge of her father was confined to "about a dozen old family letters", her remark in Myself When Young about "the help of old letters and diaries" (p.24) and her earlier reference in the same work to "an old letter of my father's, written to my mother before marriage" (p.14) leave the impression that her sources of family material were somewhat wider than is implied in "Some Notes on My Books". Leonie Kramer has thought it possible that passages from these letters and diaries "have been imported into the text fairly literally"[19] and it is also possible that these attitudes of Mahony's which seem to be derived from Richardson's historical sources may have been influenced by those of his model, Dr. Richardson. For in other respects Richard Mahony's story is very like Dr. Richardson's, though it seems an exaggeration to accuse Richardson of "following dog-like every minute twist of the trail once trod by her father".[20] Where necessary she departs from the facts of her father's life - there is no evidence that Dr. Richardson returned to England to practise, but Mahony does since Richardson wishes to show that his failure is the result of his character, rather than his environment -

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[19] H.H.Richardson and some of her sources, p.36.

[20] T. Inglis Moore, The Misfortunes of H.H. Richardson, p.8.

she keeps to them if they fit in with the plan of her work. Inglis Moore says that Richardson limits our sympathy for Mahony by her "emphasis on the physical rather than ~~than~~ the spiritual elements in Richardson's dissolution and decline into the general paralysis of the insane from which her father suffered."[21] But, as I shall attempt to show in the next chapter, Mahony's hopes and fears have been presented in such a way that this physical illness is the most terrible and tragic thing that could happen to him. It is not tragic in itself, but as the objective realisation of the paralysis and decay he has always tried to escape. For this reason it is as erroneous to see Ultima Thule as the only significant part of the trilogy as it would be to ignore everything in Shakespeare's tragedies before Act V. In Ultima Thule Richard Mahony and Walter Richardson most nearly become one: Richardson's sources are no longer historical records but her own memories and the reminiscences of people who had known her father and these are incorporated in the text as literally as the historical material in the earlier volumes. But because these earlier volumes have prepared the way, the result is not biography, but fiction. Richard's fear of illness and death, his fear of any restriction of his freedom, make his illness, his paralysis, seem part of an artistic pattern and not something that happens just because it happened to Richardson's father.

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[21] Ibid., p.19.

The details of Dr. Richardson's life have, to borrow Leonie Kramer's comment on the historical facts in the Proem to Australia Felix, "been subjected to the pattern that Richardson has discovered for them".[22]

For most of these details one must rely on Richardson's account of her father's life in Myself When Young. Here we learn that Walter Lindesay Richardson, like Richard Townshend Mahony, was born in Dublin, came from a family with a proud past but an impecunious present, and took his M.D. at Edinburgh. Then

> After one or two attempts at settling down to a dull country practice, he was bitten by the prevailing unrest, and emigrated to Australia in the hope of digging up a fortune. The usual disappointments following, he turned back to medicine, prospered, and in his early forties was able to retire from practice as a fairly well-to-do man. (pp.1-2)

He married Mary Bailey, who had come to Australia at the age of fourteen, but this marriage was childless until Henry Handel was born "some fifteen years after marriage, when my father was about forty-four, my mother thirty-three." (p.5) Thus the Richardsons must have been married in 1855,[23] when Walter was twenty-nine and Mary eighteen. In 1873 the family went to Europe and while there her father "had disturbing news of his money-affairs, and at once set out for Australia by the Overland Route." (p.10) On his return he built a house at "an outlying district of Melbourne called Hawthorn" but

Inside twelve months I should say, reckoned by my birthdays,

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[22] H.H. Richardson and some of her sources, p.25.

[23] Confirmed by the date given on Richardson's birth certificate. (Copy in the Mitchell Library)

my father saw that his attempt at a practice in Hawthorn was a failure; and, deeply mortified - for to him failure spelt disgrace - he turned his back on Melbourne, and buried himself up-country. (p.17)

"Up-country" was "Chiltern, a tiny township to the north of Victoria"; afterwards the Richardsons moved to Queenscliffe where

Too frail to carry out the duties of Health Officer, with which he had hoped to supplement his scanty income, my father shrank into himself, and grew more and more peculiar. Patients began to look elsewhere for a doctor. Finally, after a severe illness, he was declared mentally unsound and removed to Melbourne. We saw him again only for a few months at the end of his life - a gentle, broken creature, who might have been a stranger. (pp.23-4)

In the National Library there is a copy of his medical record at the Yarra Bend Asylum which states that "Walter Lindsay Richardson M.D." was admitted on "18/11/1878" with "Gen. Paralysis (incipient)", was allowed "Out on leave for three months" from 24 February 1879, and "Died while out on leave".

Richard Mahony, too, "was bitten by the prevailing unrest": he went to Australia with "the fantastic notion of redeeming the fortunes of his family." (p.76) But there is no record of Walter Richardson ever being a store-keeper; nor does he seem to have given up his practice at Ballarat in the late 1860s and attempted to recommence practice in England, though Richardson does say that at the time of her birth her parents had "not long returned from one of their several journeys to England". (p.5) When the dates derived from Myself When Young are compared with those in The Fortunes one finds that Richard Mahony is a year younger,

gets married a year earlier and dies a year later than Dr. Richardson, and that Cuffy is born a year later than Richardson. Leonie Kramer has written "We might assume that Richardson advanced the date [of Mahony's marriage] by a year in order to take in the Eureka Stockade."[24] A further possibility is that the two years by which Richard and Mary Mahony are younger than Walter and Mary Richardson at the time of their marriage correspond to the two years which they, and not the Richardsons, spend in England. Leonie Kramer, incidentally, seems to be mistaken in saying "In Chapter 11 Mahony is 45, and if we assume that he was about 29-30 at the time the book opens then the year is now 1869-1870".[25] The passage on which she apparently bases this

> "I'm not a young man any longer, wife. When one's past forty..."
> "Poor mother used to say forty-five was a man's prime of life."
> "Not for me. And not here - in this God-forsaken hole!" (p.321)

does not give a definite statement of Mahony's age, and <u>Ultima Thule</u> begins

> When, for the third time, Richard Mahony set foot in Australia, it was to find that the fortune with which that country but some six years back had so airily invested him no longer existed. He was a ruined man; and at the age of forty-nine, with a wife and children dependent on him, must needs start life over again. (p.585)

Since Mahony must have been forty-three at the time of his previous return to Australia (which would correspond to Dr.

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[24] <u>A Companion to Australia Felix</u>, p.19.

[25] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.19.

Richardson's retirement in "his early forties") he cannot have been much more than forty at the time of the earlier passage. Moreover, on his first appearance in Australia Felix Mahony is described as "a tall, slenderly built man of some seven or eight and twenty." (p.17) As the story opens in 1854, the other dates are approximately as follows: Mahony goes to England in 1868, when he is forty-one; returns to Australia in 1870; and Cuffy is born in 1871, when he is forty-four and Mary is thirty-three. He returns again in 1876, when he is forty-nine; after a year at Hawthorn he goes to Barambogie and dies three years later, in 1880, when he is fifty-three. Dr. Richardson died at the same age, and Richardson's description of him in Myself When Young shows that he was also the model for Mahony's physical appearance and major interests:

> I am told he was tall and slight, fair-haired and blue-eyed. He is also said to have sung well; and the remains of his flute for long knocked about the house. That he was a great reader - "always buying books" as my mother put it - the library he left proved; and a Bible of his which I possess points to his having been keenly interested in the Biblical criticism of his time. It is plastered in his fine handwriting with crisp comments and citations. (pp.2-3)

That Dr. Richardson also shared Mahony's interest in spiritualism may be seen from the entry of his religion as "Spiritualist" on the medical record referred to previously, and from the books Richardson mentions as his: "Ecce Homo; Where are the Dead, or Spiritualism Explained; and The Unity, Duality or Trinity of the Godhead?" (p.50)

In the 1912 Diary, in which "he" refers to her father and Mahony indiscriminately, Richardson recorded several

reminiscences of her father which she later incorporated in the trilogy. In the section "At Queenscliffe" she wrote "My remembrances of him in order: pale, with the red and white comforter, fetched from blacksmith. Taking us children for a walk. Sitting in the cargo boat." (p.17) Later, under the heading "FROM the SMARTS", she noted some recollections of Dr. Richardson which include "He would put his head down on her breast and weep and say: 'Mary, what is it? What is the matter with me? Why am I like this?'"[26] and "'The handsomest man I ever saw.'" (p.19) In Myself When Young this is given as "'The most distinguished-looking man in any room he entered'" (p.2) which is very like the description in The Fortunes of Mahony at the time of his prosperity: "Certain it was, no matter in what circle she moved, whose dinnertable he sat at, whose hearthrug he stood on, he was by far the most distinguished-looking man in the room." (p.453) This seems to be an example of Richardson's inability to "disintegrate fact from fiction"[27]- one wonders how often such confusions occur in Myself When Young. Still, it is probably factual enough to allow of the conclusion that a large part of the "frame of Mahony's spiritual existence" was constructed from the facts of Dr. Richardson's life.

As might be expected, Mary Mahony is an even more exact portrayal of Richardson's mother, Mary, than Richard

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[26] Cf. The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, p.756.

[27] Manuscript of Myself When Young, p.33. On p.2 of this manuscript the sentence reads "The handsomest man in any room he entered." The alteration was made in the typescript.

Mahony is of her father. Again, Myself When Young provides most of the evidence for this. Mrs. Richardson is there said to have "had no intellectual interests. . . . Her talents were purely practical; and there was little she could not do with her large, capable hands." (p.4) Mahony feels that Mary's "firm, capable hands looked out of place on a piano" (p.249); and his criticism of her lack of musical ability and appreciation - "'you haven't a note of music in you'" (p.659) - is echoed in Myself When Young:

> Whether or no my father was musical I cannot say. But we were given to believe that his mother had at one time been well-known in Dublin as an amateur singer . . . So I suppose the gift came from her side of the family. Certainly not from my mother's, none of whom had a spark of music in him, and she being no different from the rest. To her, music stood for little more than a noise, at times quite an agreeable one, but still a noise; and at best a showy performance. Her ear was faulty in the extreme; and as a young child I have slunk from the room when she sang, so great was the pain (and shame) of listening to her. (pp.14-5)

Mrs. Richardson was "supposed not to care for animals" (p.41), another of the differences between Richard and Mary Mahony, and had as little belief as Mary in intangibles and the spiritual world: "In her daily life a model for many a professing Christian, she acted solely by her own lights, and believed only in what she could see and hear for herself." (p.53) That Mrs. Richardson resembled Mary Mahony in her sociable and hospitable disposition may be gathered not only from Myself When Young (pp.39-40) but from Matilda C. Wasburn Freund's account of the dances the Richardsons gave at Leipzig.[28] Mrs. Freund's comment on the Richardsons'

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[28] In Some Personal Impressions, p.5

decision to set up house in Leipzig shows that Mrs. Richardson was also the model for Mary Mahony's need to "have something to do": "Mrs. Richardson . . . was a splendid manager and, I think privately, was aching to spend her superfluous energy in looking after something." (p.2) The Mahonys' frequent quarrels over money and economising seem to have been derived from the ones between Dr. Richardson and his wife described in Myself When Young:

> The other source of discomfort was the long and acrimonious debates that went on between my father and mother. In the smaller house they had at least kept their voices down. Now they weren't so careful; and you couldn't help hearing what they said.
>
> It was money, always money, they talked about, and on how to economise that they differed. My mother persisted that we needed a daily governess besides our nurse. . . . My father for his part continued to haunt bookshops and booksales - "pouring good money down the drain" contended my mother - and was not to be broken of the habit. (p.16)

The source of Mary's idea that "the children always come first" (p.684) can be seen in this passage which tells of the continuation of these quarrels at Chiltern, the "Barambogie" of the trilogy:

> My mother did her best to shield "the chicks" from any knowledge of the facts. Let the children at least be happy, was and remained her life-long maxim. But the walls were thin, the doors mostly ajar; and nerves frayed by heat and anxiety often escaped control. - It was a relief when my father went away. (p.20)

Cuffy Mahony, the third of the major characters in the trilogy, feels a similar relief when his father leaves Barambogie. Richardson's denial that she was Cuffy is puzzling since it seems obvious when one compares Myself When Young with the trilogy that Cuffy's reactions to the events preceding and succeeding his father's illness are

based on her own. Even though his appearance and behavior may have been modelled on a young boy she knew - the most likely candidate would be her sister's son, Walter Lindesay Neustatter, who came to live with Richardson in 1912 when he was nine[29] - Cuffy's thoughts and feelings, and his musical ability,[30] must have come from herself. An interesting comment on this is made by Andrew Gyde in Some Personal Impressions:

> The tears I have shed for Mahony's little son! How could she, who was childless, know the mind of a child thus? At first I suspected that her nephew supplied the realism. But now I know that she was the boy, hers the grief that filled her heart to bursting. From her own memories of her own father's death she described the mind and feelings of Cuffy. Indeed, so much is made clear in the autobiographical and posthumous Myself When Young. (p.36)

Richardson also includes certain details in her portrayal of Cuffy which she could not be expected to remember. In The Fortunes Cuffy's birth is described as follows:

> But when December, with its livid heat, had slipped into the greater heats of January and her time came, she gave birth as hardly as on that first occasion years ago; all but paying with her own for the new life she was bringing into the world. . . . In the end Mary's sound constitution triumphed, and she was gradually won back to life; but over a week passed before she even asked to see her child. . Tilly it was who, going to the crib, carried to her on a pillow one of the tiniest babies ever seen: a waxen doll, with black hair an inch long, and the large black eyes of Mary's own family. (pp.495-6)

Richardson too was born in January; as she writes in Myself When Young

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[29] See his chapter in Some Personal Impressions, p.28.

[30] Neustatter writes of Richardson "She was extremely musical and I am just about the reverse.", ibid., p.31.

It was a difficult birth, and both my mother and I nearly died of it, she remaining so ill that she did not see me till I was over a fortnight old. I weighed three pounds, and, too small to be dressed, lay on a pillow wrapped in wadding. (p.5)

Both Cuffy and Richardson are said to be contented infants "who seldom cried"[31]; both afterwards show signs of jealousy for their fifteen months younger sisters.[32] For Cuffy has the "passionate temper" which Richardson inherited from her mother and, in consequence, Mary finds it as hard to "master" him as Mrs. Richardson to "master" her daughter:

I never saw her really angry with anyone but me. I must have been a trying child; but the root of the trouble, both then and afterwards, lay I think in the two of us being so alike and yet so different. So bafflingly different. For the blood of another race ran in my veins; I was half-Irish - perhaps even more than half as I recognised when I eventually met my father's people - and for this side of me, with its waywardness and inconsistencies, she, the sturdy Saxon, made no allowance. - On the other hand, when she tried to master me she came up against something of her own strength of will and determination. I refused to conform to her ideas of what I ought to do and to be; and the older I grew the more vigorously I fought against them. Our differences, our conflicts were endless, and went on until I left home for good.[33]

So, even allowing for Richardson's tendency to describe her past in the terms used in the trilogy, there seems abundant evidence in Myself When Young - and there are many other resemblances which I have not listed - of her identity with Cuffy.

A number of the minor characters in The Fortunes are also taken from the Richardsons' relatives and friends.

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[31] Myself When Young, p.6. Cf. The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, p.498.

[32] Cf. ibid., p.8 and ibid., pp.498-501.

[33] Ibid., pp.47-8. Cf. ibid., pp.502-3.

Cuffy's sister Lucie is, in appearance and character, obviously modelled on Richardson's sister Lil. In Myself When Young Richardson says of Lil after their father's collapse

> Lil . . . lived in a constant twitter of nervous anxiety. Our one mainstay having broken down, might not the other, too, fail us? Or, in her own words, when Mother went out would she ever come back? And this fear ate so deep and proved so lasting that it lay like a blight over her whole childhood. From now on she was only to feel safe and happy by mother's side. (p.26)

Here is her description of Lucie at the same period:

> His little sister, on the other hand, carried with her, as the sole legacy of her few years, only a wild fear lest, one sure prop having given way, the other should now also fail her. Except at her mother's side, little Lucie knew no rest. She had, as it were, eternally to stand guard over the parent who was left. And to her baby mind the one good thing about this poor, ugly place was that Mamma never went out. (p.797)

Again there is a close similarity in expression between the passages from these two books. In Myself When Young we are also told that of Mrs. Richardson's family "Four made their homes in Australia" (p.3) These four appear in The Fortunes as John, Ned, Sarah and Jery Turnham. John Turnham's election to parliament as a member for Ballarat West is based on John Turnham's election, in a similar capacity, in August 1859. There are some notes on Bailey's speeches and the details of his election in the 1912 Diary, of which these are a sample:

> August 13th, 1859.
> There were advts. in the Star signed by influential people asking John to let himself be nominated for election to District of Ballarat W.
> John replies in print. . . .
> August 17th Mr. J.R. Bailey addresses the electors of Ballarat W. in the Council Chambers, Sturt Street. . . .

After meeting some one moved that Mr. Bailey is not a fit and proper person to represent the constituency. (pp.12-14)

This last sentence appears in the account of John Turnham's election in The Fortunes: "In the braying and hurrahing that followed -the din was heightened by some worthy mounting a barrel to move that 'this yere Johnny Turnham' was not a fit person to represent 'the constitooency'". (p.226) In the first edition of Australia Felix Mahony congratulated his brother-in-law on the sudden tacking of the Star newspaper, with regard to its election policy. If John knew how this had come about, he did not say so; but the hostile attitude of the leading local journal - only the day before, it was abusing him as "an unprincipled scoundrel" - had been the chief obstacle in his path, and he was frankly gratified by its change of face.[34]

The proprietors of the Star objected to this libellous reference and it was omitted in "the 'second impression' issued in November 1917 and succeeding editions"[35] - so much for realism! Richardson also obtained some of the information used in her portrayal of John from more general historical sources. In her notebooks there is the following extract from Howitt's Land, Labour and Gold:

Trade is the thing at present; everybody said to be making a fortune in trade and the lawyers doing wonders. As mere conveyancers the sale and transfer of town allotments is a splendid digging for them. The gov. sells its acres; the purchasers divide them up, each requires a legal conveyance. A digger may clear his £100 a year, a lawyer his £5-10000.[36]

On the opposite page Richardson wrote "Trade the fashion - John. Lawyers growing rich, Henry." "Henry" is Henry Ocock;

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[34] Op.cit (1917), p.263. Cf. The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, p.221.

[35] Morris Miller, "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: A bibliographical note", Meanjin VII (1948), p.187.

[36] Notebook I, p.43, from Howitt, op.cit., I, p.280.

a detailed account of the other facts Richardson used in her portrayal of him has been provided by Nettie Palmer.[37]

The sources of some of the even more minor characters can be discerned from evidence in the notebooks and Myself When Young. Devine, the digger turned market-gardener who makes a fortune in mining investments, enters parliament and eventually becomes Prime Minister, is based on Sir Thomas Bent, the "cabbage grower" who became Prime Minister of Victoria.[38] The notebooks also contain this passage from John Davies Mereweather's Diary of a Working Clergyman - "A shepherd made £107 at Mt. Alexander in 9 days" - which is underlined and commented on : "Idea for old Beamish: made money at Tarrangower (?) bought his hotel." (p.24) When writing Australia Felix, however, Richardson kept strictly to her source; there we are told that Beamish made his money at "Mount Alexander". (p.51) The drunken station-owner, Glendinning, seems to have got his name from "A Dr. Glendinning" mentioned in the Star in August 1860,[39] and his character from "The owner of Gibson's station [who] used to drink 3 bottles of brandy by day and one by night."[40] Archdeacon, afterwards Bishop, Long has many characteristics, particularly his horsemanship, in common with Richardson's childhood sweetheart Jack Stretch, the Maldon vicar who

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[37] See H.H.Richardson, A Study, pp.161-2.
[38] Notebook III, p.338.
[39] 1912 Diary, p.23.
[40] Notebook I, p.64, from Howitt, op.cit., II, p.37.

later also became a Bishop.[41] (The alteration in the surname is reminiscent of Richardson's transformation of a Mrs. Boyes into a Mrs. Gurley in The Getting of Wisdom.)[42] From these examples it can be seen how closely Richardson based her characters on actual persons, even to the extent of retaining their names - Mrs. Richardson's sisters, Sarah and Elizabeth,[43] appear in the trilogy as Sarah and Lisby Turnham - and including details about them - such as Long's passion for horses - which are irrelevant to their role in the novel.

Richardson's passion for accuracy may also be seen in her use of medical and other reference books to authenticate her portrayal of Mahony as a doctor and a nineteenth-century intellectual and her depiction of the effects of his growing insanity. In the first section of the 1912 Diary, called "On the Voyage", she made the following notes in relation to Mahony's career as a doctor:

"Mid." "I'm going to chuck mid."
Placenta previa, one of the hardest events to deal with. Child lost. 40-50 cases of mid. in year too much. Midwifery takes years off one's life. Chiefly nightwork. "Primas?" Puts up the price to 10 guineas. (p.I)

After he has built up a successful practice at Ballarat, one of the sources of Mahony's discontent is the number of confinements he is asked to handle:

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[41] Cf. Myself When Young, pp.55-7 and The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, pp.189-90.

[42] See Nettie Palmer, A Study, p.155.

[43] Myself When Young, p.5.

As time went on, he found himself pushed more and more into a single branch of medicine - one, too, he had never meant to let grow over his head in this fashion. For it was common medical knowledge out here that, given the distances and the general lack of conveniences, thirty to forty maternity cases per year were as much as a practitioner could with comfort take in hand. His books for the past year stood at over a hundred! The nightwork this meant was unbearable, infants showing a perverse disinclination to enter the world except under the cover of the dark. . . . And though he would sometimes give Mary a fright by vowing that he was going to "throw up mid. and be done with it," yet her ambition - and what an ambitious wife she was, no one but himself knew - that he should someday become one of the leading specialists on Ballarat, seemed not unlikely of fulfilment. (pp.273-4)

On several loose pages labelled "Notes for Mahony"[44] Richardson recorded "Notes on Lister's Life"[45] and details of the dates of publication of some of the more influential scientific and theological works of the mid-Victorian era, such as: "1859 Origin of the species much read at this time and Huxley's book (?) and the Antiquity." She also made notes from Bern-Hollander's First Signs of Insanity, which she seems to have followed very closely in her portrayal of the last stages of Mahony's life:

"The Injustice and disgrace of Incarceration." . . .
The insane require association with healthy minds and "individual" treatment. . . .
Only certified patients can be admitted to licensed Institutions. . . .
Consciousness of derangement occurs only at the very beginning of insanity, and only in some patients, and just before recovery. . . .
At the approach of it the unfortunate sufferer is often conscious of a gradual loss of control over his thoughts, feelings and fears. Persistent introspection, a gloomy retrospection, excessive sensitiveness, marked egotism, a feeling of unsettledness, want of power of application.

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[44] In the National Library.

[45] There is a reference to Lister on p.386 of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony.

2 classes of insane. Those whose character has undergone a change and those whose natural characteristics have become accentuated and exaggerated beyond control. The prudent man launches out into wild speculations. Oversensitiveness passes into melancholia, suspicion into delusion, unstable temper into uncontrollable violence.

It would be a lengthy business to point out all the instances of Richardson's use of these facts in Ultima Thule; examples can easily be seen in such places as the scene where Mahony beats a horse with "uncontrollable violence" (p.715) Mahony would seem to belong to the second class of the insane: the list of traits beginning "Persistent introspection" are to some degree present in his character from the beginning.

Finally, there is the question of the extent to which Mahony is a, presumably unintentional, portrait of Richardson herself. Certain interests - in books, in music, in spiritualism[46] - are common to Mahony, Richardson and her father. Other characteristics - such as love of animals and of the sea - may also be common to all three, though there is only slight evidence that Dr. Richardson shared these loves. In any case, in her presentation of these aspects of Mahony's character, Richardson would seem to have drawn most of the details from herself. Richardson's comment on her father in Myself When Young "I saw him then as a well-meaning and upright man, but so morbidly thin-skinned that he could nowhere and at no time adapt himself to his

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[46] See Some Personal Impressions, pp.77-8 and 88-92, for an account of Richardson's interest in spiritualism.

surroundings" (p.24) could with almost equal justice be applied to herself. From Myself When Young we learn that Richardson considered herself a "misfit" at school and in Australia generally, where she was "at constant war with her surroundings". (p.73) She speaks of the years she spent in Leipzig as "the happiest I had yet known", for here she was no longer "the aimless, ill-adjusted girl who had begun to feel herself odd-man-out, and to judge people and things from that angle." (p.98) But when, after her decision to marry Robertson, she gave up her musical studies and returned to London with her mother and sister, Richardson's unhappiness returned. The description she gives of herself at this time, with her unsociableness and her contempt for ordinary people and their standards, could easily have been written of Mahony:

> I must have been a very trying person to live with - cross-grained and unsociable, for ever slinking off on solitary walks, leaving what gaieties there were to my more adaptable sister. The truth was I felt as much of a misfit here as I had ever done - even in Australia. Indeed there were moments when I could imagine myself back there, all the rich Leipzig years wiped out. An invitation to tea, for example, invariably included the request to "bring your music". Bring my music! What? - a Bach fugue or a sonata by Beethoven? I was so scathing at my would-be-hosts expense that it led to ructions with Mother. (p.123)

This inability to adapt herself to life in London was again demonstrated when, on her husband's appointment to London University, Richardson returned to England for good. Their life on the Continent had been very happy, but as Professor Robertson wrote, she was not to find similar happiness in London:

"We left Germany unwillingly, missed bitterly the Black Forest and the Vosges and our circle of intimate friends in Strassburg. And indeed Henry never reconciled herself to life in England. For years she felt a constant regret and hankering after the Continent; we had hoped with the improved financial conditions to see as much of the old summer haunts (and Strassburg in spring) as before; but the long railway journey made it exhausting, and more difficult. It was not the same. And walking in Middlesex was not walking in the Black Forest. It was also not easy to make new friends like the old; for one thing, settling in Harrow precluded the possibility of doing so in the first seven years when new intimacies might have been formed. And the views of the new friends were not Henry's. Our attempt to introduce the old Sunday afternoon 'at homes' which had been so pleasant a feature of the Twingerstrasse house was something of a failure.

"The house in Lyon Road was pleasant and the garden a source of pleasure. But going into London for theatre or concert was strenuous as the ten minutes' walk to these things in Strassburg had never been. These unsympathetic surroundings and conditions had perhaps one good result: that in Harrow Henry buried herself as never before in her book.

After describing Richardson's varied reading during "the Strassburg years" Professor Robertson continues

"On all these things our little Strassburg circle could talk, and discussed them with similar interest. Of this there was little or nothing in London; and she felt spiritually isolated. Also she found no congenial friends interested in music. Thus her life became, unfortunately, more solitary, and the 'living alone' only increased with the years."[47]

Thus when Richardson is writing about Mahony's "spiritual isolation" in Australia, his friendlessness and his lack of companions who share his interests and outlook on life, she would seem to be depicting something which she herself knew only too well. Richardson was, however, more fortunate than Mahony in that she was able to find an occupation to

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[47] Quoted by Olga Roncoroni in her conclusion to Myself When Young, pp. 149-50.

compensate for this loneliness; though unable to adapt herself to her surroundings, she was able to adapt her surroundings to herself, free as she was from Mahony's necessity to make a living. The life of her household was regulated to suit her needs, to provide her with the routine and quietness which she needed for her writing. This longing for peace and privacy is shared by Mahony,[48] as is the need for a routine: "As always when forced to live at haphazard, without a fixed routine, Mahony was restless and ill at ease. He had not even a comfortable room to retire to: his present den was the dull little back parlour of a town house." (p.450)

There are many other aspects of her temperament in which Richardson would seem to be Mahony's twin: she, too, had the pride and the "thin-skin" which made her "acutely sensitive to snubs and sneers", as her account of her school-days shows. The description in Myself When Young of her reasons for breaking-off her friendship with the "Evelyn" of The Getting of Wisdom "But I felt myself an interloper in her family-circle, a sort of pariah dog among her new and stylish friends, I poor, and unsuitably dressed, and always on the watch for slights or patronage." (p.71) is reminiscent of Mahony's reactions on his return to Melbourne after his financial crash:

Landing in Melbourne one cold spring day in the early seventies, he tossed his belongings into a hansom, and

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[48] See, for example, The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, p.159 and 480-1.

without pausing to reflect drove straight to his old club at the top of Collins Street. But his stay there was short. For no sooner did he learn the full extent of his losses, than he was ripe to detect a marked reserve, not to say coolness, in the manner of his former friends and acquaintances. More than one, he fancied, deliberately shunned him. Bitterly he regretted his over-hasty intrusion on this, the most exclusive club in the city; to which wealth alone was the passport. . . . Well! if this was a foretaste of what he had to expect - snubs and slights from men who would once have been honoured by his notice - the sooner he got out of people's way the better. (pp.585-6)

Other aspects of Mahony's character shared by Richardson are his dislike of interference, especially from Mary, and his impulsiveness: Richardson, too, was "a great believer in the impulse of the moment."[49] Richardson also seems, like Mahony, to have had "superstitious depths." (p.235) Miss Roncoroni describes how

she would always tell me to watch for the first appearance of the new moon each month, so that she could throw open her study window and make her "nine bows", after which she would get out her purse, containing silver coins, and turn this over. If I failed her and she saw the moon first through a window she would be quite angry with me.[50]

For Richardson certainly possessed a temper - whether it be labelled "Irish" or "Bailey" - as both she and her friends testify. Her nephew's description of her temperament demonstrates further similarities between herself and Mahony:

Anyone who has read H.H.R.'s works will realize the depth of feeling and sensitivity which she must have possessed, yet she was a person who appeared aloof, self-contained, and almost distant in manner; but all this coldness and austerity was born of the necessity to protect herself against her own intense emotions. She had the Celtic temperament of the Irish, and, especially when

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[49] In a letter to Oliver Stonor, 1 May 1943. (In the National Library)

[50] Some Personal Impressions, p.150.

younger, was subject to spells of very bad depression. She could be easily distressed and upset, and, of course, the very temperamental difficulties which at times could interfere with her work also gave the emotional depth to her writing which made it so outstanding. It was, however, essential for her to conserve her energy and to avoid situations which aroused her emotions for no good purpose. In other words she had to have a protective covering. One of the results of this was that she did not like being interviewed. As she also did not tolerate fools at all gladly, she very rightly avoided giving interviews to those who unfortunately came into this class.[51]

Walter Neustatter also mentions that his aunt was not "physically strong" - she was continually in poor health - so much so that some of her acquaintances seem to have regarded her as rather a hypochondriac. Andrew Gyde writes "In my insensitive way I had long formed the opinion that she enjoyed the frailties which always seemed to mar her complete happiness."[52] This is interesting because of its identity with Mary's reaction to Mahony's continual worries about his health; in the 1912 Diary Richardson comments "The feeling that he was not robust must have made it hard for him to take up work again." (p.19) Richardson also seems to have been subject to claustrophobia. She writes in Myself When Young

Leaving our uncle to Mother, who wasn't given to nerves, we stole out and wandered about Hampstead's rural ways. I mention this because it was here that I first came upon hedges, high hedges, bordering narrow lanes. Having grown up in a country famed for its openness, I found them stuffy and oppressive. It may also be that the sense of smotheration they induced was associated with an asthmatic's struggle for air. Anyhow I didn't like them,

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[51] Ibid., p.30.

[52] Ibid., p.39.

and though I have learned to admire their beauty in spring, would always rather be without them. - And this holds good not only of hedges but of anything that tends to shut me in. I want to be able to see about me, to overlook my surroundings. (pp.89-90)

which may explain Mahony's dislike of restrictions, of anything which limits his freedom. Richardson's antipathy to hedges is expressed in The Fortunes in the description of Mahony at Buddlecombe: "To-day, even had the weather allowed of it, he could have seen nothing, on foot between giant hedgerows that walled in the narrow lanes leading from one cottage and one village to the next." (p.359); and has been hinted at earlier in the Proem to The Way Home. (p.350) The "dirty, cold, cheerless reality" of the Mahonys' arrival in England would seem to be based on Richardson's own initial reactions to England:

To the loss of the sun we had to some extent become inured; all through the Bay the weather had been cold and wet and squally. But for the ugliness of Tilbury and the low-lying flats surrounding it, I was not prepared. I had pictured the scene very differently. So this was England; England, too, the miles on miles of dismal slums through which we travelled to our sooty terminus. My heart sank, and went on sinking; and many a time during those first weeks did I wish myself home again, back in a land which, whatever its defects, was at least bright and sunny, and clean. (pp.86-7)

A comparison of this passage with Mary's attitude to London provides another example of Richardson's tendency to take over phrases from the trilogy in Myself When Young: "Privately she thought London not a patch on Ballarat; thought it cold, comfortless, dreary; a bewildering labyrinth of dirty streets. And the longer she stayed there the more she regretted the bright, clean, sunny land of her adoption." (p.364) Mahony's dislike of the rigid class distinctions

he encounters in Buddlecombe, of the obsequious deference of the lower to the upper class, appears rather at variance with the class-prejudice he has himself exhibited in Australia. The reason for this may be that Mahony's class-prejudice comes from Richardson's historical sources and his dislike of the English obsequiousness from her own experiences. Richardson writes in Myself When Young of her meeting with her "Irish relatives, the Henry Richardsons"

> Cousin Cheyne then, in addition to his curacy, held a post as tutor to the sons of some titled personage, a Lord or an Earl; and this position, and the standing it gave him, took first place in their minds. And their talk: we were never allowed to forget it. Now I had already had a taste of the English reverence for a title; and having landed from Australia a sturdy young radical, convinced that one man was as good as another, had thought it very silly and behind the times. But the prostrate attitude adopted by these two fairly sickened me: why, they couldn't even mention the name of Cheyne's employer without obsequiously dropping their voices. For Mother's sake I kept a hold on my tongue. But I had many a pitched battle with the pair in my head, when I told them what I thought of their snobbishness. (pp.92-3)

And she was able to relieve her feelings in The Way Home, even if the result was to make Mahony appear more inconsistent than ever.

Two other points, of a more general nature than similarities in interests, habits and temperament, remain to be discussed. The first of these shall be mentioned only briefly, as it will be dealt with at greater length in a later chapter. We have already seen how Richardson in her youth thought of herself as a "misfit", an "odd-man-out" who judged "people and things from that angle" - in another place in Myself When Young she mentions her

"youthful acrimony with life." (p.83)-and have seen how this can be compared to Leonie Kramer's comment on Mahony: "Even in his loneliness there is more than a suspicion of Byronic temperament; of a contempt for the world which is a protest against the world's indifference and disapproval."[53] But, as I have mentioned in an earlier chapter, there seems to have been a change in Richardson's attitude of life between Maurice Guest and the trilogy, a change which Professor Robertson hints at when he writes "it would seem as if, in the interval between the two works, the author had shaken off her pessimistic disharmony with herself, and come to see life in a more equable light."[54] Mahony's trouble, too, is a "pessimistic disharmony" with himself, a dilemma which he can only resolve when, in Ultima Thule, he overcomes that part of himself which has struggled against the acceptance of the "hard and bitter" facts of life.

The other point to be discussed is the extent to which Richardson's depiction of the conflicts and differences between Richard and Mary Mahony are based on her own conflicts with her mother. Though, as we have seen, Richardson's parents did quarrel over money, and differ in their ideas of economy, the underlying source of Richardson's presentation of these quarrels would seem to be her own equally acrimonious relationship with her mother. This may

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53 "Henry Handel Richardson", The Literature of Australia (ed. G. Dutton, 1957), p.326.

54 "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, p.209.

explain why the relationship between Richard and Mary is from towards the end of Australia Felix on depicted largely in terms of a mother-child relationship. As Richard's insanity increases he transfers to Mary his childhood fear and resentment of his mother, while Mary comes to regard him as a "wayward child" who must be protected and prevented from doing anything that might hurt him. Mahony's resentment of Mary's assumption of authority would seem very like Richardson's refusal to conform to her mother's "ideas of what I ought to do and to be." One cannot say whether Mrs. Richardson shared Mary Mahony's ambitions for her husband, but she certainly had ambitions for her daughter which, like Mary's for Richard, were to remain unfulfilled. If, as would seem likely, Richardson did base the relationship between Richard and Mary on her own with her mother, this may partly explain the "sexless" treatment of their marriage.

Thus, while Mahony, in appearance and in some aspects of his life and behavior, was modelled on Richardson's father, his thoughts and emotions came, as with Cuffy, from herself. But, of course, there is more to Richard Mahony's characterisation than the facts - historical, family and personal - from which it was constructed. Richardson's major achievement in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony is, as I shall attempt to show in the following chapter, her fusion of frame and portrait into a compelling picture of Mahony as a tragic hero.

CHAPTER VI

THE FORTUNES OF RICHARD MAHONY :

Mahony as a Tragic Hero

At some point in discussions of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony mention is usually made of "the impressive bulk and scope",[1] the "imposing proportions",[2] "the amplitude of the design"[3] of Henry Handel Richardson's work. One wonders, however, whether these critics sighed while they admired, for it is this very extensiveness which makes difficult an appraisal of the book. The questions of where to commence and on which aspects to concentrate - for, regrettably, one cannot hope to match Richardson in telling all - are not easily answered. But as Richardson wrote that the trilogy "was planned to be chiefly the study of character",[4] the following discussion will, like my examination of its sources, be centred on this aspect of her work. Here, too, one is at first frustrated by the trilogy's "imposing proportions": not only are Mahony's thoughts and actions presented in great detail but they are frequently contradictory. This is not, since Mahony is consistent in his inconsistencies, a

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[1] Jennifer Dallimore, "The Malaise of Richard Mahony", Quadrant, V (1961), p.51.

[2] J.G. Robertson, "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, p.210.

[3] T. Inglis Moore, The Misfortunes of Henry Handel Richardson (C.U.C., 1957), p.7.

[4] In a letter to Mrs. Kernot, 15 February 1933. (In the Mitchell Library, Uncat Mss Set 325)

defect in Richardson's art, but the result of her strict adherence to the realist principle of presenting life "as it is": an irrational mixture of good and bad, pleasure and pain. If the pain seems to predominate in Richard Mahony's life it is partly because he himself refuses to adopt this realistic outlook. He fights against the recognition of the inevitability of the unpleasant aspects of life: suffering, change, decay; a struggle so futile, and yet so universal, that by attempting it he gains heroic and tragic stature.

Richardson's account of her reasons for beginning Australia Felix, the first book of the trilogy, gives the impression that she intended to limit the significance of her work to Australian conditions:

> So far, all the novels about Australia that had come my way had been tales of adventure; and successful adventure: monster finds and fortunes made in the gold fields, the hair-raising exploits of bushrangers, and so on. But there was another and very different side to the picture, and one on which, to my knowledge, no writer had yet dwelt. What of the failures, to whose lot neither fortunes nor stirring adventures fell? The misfits, who were physically and mentally incapable of adapting themselves to this strange hard new world? I knew of many such; and my plan was to tell the life story of one of them, with the changing face of the country for background, the rise of the towns on what had been mudflats; while faithfully observing Laura's injunction to keep a foot planted on reality. ("Some Notes", p.14)

But Richardson was more interested in her "failure" as a person rather than as the representative of this "different side to the picture". The letter which states that her primary aim in the trilogy was "the study of character" continues "That it plays in Australia is not exactly chance

any more than Leipzig was chance in M.G. but just a background as need and into which the story is woven." And on 18 December 1935 she wrote to Mrs. Kernot "As I said before I adopted a European book into a struggling literature which will go its way in time to come almost uninfluenced by it." Jennifer Dallimore seems to regret that The Fortunes of Richard Mahony was conceived as a "European" rather than an "Australian" book when she complains that, in order "to give his story more tragic proportions still", Richardson has vitiated "the stated intent of Australia Felix by "developing Richard's character not as colonial, but as congenital misfit".[5]

If, however, one considers Australia Felix in isolation from the rest of the trilogy, its "stated intent" appears to have been carried out fairly well. Mahony at times wonders whether his discontent with Australian life may be "inherent not in his situation or environment, but in himself" but these moments are few and in their contexts may, perhaps, even be seen as "rationalizations" of his "conventional 'colonial malaise'". That the opposite is true is, of course, demonstrated in the second volume, The Way Home, when Mahony fails to adapt himself to life in England and to a life of wealth in Australia. In Australia Felix, where the action is mostly presented from Mahony's point of view, and where his "rationalizations"

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[5]"The Malaise of Richard Mahony", op.cit., p.53.

outweigh his momentary insights, there is no definite evidence that he will be unable to adjust to life away from Australia. Thus, far from changing her intentions in mid-novel, in Australia Felix Richardson fulfils her aim of debunking romantic views of colonial life and at the same time establishes the first term of her proposition that Mahony is "so morbidly thin-skinned that he could nowhere and at no time, adapt himself to his surroundings."[6] Since Mahony's failure as a colonist is not separate from, but part of, his "inability to cope with life" one can, as W.M.Maidment points out in criticizing Miss Dallimore's article, accept

> that the Australia Felix Proem may relate symbolically to the whole trilogy as well as literally to colonial material in Australia Felix, that, in the spirit of the epigraph from Religio Medici which introduces the Proem, nothing is itself alone, and that the malignant land may also be all lands, the old as well as the new, may figure forth, inter alia, the crucial fact in Mary's relation with Richard, and the vengeful "life" that Richard would subordinate to "Life".[7]

By examining the Proem on these two levels - as an accurate portrayal of life on the Victorian gold fields in the 1850s and as a symbolic synopsis of the main themes of the trilogy - one gains an insight into the methods of presentation used by Richardson. As in Maurice Guest, repetition and contrast give a meaningful pattern to the "trifling yet significant" details of her story. Mahony's

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[6] Myself When Young, p.24.

[7] "Australian Literary Criticism", Southerly, XXIV (1964), p.36.

failure is repeated under varying conditions and is contrasted or compared with the fortunes of the other characters in the trilogy. But The Fortunes of Richard Mahony differs from Maurice Guest in the extent to which Richardson subordinates her presentation of these other successful and unsuccessful colonists to the characterisation of Mahony. They, with the partial exception of Mary Mahony, are, like the Australian environment, part of the background into which his story is woven. Two of the number of "wasted lives" prophetic of Mahony's tragedy may be found in the Proem to Australia Felix which begins:

> In a shaft on the Gravel Pits, a man had been buried alive. At work in a deep wet hole, he had recklessly omitted to slab the walls of a drive; uprights and tailors yielded under the lateral pressure, and the rotten earth collapsed, bringing down the roof in its train. The digger fell forward on his face, his ribs jammed across his pick, his arms pinned to his sides, nose and mouth pressed into the sticky mud as into a mask; and over his defenceless body, with a roar that burst his ear-drums, broke stupendous masses of earth. (p.7)

It goes on to describe his workmates' reactions to this catastrophe: after checking to see that there is no hope of the man having survived, all but one repair to "the nearest grog-shop". This one, Long Jim, weeps "not for the dead man, but for himself" and through his lamentations and his thoughts about his dead friend, Young Bill, the theme of the colonial misfit is introduced. Long Jim had met Bill on the way to the diggings and, distrusting "his fine-gentleman airs", had intended this to be only a casual acquaintance:

> But at first sight of the strange, wild scene that met his eyes he hastily changed his mind. And so the two of them

had stuck together; and he had never had cause to regret it. For all his lily-white hands and finical speech Young Bill had worked like a nigger, standing by his mate through the latter's disasters; had worked till the ladyish hands were horny with warts and corns, and this, though he was doubled up with dysentery in the hot season, and racked by winter cramps. But the life had proved too hard for him, all the same. During the previous summer he had begun to drink - steadily, with the dogged persistence that was in him - and since then his work had gone downhill. His sudden death had been only a hastening-on of the inevitable. Staggering home to the tent after nightfall he would have been sure, sooner or later, to fall into a dry shicer and break his neck, or into a wet one and be drowned. (p.10)

Young Bill is one of the many characters in the novel who find an escape from intolerable situations in alcohol. It is significant that Mahony opposes the general indulgence in "strong drink"[8]; one of the things which makes him an outsider in colonial society. Mahony's refusal to accept this common and easy refuge from the rigours of colonial life later produces one of the tragic ironies of his insanity. The symptoms of his illness are interpreted by the townspeople of Barambogie, naturally enough, as signs of intoxication and this contributes to the failure of Mahony's practice there. Young Bill is, however, in other respects very like Mahony: he is shown to be reserved and not given to confidences about himself: "Young Bill had never spoken out"; he is a gentleman and as such is distrusted, as Mahony will later be, by Long Jim; he, too, suffers from the Australian climate. Most importantly, as Leonie Kramer remarks, "Mahony in his lonely grave shares the same fate as the unknown digger whose death is described

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[8] See, for example, The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, pp.107, 168 and 171.

in the opening pages of Australia Felix - their graves 'indistinguishable from the common ground'".[9] Young Bill's fate is soon forgotten in "the rude activity of the gold-diggings in full swing", Richard Mahony's in the ceaseless forward motion of life, "those who had known and loved him passing, scattering, forgetting". (p.831)

Long Jim, the other discontented colonist met in the Proem pining for the past joys of England, seems at first glance to have much less in common with Mahony. The course of Jim's life is, however, not only partly determined by the course of Mahony's but parallels it in several ways. When Mahony commences practice at Ballarat he assists the fulfilment of Jim's dream of returning to England. Later he received a letter from Jim who has failed to find England as he imagined. The letter's tone of self-pitying supplication is well conveyed in this passage:

> The old man wrote in a dismal strain. Everything had gone against him. His wife had died, he was out of work and penniless, and racked with rheumatism - oh, it was "a crewl climat"! Did he stop in England, only "the house" remained to him; he'd end in a pauper's grave. But he believed if he could get back to a scrap of warmth and the sun, he'd be good for some years yet. Now he'd always known Dr. Mahony for the kindest, most liberal of gentlemen; the happiest days of his life had been spent under him, on the Flat; and if he'd only give him a lift now, there was nothing he wouldn't do to show his gratitude. Doctor knew a bit about him, too. Here, he couldn't seem to get on with folk at all. They looked crooked at him, and just because he'd once been spunky enough to try his luck overseas. (p.233)

As Mahony has just made some money from mining investments

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[9] A Companion to Australia Felix (1962), p.14.

he sends Jim the fare back to Australia. Once more Jim, now called Old Jim, works for Mahony until, after making some successful investments himself, he decides to leave and "be me own master for a spell". On his last appearance in the trilogy, at the end of Australia Felix as the Mahonys are setting off for England, Jim seems to have finally become adapted to life. Mary tells Richard

"- Oh, by the way, did you notice - I don't think you did, you were in such a rush - who I was speaking to as you ran up? It was Jim, Old Jim, but so changed I hardly knew him. As spruce as could be, in a black coat and a bell-topper. He's married again, he told me, and has one of the best-paying hotels in Smythesdale. Yes, and he was at the sale, too - he came over specially for it - to buy a piano."

"He did, confound him!" cried Mahony hotly.

"Oh you can't look at it that way, Richard. As long as he has the money to pay for it. Fancy, he told me he had always admired the 'tune' of it so much, when I played and sang. My dear little piano!" (p.335)

The implications of Jim's connection with Mahony do not, however, become apparent until he has repeated the moves in Jim's story: dissatisfaction with Australia coupled with a longing for the idealised past in England; return to England to find reality in no way equalling ideal, with a subsequent longing for the idealised past in Australia; return to Australia and to prosperity through mining investments. Looking back from this point in the trilogy, one sees how Long Jim's story foretells Mahony's. In the Proem, Jim sings "the praises of his former life" and bemoans the hardships of his present:

No; here, under bare blue skies, out of which the sun frizzled you alive; here, where it couldn't rain without at once being a flood; where the very winds blew contrarily,

hot from the north and bitter-chill from the south; where, no matter how great the heat by day, the night would as likely as not be nipping cold: here he was doomed to end his life, and to end it, for all the yellow sunshine, more hopelessly knotted and gnarled with rheumatism than if, dawn after dawn, he had gone out in a cutting north-easter, or groped his way through the grey fog-mists sent up by grey Thames. (p.9)

Jim's praises are enlarged on in Mahony's reminiscences throughout Australia Felix and in his glorious vision of England in the Proem to The Way Home; and he echoes Jim's complaints against the Australian climate on numerous occasions. Further similarities can be found by comparing Jim's and Mahony's experiences in England. After the failure of two practices, Mahony's situation is almost as bad as Jim's "out of work and penniless"; like Jim, he sees no alternative to a return to Australia where it now seems that he, too, has spent "the happiest days of his life":

"Never should I have brought you here - never! I thought to find myself among a different set of people altogether. In memory, I confused good breeding with tact and kindliness. Whereas, now, if it comes to a choice between blue blood and inborn goodness of heart, then what I say is: give me nature's gentlefolk all the time. There's as little likeness between them as between this eternal clammy drizzle and some of those cloudless winter days we knew on the Flat." (p.419)

Thus, while the English climate has not affected Mahony's health as it has Jim's - ironically enough with "rheumatism" - he, too, compares it unfavourably with the Australian. He also learns the truth of Jim's complaint about the English attitude to colonials: "Returning full of honours and repute, he found that the mere fact of his having lived and practised in Australia cast a slur on his good name." (p.416)

Jim and Mahony are also alike in the motivation for their trips: both are dissatisfied with the present and long for change, both rationalize this dissatisfaction by idealising the past. This similarity in motivation is emphasised by Jim's reply when Mary taxes him on his decision to leave Mahony's employment:

> "I want a change," said Old Jim dourly in response to her inquiry; and went on polishing wheel-spokes, and making the wheel fly. "I've bin 'ere too long. An' now I've got a bit o' brass together, an' am thinking I'd like to be me own master for a spell."
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> "But at your age, Jim, is it wise? - to throw up a comfortable home, just because you've laid a little past?" (p.264)

This desire for change, this dislike of being "too long" in the one place, is seen by Mahony in the next chapter as being a reason, additional to his hatred of Australia, for his wish to return to England:

> Did he dig into himself, he saw that his uncongenial surroundings were not alone to blame for his restless state of mind. There was in him a growing desire for change as change; a distinct fear of being pinned for too long to the same spot; or to put it another way, a conviction that to live on without change meant decay. For him, at least. Of course, it was absurd to yield to feelings of this kind; at his age, in his position, with a wife dependent on him. (p.274)

Mary's words to Jim can, therefore, be compared not only to her later reaction to Mahony's announcement of his intention of leaving Australia but to Mahony's own arguments against this desire when he can still view it with some of Mary's common sense. The parallels between Mahony and Jim are again emphasised when he, in his prosperity, buys Mary's piano, earlier a symbol of Mahony's first success. Mahony's anger on hearing of this points to the irony inherent in

Richardson's presentation of the similarities between himself and Jim. Mahony resents Jim's action as a negation of the differences between them - he regards Jim as someone who is "beneath" him and hence can, or should, have nothing in common with him.

This irony is also apparent in the resemblances drawn between Mahony and the other "wasted lives" in Australia Felix, Bolliver and Tangye, for Mahony is shown to regard both these men as in no way equal to himself. There are, of course, other "wasted lives" from all classes in Australia Felix and the subsequent volumes, but it seems significant that the three most closely compared to Mahony fall into this category. Richardson's ironic presentation of similarity where no similarity is thought possible takes us, indeed, to the very core of Mahony's tragedy. For, as he realises on the night when he intends to commit suicide, "the most vital part of him" has been "his pride ... his black Irish pride . . . A fierce Lucifer-like inhibition". (p.738) Mahony's pride, which prevents him from seeing any similarities between himself and Long Jim, or himself and Tangye, which underlies his failure to adapt to conditions in Australia and to life as a whole, may, if anything may, be seen as his "tragic flaw". Professor Robertson has given this term to Mahony's restlessness[10] but, as we realise with Mahony in Ultima Thule, this longing for change is only a

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[10]"The Art of H.H. Richardson", p.182.

symptom of his fear of decay and death. Since these two things are inevitable and natural products of life and time Mahony's love of change is actually caused by his fear of change. From this it seems to follow that Mahony's fear is itself a product of his pride: a pride which refuses to accept that he cannot escape the common fate of man: to live means to change. In spite of all Mahony's acknowledgments of God's will, then, he can be termed "Lucifer-like" in so far as his refusal to accept the terms of life, which in the context of the book are seen as ordained by God, is a denial of God and his laws. This is not to insist on a metaphysical interpretation of the trilogy, nor to imply that Richardson saw Mahony's struggle with life in terms of Lucifer's struggle with God. She is not using Mahony as a symbol for the presentation of metaphysical ideas but rather, in keeping with her belief that character-drawing was the most important aspect of the novel, using these ideas to provide further information about Mahony. And while Mahony's pride may be his "fatal flaw", it is not seen as sinful in any moral sense. In many ways Mahony is the most moral character in the trilogy; his behavior is governed by ideals and principles that are generally ignored by those around him. This is one of the positive aspects of his character and is a product of the positive side of his pride - his sense of tradition and of himself as an upholder of the best elements in that tradition. So that, the term "pride", as it is used in relation to Mahony, should be understood to imply not only

something that goes before a fall, but also "proper pride", which involves a sense of achievement and duty, and can be an incitement to further achievements.

After visiting the house where her father died, Richardson wrote in the 1912 Diary

> Behind these two little windows he died - lay dead. A mother's son - he too. Each has his fate to fulfil. Man kann seinem Schicksal nicht entgehen. - Why do I feel so strongly about him? An early Victorian man with all the prejudices and limitations of his time. But I see him as a seeker, with all the higher needs in him, crushed physically, dissipated mentally, dazed and confused by the ultimate demands of life. He was never equal to it. (p.18)

Thus, a further admirable aspect of Mahony's character, that which makes him worthy of our sympathy and interest as it has made him worthy of Richardson's, lies in his search for knowledge and truth - about God, about life, about himself. This assertion - and it is a proud one - that there is more to life than the worship of money and position he finds in both Australia and England distinguishes Mahony from the other characters and also gives him the "nobility" required of the tragic hero. In persisting in this quest in the face of repeated disillusionment he shows not weakness, but strength. Mahony's tragedy is that he can never overcome the conflict between his aspirations and his fears. He may assert with his scientific mind that "Panta rei is the eternal truth" (p.485), he may give lip-service to an acceptance of God's will, but he has an underlying fear of change and death. On one of Richardson's loose pages of notes there are two almost consecutive entries which serve

to define these two sides of Mahony's character:

> Intellectual restlessness - restlessness of the mind, which kept him on the alert for the bull's-eye flash of light that was someday to break in upon him; solving the riddle and illuminating the why and wherefore of existence. . . . Mahony's superstitiousness: not crudely so, but he lay in the Irishman's habitual grovelly attitude of subjection before a whole host of invisible powers that waited to be appeased.[11]

While, therefore, Mahony is, like Maurice Guest and Louise Dufrayer, a dreamer in his refusal to accept life "as it is" there is the additional motive of fear for himself and his pride. He rejects not only life, but its embodiment in other people; in setting himself apart from others, as in the scene with Tangye which will be discussed later, he attempts to assert his independence from humanity and its universal fate. He is, as we have seen, set apart from, and superior to, the other characters, but not to the extent that he would wish. And in the main way in which he is superior, his attempts to find Life and Truth, Mahony is hampered at every turn by his refusal to accept the truth about life. His vitality and mental energy are wasted in a hopeless struggle against life - hopeless because it is so unequal. For, in so far as he is himself living, and hence part of life, it is a struggle not only against external forces, but against himself. The seeking mind which attempts to deny all materialistic things and assert its independence from everything but intellectual inquiry, is inescapably dependent on the living body, with its demands for food and

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[11] "Australian Notes", p.3. (In the National Library)

drink, sex, warmth and rest. And Mahony is not an ascetic hermit who contents his body only with the absolute necessities but rather the opposite. Though not a sensual man, he is a man, he marries and has children, and he has a taste for the refinements of civilization - he is fussy about what he eats and how he eats it, about the clothes he wears and the house he lives in. For he has to content not only his body but his pride; the pride which refuses, through fear for itself, to face the fate which life entails for everybody, also demands only the best from life in the way of material things.

This conflict, which reveals itself in Mahony's contradictory attitudes to such things as snobbishness and money, together with his superstitious fears, prevent him from achieving any of his ambitions. He is unable to attain the single-minded devotion and concentration necessary for this - half of him is continually on the defensive against injury to his pride by others, or by life itself. Richard Sadleir has recognised this aspect of Mahony's tragedy when he writes

> All the incidents of Mahony's life, which seems to a superficial glance so eventful, are really only variations on a single, underlying theme: he is incapable really of action; at the best everything he does is a reaction since, never having understood his own self, his deepest motives, he is "lived" by forces beyond his conscious knowledge and which often even contradict his rational self. He is like a man divided in two, or ridden by a ghost.[12]

Sadleir would seem to equate these "forces" with Mahony's

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[12] "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: An Appreciation", Westerly, 1 (1962), p.107.

pride but, as we have seen, they are also the external and internal forces of life and living. Mahony's dilemmas are not entirely "of his own making",[13] they are partly the result of the common difficulty of reconciling the demands of the mind with the demands of the body, a difficulty that is increased for him by his pride and his inner division. Because of these conflicts, all his attempts to escape from his fears and achieve his ideals only result in an earlier realisation of the decay and death he fears. Mahony recognises the truth about himself in one of his periods of self-communion at Barambogie:

> - And in these endless nights, when he lay and searched his heart as never before, he thought he read the answer to the riddle. Himself he was the hunter and the hunted: the merciless in pursuit and the panting prey. Within him, it would seem, lodged fears ... strange fears. And at a given moment one of these, hitherto dormant and unsuspected, would suddenly begin to brew, and go on growing till he was all one senseless panic, blind flight the only catholicon. No matter what form it took - whether a morbid anxiety about his health, or alarm at the swiftness with which his little day was passing - its aim was always the same: to beat him up and on. (p.692)

After this comes a passage in which Mahony realises that his fears - notice that the examples given are fear for his health and fear of old-age - are all at bottom fear of death. This view of Mahony as a man divided against himself is, as I shall show later, confirmed in symbolic fashion in the scene where he beats a horse and in the dream in which he appears as both plaintiff and defendant.

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[13] Leonie Kramer, "Henry Handel Richardson", The Literature of Australia (ed. G. Dutton, 1964), p.327.

But these revelations come too late to save Mahony; his tragedy is made more terrible and pitiful by the ignorance with which he precipitates it and by the inevitability with which it runs it course. Like the classical tragic hero Oedipus, Mahony runs towards his fate in his attempts to flee it, his denial of the laws of his world reinforces the application of those laws to himself. For his fate is worse than the death he has feared since it involves not only his body but what is truly "the most vital part of him", the real difference between himself and other men, his mind, his questing spirit. The emphasis on the physical nature of Mahony's madness is not, as some critics have thought, a lessening of the tragedy but an intensification. Mahony's physical demands have always been one of the causes of the frustration of his spiritual aspirations. Hence it is entirely appropriate that his body, representative of the transiency of life that he has feared, should take its revenge on his mind and spirit. Mahony's fate, with its overtones of living-death, is, like that of the digger in the Proem to Australia Felix, to be "buried alive" - he, too, "recklessly" contributes to this catastrophe.

The Proem to Australia Felix announces the major themes of the trilogy in other ways besides the fate of Young Bill and the homesickness of Long Jim. The generalised picture of the "rude activity of a gold-digging in full swing", which emphasises its continual movement and noise, prepares for Mahony's rejection of this ceaseless,

mindless pursuit of wealth in which all the decencies and values of civilization are forgotten. Men appear less than human: "The many human figures that went to and fro were hardly to be distinguished from the ground they trod"; all that can be heard, apart from the yapping of dogs, is "a wholly mechanical din". A little later we are told, concerning the digger's refusal to allow mechanical mining to be introduced on Ballarat, "He remained for ever the dreamer, the jealous individualist; he hovered for ever on the brink of a stupendous discovery." The application of this to Mahony is obvious, though the discovery he dreams of is one of the spirit rather than the earth. The Proem concludes

> This dream it was, of vast wealth got without exertion, which had decoyed the strange, motley crowd, in which peers and churchmen rubbed shoulders with the scum of Norfolk Island, to exile in this outlandish region. And the intention of all alike had been: to snatch a golden fortune from the earth and then, hey, presto! for the old world again. But they were reckoning without their host: only too many of those who entered the country went out no more. They became prisoners to the soil. . . .
>
> Such were the fates of those who succumbed to the "unholy hunger". It was like a form of revenge taken on them, for their loveless schemes of robbing and fleeing; a revenge contrived by the ancient, barbaric country they had so lightly invaded. Now, she held them captive - without chains; ensorcelled - without witchcraft; and, lying stretched like some primeval monster in the sun, her breasts freely bared, she watched, with a malignant eye, the efforts made by these puny mortals to tear their lips away. (p.13)

This depiction of the way in which Australia trapped the unwary and unwilling colonists applies, as I have mentioned earlier, to more than Mahony's inability to free himself from the country. The theme of Mahony's fear of

imprisonment, of being pinned down - symbolic of his fear of death - first announced in the burial alive of the digger, is echoed in this concluding image. The words "robbing and fleeing", too, apply not only to Mahony's aim in coming to Australia but to his attitude to life in general. Just as the scene at the gold-fields can be seen as symbolic of the view that men who devote themselves to the acquisition of money for its own sake are less than brutes - the dogs speak but they don't - so the malignant mother Australia can be seen as symbolic of life itself, from whose breasts Mahony can never completely tear his lips away. For, while bread may not be all, it is necessary: Mahony may free himself from the "unholy hunger" for gold, he cannot free himself from hunger.

This theme of escape and imprisonment recurs in the first chapter of Australia Felix which opens with a licence hunt in which two of the characters from the Proem are involved. Long Jim, who has refused to pay "the blasted tax", panics at the sight of the soldiers, and is only saved from certain capture by a diversionary action on the part of "the youthful blackbeard who had pluckily descended the shaft after the accident." (p.15) The young digger leads the chase to a "log-and-canvas store" where he is caught but, as he has evidently anticipated, bailed out by the storekeeper. The storekeeper is Richard Mahony himself, and the digger his friend Purdy Smith. Mahony is introduced as "a tall, slenderly built man of some seven or eight and twenty" (p.17) and his comments and actions in this chapter

reveal several important aspects of his character. Unlike the men around him, he is shown to respect authority: he tells the Police Commissioner: "'A young hot-head, sir! - He means no harm. I'll send him up in the morning, to apologise,'". The formality of this speech, only slightly lessened in his other dialogue, further distinguishes him from the diggers with their slangy, free-swearing talk. He is also set apart by his offer of water rather than spirits to Purdy and by his apparent freedom from the ceaseless money-making activity of the Flat: "He made a point, no matter how brisk trade was, of not keeping open after dark. His evenings were his own." Thus Mahony is seen in this chapter as a sober, respectable, well-spoken man, hard-working yet valuing other things more than money, who disapproves of his friend's law-breaking but is generous enough to aid him even so. This picture is reinforced by the episode of the diggers' protest meeting in the next chapter. Mahony, incensed by the rebellious speeches, calls for "three cheers for the British flag" and then attempts to show the diggers the error of their beliefs. They make insulting replies, Mahony loses his temper, but the hostilities which seem imminent are prevented when Purdy once more provides a diversion. This scene again demonstrates Mahony's opposition to lawlessness and also shows one of the reasons for his unpopularity. He has little tact in his dealings with others, like Maurice Guest he believes in "absolute truth", and fails to realise that this often involves an ignorance of other truths.

That Mahony may be as misguided in his attitude to Purdy as he is in his attitude to the diggers is intimated by the doubt inserted in his rather patronising "He knew - or thought he knew - young Purdy inside out." (p.20) For Purdy, as we see, takes a much more critical and expedient view of Mahony and his friendship than Mahony realises - a blindness which is later to prove disastrous. Richardson's demonstration of the disparity between Purdy as Mahony sees him and as he is shows Nettie Palmer to be mistaken in saying that the minor characters "have no being apart from Mahony's vision of them."[14] Many of the other characters - in particular Tilly and Mrs. Marriner - are seen to differ from Mahony's conception of them. As Nettie Palmer goes on to say, "None of them is given a full inner life", but their actions and the tone of their conversations serve to reveal their personalities fairly well. Richardson does, I think, have more success with her female characters - even the caricatures like Sarah-Sara-Zara have a certain amount of individuality - than with her male, who, Purdy not excepted, tend to be more abstractly presented. But while these characters are shown to have an existence independent of Mahony's view of them, they are, like Schilsky in Maurice Guest, important not in themselves but in their effect on the major characters. They, and the Australian landscape, are subordinated to the characterisation of Mahony. Just as Mahony's opinion of his natural surroundings

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[14] Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.82.

varies with variations in his mood, so he changes his opinion of Henry Ocock as he alternately becomes his friend and his enemy. Similar changes occur in Mahony's attitude to Purdy in The Way Home for he is unable to take an objective view of people, he sees them only in terms of his own needs.

Purdy's reply when Mahony accuses him of restlessness, "'Well, I'm jiggered! If ever I knew a restless mortal, it's yourself.'" (p.20), shows that he knows Mahony better than Mahony knows him. Later Mahony remembers this charge, and partially admits its truth. He blames this restlessness on the conditions of colonial life, from which he intends to escape as soon as he can:

> The life one led out here was not calculated to tone down any innate restlessness of temperament: on the contrary, it directly hindered one from becoming fixed and settled. It was on a par with the houses you lived in - these flimsy tents and draught-riddled cabins you put up with, "for the time being" - was just as much of a makeshift affair as they. Its keynote was change. Fortunes were made, and lost, and made again, before you could say Jack Robinson; whole townships shot up over-night, to be deserted the moment the soil ceased to yield; the people you knew were here today, and gone - sold up, burnt out, or dead and buried - to-morrow. And so, whether you would or not, your whole outlook became attuned to the general unrest; you lived in constant anticipation of what was coming next. Well, he could own to the weakness with more justification than most. If trade continued to prosper with him as it did at present, it would be no time before he could sell out and joyfully depart for the old country. (pp.25-6)

But Mahony's restlessness, though it has perhaps been aggravated by Australian conditions, is not to be stilled by any change of environment - it is the outward sign of his fear of death and decay. The transiency of the Australian scene is, of course, representative of this

general impermanence of life, which may be why Mahony dislikes it so strongly. The emphasis on "the fleetingness of things"[15] found in all of Richardson's work is particularly pervasive in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony; it, too, has change as its "keynote". The phrase "you lived in constant anticipation of what was coming next" is significant since it is this fear of the future which vitiates Mahony's attempts to succeed in the present. Mahony's fear of the future also produces his love of the past, which to him means his former life in England; he is extremely conservative and, of course, a Tory. (p.108)

Another example of Purdy's insight is provided when Mahony decides to marry the girl, Polly Turnham, who Purdy has said would make him a perfect wife. Since this marriage will mean the postponement of his escape from Australia, we see that the realities of life are already impinging on Mahony's ideals. The impetuousness of his decision to propose to Polly, of which we are told "it did not suit him, even in secret, to confess to the vehemence with which, when he much desired a thing, his temperament knocked flat the hurdles of reason" (p.61), is prophetic of much of his future behavior, as is the speedy way in which he carries out this decision - for fear that any delay may result in the loss of Polly. Throughout the trilogy Mahony is frequently impelled to act impulsively

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[15] The Getting of Wisdom, p.249.

and irrationally by the fear that any pause might allow time for some change in the situation that would prevent him attaining his desire.

After proposing to Polly, and being accepted, Mahony goes to Melbourne to obtain the consent of Polly's elder brother, John Turnham. This scene shows once again that Mahony's failure to adapt to Australian conditions is partly the result of his attempt to cling to the past: a past which has in no way prepared him for his new environment. John, who has made this adaptation, holds a view of the colonist's qualifications which directly opposes Mahony's:

"In this grand country of ours, where progress is the watchword, effete standards and clogging traditions must go by the board. Grit is of more use to us than gentility. Each single bricklayer who unships serves the colony better than a score of gentlemen."

"In that I am absolutely not at one with you, Mr. Turnham," said Mahony coldly. He had sat down again, feeling rather ashamed of his violence. "Without a leaven of refinement, the very raw material of which the existing population is composed ---"

But Turnham interrupted him. "Give 'em time, sir, give 'em time. God bless my soul! Rome wasn't built in a day." (p.69)

In spite of this disagreement, John agrees to let Polly marry Mahony and Part I of Australia Felix concludes with their wedding and trip home to Ballarat. The consequences of this marriage for both Polly or, as she is later called, Mary, and Mahony shall be discussed in the next chapter. Here, I shall leave, too, this intensive examination of the presentation of Mahony's character, hoping that I have said enough to refute the idea that the first part of the trilogy, like the first part of Maurice Guest, contains a

lot of material which is extraneous to its major concerns. In its concentration on Mahony's point of view, Australia Felix can, indeed, be said to be the best constructed of the three volumes. The Way Home gives more space to Mary, and Ultima Thule introduces Cuffy as a third observer and commentator but, as Mahony's story is still the main interest, this broader presentation involves the inclusion of much irrelevant material. Of course, to say that all the detail of Australia Felix is relevant to Richardson's presentation of Mahony is not to say that it is all necessary. Richardson, as has frequently been stated, gets her effect by the accumulation of detail and so it is difficult to decide when, if at all, this detail becomes obstructive rather than constructive, or to determine whether she would have been more or less successful if she had been more selective.

In the remainder of this chapter I will, however, be dealing with certain scenes, most of them referred to earlier, which reveal Richardson's strengths rather than her weaknesses. The first of these is Mahony's highly ironic and significant confrontation with Tangye, the ill-reputed chemist, in Part IV of Australia Felix.[16] Mahony has by now built up a successful practice at Ballarat and he and Mary move in the highest strata of society. After one of the parties this new social position entails, Mahony

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[16] Some of the following discussion is derived from F.H. Mares, "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: A Reconsideration", Meanjin, XXI (1962), pp.65-7.

returning home from farewelling some of his guests, is addressed

"Good evening, doctor!"

Spoken in his very ear, the words made him jump. He had been lost in contemplation; and the address had a ghostly suddenness. But it was no ghost that stood beside him - nor indeed was it a night for those presences to be abroad whose element is the dark.

Ill-pleased at the intrusion, he returned but a stiff nod: then, since he could not in decency greet and leave-take in a breath, feigned to go on for a minute with his study of the landscape. After which he said: "Well, I must be moving. Good night to you."

"So you're off your sleep, too, are you?" As often happens, the impulse to speak was a joint one. The words collided.

Instinctively Mahony shrank into himself; this familiar bracketing of his person with another's was distasteful to him. Besides, the man who had sprung up at his elbow bore a reputation that was none of the best. The owner of a small chemist's shop on the Flat, he contrived to give offence in sundry ways: he was irreligious - an infidel, his neighbours had it - and of a Sabbath would scour his premises or hoe potatoes rather than attend church or chapel. Though not a confirmed drunkard, he had been seen to stagger in the street, and be unable to answer when spoken to. Also, the woman with whom he lived was not generally believed to be his lawful wife. Hence the public fought shy of his nostrums; and it was a standing riddle how he managed to avoid putting up his shutters. More nefarious practices no doubt, said the relentless vox populi. - Seen near at hand, he was a tall, haggard-looking fellow of some forty years of age, the muscles on his neck standing out like those of a skinny old horse.

Here, his gratuitous assumption of a common bond drew a cold: "Pray, what reason have you to think that?" from Mahony. And without waiting for a reply he again said good night and turned to go.

The man accepted the rebuff with a meekness that was painful to see. "Thought, comin' on you like this, you were a case like my own. No offence, I'm sure," he said humbly. It was evident he was well used to getting the cold shoulder. Mahony stayed his steps. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Aren't you well? There's a remedy to be found for most ills under the sun."

"Not for mine! The doctor isn't born or the drug discovered that could cure me."

The tone of bragging bitterness grated anew. Himself given to the vice of overstatement, Mahony had small mercy on it in others. "Tut, tut!" he deprecated. (pp.255-6)

The scene is too long to quote in full, but certain parallels

between Mahony and Tangye, and the irony of Mahony's attempt to dissociate himself from him, are evident in this opening section. Mahony's first instinct on hearing Tangye is correct: Tangye and his words are to haunt him for the rest of his life. It is significant that Tangye's profession is, like Mahony's, concerned with healing, though he cannot cure his own ills. While Mahony's profession may, like his insanity, be derived from the facts of Richardson's father's life, it is, again like his insanity, given an added meaning by his fear of decay and death. There are many other ways in which Tangye is, at this moment, very similar to Mahony: his "overstatement" and his sleepless nights, and, as we discover later in this scene, his dislike of the general mispronunciation of his name, his reasons for coming to Australia and his education - his knowledge of Latin. He recognises that he, and Mahony, are "out-o'-place here, out-o'-date", and describes himself as "staid, respectable, orderly", as "not over-strong or over-shrewd, but honest", a description which, like Tangye's hatred of his fellow money-grubbing colonists and his resentment of the fact that in order to make a living in Australia one must suppress "every thought of interest that wasn't essential to the daily grind", equally fits Mahony. And Mahony is to become even more like Tangye in the course of his life, as can be seen if the description of Tangye in the passage quoted and in the later phrase "old and grey and down-at-heel - fifty, if a day - and his clothes hung loose on his bony frame" (p.256), is compared with the description of Mahony at

Barambogie when he is "an old and weary man, with his fiftieth birthday behind him." (p.693) He is "tall, lean, bent" (p.722), his trousers flap "to and fro on his bony shanks" (p.679), and in his dream he sees himself as "an oldish man, with straggly grey hair and whiskers, and a round back." (p.731) At Barambogie Mahony, too, is "seen to stagger in the street, and be unable to answer when spoken to" and is supposed a drunkard by the "vox populi" which, learning of his belief in spiritualism, also accuses him of "nefarious practices" and irreligion. In consequence, the Barambogie public fight "shy of his nostrums".

Failure, as it has with Tangye, turns Mahony into a meek man. When he is accused of malpractice he is not, as he formerly would have been, angry at the slight to his professional ability, but is found "cowering in his chair, his grey head sunk between his shoulders" (p.727), and in the dream that arises from this scene sees himself "grovelling! - begging abjectly for mercy". (p.732) Mary's reaction on finding Mahony "cowering" is similar to his "pain" at Tangye's humility. In his response to Tangye's recitation of his woes Mahony is, indeed, shown to be just as lacking in sympathy and understanding as Mary is in her response to his increasing troubles. Too late he realises that Tangye had wanted "not argument or reason but a little human sympathy." (p.261) Mahony assumes that a remedy may be found for Tangye's ills just as Mary assumes that his illness will be cured if he leaves Barambogie. He refutes

Tangye's view that only dishonest men succeed in Australia:

> Preposterous, too, the notion that those of their fellow-townsmen who had carried off the prizes owed their success to some superiority in bodily strength ... or sharp dealing ... or thickness of skin. With Mr. Tangye's permission he would cite himself as an example. He was neither a very robust man, nor, he ventured to say, one of any marked ability in the other two directions. Yet he had managed to succeed without, in the process, sacrificing jot or tittle of his principles; and to-day he held a position that any member of his profession across the seas might envy him. (pp.259-60)

But it is doubtful whether Mahony would have achieved this success without the aid of John Turnham and Henry Ocock, who perfectly fulfil Tangye's conditions. When, towards the end of The Way Home, John having died and Ocock become his enemy, Mahony is forced to rely on his own judgment, he makes a decision which results in the loss of his fortune. He only manages to save his principles, and his pride, by ignoring the fact that his success has been contributed to by others less "mealy-mouthed" than himself. Similarly, in refuting Tangye's suggestion that his other interests have been neglected in the interest of this success, he forgets that

> Lepidoptera collected years since were still unregistered, plants and stones unclassified; his poor efforts at elucidating the Bible waited to be brought into line with the Higher Criticism; Home's levitations and fire-tests called for investigation; while the leaves of some of the books he had cited had never even been cut. (p.261)

And Mahony equally overlooks some truths in asserting "'It's sheer folly to talk about what life makes of us. Life is not an active force. It's we who make what we will of life'" (p.260) since he himself fears two very active forces of life - time and change. Thus, besides being the wrong response to Tangye's problems, Mahony's arguments are

in themselves as far from reality as Mary's common sense attitude to his difficulties.

It is Tangye, too, who speaks that Latin phrase "Coelum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt" which, recalled by Mahony as he is leaving for England at the end of Australia Felix, intimates in advance that his journey will be unsuccessful. For the conversation with Tangye has reawoken Mahony's dissatisfaction; the emphasis is now on the handicaps of his new-found prosperity rather than its benefits. He is over-worked and has no time for a holiday or for "a particle of pleasure or relaxation". (p.262) It is while under these pressures that Mahony learns of Purdy's advances to Mary at the ball, an event prepared for by his increasing attentions to Mary, which Mahony, ignorant of the gossip about them, has ironically assisted. Immersed in his work, he advises Mary to ask Purdy's help in "such trifles" as "Ned's affair" (p.263) and, when called away on the night of the ball, tells her to send for Purdy to escort her. (p.280) Although Mahony's immediate reaction to the news of Purdy's behavior is one of anger and hurt pride, we later see that what concerns him most is the end of his friendship. That this friendship was not one of mutual liking and respect has been evident from the beginning of the novel. Mahony has been motivated by his desire to cling to the past, Purdy by expediency. The reasons why Mahony cares so much about the loss of Purdy's friendship are made clearer in his meditations on the way home from attending a patient in the

bush. Here we see that Mahony regards this loss as a loss of the past - note the use of the words "old" and "death" - representing the change and decay which he fears:

> The associations of some five-and-twenty years were bound up in it; measured by it, one's marriage seemed a thing of yesterday. And even more than the friend, he would miss the friendship and all it stood for: this solid base of joint experience; this past of common memories into which one could dip as into a well; this handle of "Do you remember?" which opened the door to such a wealth of anecdote. From now on, the better part of his life would be a closed book to any but himself; there were allusions, jests without number, homely turns of speech, which not a soul but himself would understand. The thought of it made him feel old and empty; affected him like the news of a death. (pp.291-2)

In the midst of his musing Mahony falls unconscious to the road with an attack of vertigo that marks the onset of a serious illness. The outcome of these two misfortunes, both reminders of the death Mahony fears, is that "The ancient idea of escape, long dormant, suddenly reawoke in him with a new force." (p.315) He again dreams of returning to England, of freeing his spirit from its paralysis by the struggle for existence, which he imagines he will leave behind him in Australia:

> - Oh! he had adapted himself supremely well to the standards of this Australia, so-called Felix. And he must not complain if, in so doing, he had been stripped, not only of his rosy dreams, but also of that spiritual force on which he could once have drawn at will. Like a fool he had believed it possible to serve mammon with impunity, and for as long as it suited him. He knew better now. At this moment he was undergoing the sensations of one who, having taken shelter in what he thinks a light and flimsy structure, finds that it is built of solidest stone. Worse still: that he has been walled up inside. (p.317)

Such images of imprisonment and confinement - here, "walled up inside" is reminiscent of the digger trapped in his drive at the opening of the novel, and prophetic of the fate that

awaits Mahony - paralysis, the asylum, the straitjacket - recur throughout the remainder of Australia Felix, particularly in Mahony's attempts to convince Mary of the necessity of his return to England. It is the emphasis on these connected idea of death, burial, paralysis and frustrated escape in Australia Felix which, as I have said earlier, makes Mahony's madness seem not only inevitable but the most terrible thing that could happen to him.

At the end of Australia Felix Mahony sets sail "for the dear old mother country - for home", but it is the purpose of the second volume, ironically entitled The Way Home, to demonstrate that "No place could now be 'home' to him as long as he lived." (p.417) The Proem to this volume, which opens with the last half of Tangye's quotation, describes the voyage to England and Mahony's romantic views of England and of himself as an example of "the wanderer home from the sea" on whom he imagines England's greatness has been founded:

> And just as these rovers carried out news of England, so, homing again, either for a breathing-space in the great tourney, or, old and feeble, to lay their bones in English earth, they brough back their quota of things seen, heard, felt on their Odyssey; a fruity crop of experience; so that even the chimney-dwellers in England came by a certain bigness of vision: through the eyes of son or brother they explored outlandish parts, were present at exotic happenings. And now, his thoughts turning inward, he asked himself whether even he, Richard Mahony, in his small way, was not carrying on the great tradition. Having fared forth in his youth, endured in exile, then heard and obeyed the home-call, did not he, too, return the richer for a goodly store of spiritual experience - his treasure-trove of life-wisdom - which might serve to guide others on their road, or go before them as a warning? And the idea grew, under his pondering. He saw his race as the guardian of a vast reserve fund of spiritual force, to which all alike contributed - as

each was free at will or at need to draw on it - a hoard, not of the things themselves, but of their ghostly sublimates: the quintessence of all achievement, all endeavour; of failure, suffering, joy and pain. And, if this image held, it would throw light on the obscure purpose of such a seemingly aimless life as his had been; a life ragged with broken ends. Only in this way, he must believe, had it been possible to distil the precious drop of oil that was his ultimate essence. (p.351)

Nettie Palmer, after quoting this passage, comments "There is no ironic note in this rather turgid proem, yet it seems as if one were needed, for it is plain that Mahony is bringing back little from his Odyssey except a restless mind and unstable heart."[17] But while it may be plain to us, it is not plain to Mahony, or if it is he refuses to recognise it. The incongruous image of the spiritual bank, with its depositors and withdrawers, is part of his attempt to convince himself - "he must believe" - that there has been a meaning to his life and that he will find happiness and a home in England. It should be noted that immediately before the paragraph containing the passage quoted above Mahony has wondered whether the homing son will, after all, be able to fit back into his old home: "How, knowing what he knows, can he placidly live through the home day, with its small, safe monotony? How give up for ever the excitement of great risks taken and met, on grander shores, under loftier skies?" (p.350) This obviously disturbing thought is dismissed with "a truce to such vapourings!" and Mahony launches into his panegyric with the rhetorical flourishes of the professional orator: "Did the man exist

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[17] A Study, p.90.

that had it in him to fret and go unhappy, fell pinioned, and a prisoner while, round the cliffs of England, now grey, now white, now red, danced and beckoned the English sea?" Again the mention of confinement is significant, serving with the doubt about the "miniature perfection" - after he has been disillusioned Mahony sees Mary and himself as "over-large figures on a miniature background" (p.415) - to undercut the confidently pompous tone of the Proem.

Nettie Palmer's demand for irony is met as well by the "delayed" irony which is so pervasive in the trilogy. Mahony is to discover that the English care for "spiritual force" as little as the Australians: far from welcoming the returned wanderer and his contribution, they despise him for ever having left England and for returning with no tangible "treasure-trove". And this irony is not long delayed. In her only departure from a natural time-sequence in the whole of the trilogy, Richardson opens The Way Home a little over a year after the Mahonys' arrival in England, with Mahony in his second English practice. We find that Mahony is as much an outsider as ever, the subject of "curious and faintly hostile eyes" (p.359), and as little free from worry. He cannot adapt himself to English customs and ideas, and is already beginning to compare them unfavourably with Australian ones. Both this and the English attitude to Australia are demonstrated in the following passage: Mahony, the animal-lover, has been accused of ill-treating a horse:

"Well, upon my word, Jopson, this is something new! I drive for show? ... I overwork a horse? Why, my man, where I come from, it used to be dinned into me on all sides that I was far too easy with them."

"Ca'an't say, surr, I'm sure." Jopson was perfectly civil, but equally non-committal.

"But I can!" gave back Mahony, with warmth. "I had two of my own there, let me tell you, and no beasts were ever better treated or cared for. They certainly hadn't to be walked up every slope for fear they'd lose their wind. They took their honest share of the day's work. For where I come from ..." At the repetition of the phrase he bit his lip.

"Aye, surr, ahl very well, I dessay, for such a place - Australy, as I unnerstand," answered Jopson unmoved. "But 'twouldn't do 'ere, surr - in England. Thic's a civilised country." (pp.357-8)

This idea of cruelty to animals is found at several of the critical moments of the trilogy and can be seen as symbolic of the generalised cruelty of the world, of the suffering which, as I shall show in the next chapter, is presented in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony as inseparable from life. On the night Mahony learns of Purdy's betrayal he is called out on a bush visit and reproves the sick woman's husband, who is beating "his horse to a lather", "'Mercy! ... have a little mercy on the poor brute'". (p.288) The discovery at Venice of the loss of Mahony's fortune coincides with Cuffy's distress at seeing a puppy being drowned. (pp.576-7) These events, and the Buddlecombe passage quoted above, come together in the scene where Mahony beats a hired horse unmercifully while on the way to attend a patient in the bush, which is further connected with Mahony's earlier reproof of Cuffy for beating his wooden horse. (p.500) Mahony has had a poor night, feels very unwell, and only undertakes the journey because he is

"unable to face the fuss and bother in which a refusal would involve him." (p.714) In this state, with the added resentment of Mary's intrusion on his solitude, he is enraged by the slowness with which the horse - "old, spiritless and stubborn as a mule" - is travelling:

> But the prolonged inaction was doing its work: a sense of unreality began to invade him, his surroundings to take on the blurred edges of a dream: one of those nightmare-dreams in which the dreamer knows that he is bound to reach a certain place in a given time, yet whose legs are weighed down by invisible weights ... or which feel as if they are being dragged through water, tons of impeding water ... or yet again the legs of elephantiasis ... swollen, monstrous, heavy as lead: all this, while time, the precious time that remains before the event, is flying. Yes, somewhere ... far away, out in the world ... life and time were rushing by: he could hear the rhythm of their passing in the beat of his blood. He alone lay stranded - incapable of movement. And, as always at the thought of his lost freedom madness seized him: dead to everything but his own need, he rose in his seat and began to rain down blows on the horse: to beat it mercilessly, hitting-out wherever the lash found place - on head, neck, ears, the forelegs, the quivering undersides. In vain the wretched creature struggled to break free, to evade the cut of the thong: it backed, tried to rear, dragged itself from side to side, ducked its defenceless head, the white foam flying. But for it, too, strapped down, buckled in, there was no chance of escape. And the blows fell ... and fell.
>
> "Richard! Oh, don't! - don't beat the poor thing like that! How can you? What are you doing?" For, cruellest of all, he was holding the animal in to belabour it, refusing to let it carry out its pitiful attempts to obey the lash. "You who pretend to be so fond of animals!" (p.715)

Here, in a scene made more terrible by the knowledge that Mahony's fondness for animals has not been a pretence, Richardson again uses the related themes of the passage of time and thwarted escape to show the trap of madness slowly closing on Mahony. The reference to "the beat of his blood" indicates that Mahony's struggle to overcome

the "forces of life and time" has, as I have said earlier, been a struggle against himself. He is the merciless whipper who tries to outpace time and paralysis and also the spiritless old horse whose attempts to obey the lash are frustrated by the whipper's tight hold on the reins. This identification is made more explicit in the description of Cuffy's feelings after the mad ride is over:

> He only wanted to stop where he was. And cry. He felt so dreadfully miserable. For the poor horse ... it couldn't cry for itself ... only run and run - and it hadn't done anything ... 'cept be very old and tired ... prayeth best who loveth best ... oh! everything was turned all black inside him. But for Papa, too, because ... he didn't know why ... only ... when Mamma had gone and Papa thought nobody would see him, he went up to the horse's neck and stroked it. And that made him cry more still. (p.716)

Mahony, too, "hadn't done anything ... 'cept be very old and tired"; while, like all tragic heroes, he may be the initiator of his misfortunes, he does not deserve all the blows that he gets. In connection with this identification, it may be noted that Tangye is said to have "muscles on his neck standing out like those of a skinny old horse." (p.256)

The "nightmare" imagery which gives the horse-beating scene so much force is used to even greater effect in the dream produced by one of the consequences of this journey: the broken leg Mahony has set fails to mend, he is accused of being drunk at the time and threatened with a lawsuit for malpractice. This dream, like the "lilac" dream in Maurice Guest, has as its starting point an incident of the previous day, and contains recollections of past events and conversations and confusions of characters with common attributes. The scene from the past most fully reproduced

in the dream is the episode of Bolliver's lawsuit against Mahony - the connection is obvious, the present threat of a lawsuit calls up memories of the earlier one - but many of the details come from other parts of the trilogy. The "ill-smelling oven" of the court in the earlier case is paralleled by the "airless and fetid" court of the dream, and the judge is again picking his teeth. The sentence "Foul teeth ... a foul breath ... out of such a mouth should judgment come?" (p.730) also recalls Mahony's scene with Mrs. Beetling, the housekeeper at Barambogie, when he castigates her for "the disgraceful state" of her teeth (p.677), together with his resentment of the judgment passed on him by the townspeople, whom Mrs. Beetling symbolises. The "melting jujubes" Mahony finds in his pocket while searching for some forceps, apparently to make a direct attack on the judge's teeth, come from the scene of his humiliation at Buddlecombe "Hall": he is left alone to overhear his hostess's slight on Mary when his companion finds "that he had left his jujubes in the pocket of his greatcoat." (p.413) They therefore symbolise his feeling that Mary, in herself and in her concern for the children, has always been in the way of his escape - an idea which recurs at the end of the dream. Mahony tries to get rid of this "sticky conglomerate"

> But his neighbour, a brawny digger, with sleeves rolled high above the elbow and arms behaired like an ape's, espied him, and made as if to call the attention of the usher to his misdeed. To escape detection he rose and moved hurriedly to the other side of the court; where, oddly enough, there seemed after all to be plenty of room. (p.730)

Here again is the theme of escape, escape from Australia - the digger - in particular.

Mahony now realises that "every one present was more or less familiar to him" and overhears a conversation between "two rascally-looking men" behind him which is similar to one he heard at the earlier trial. He tries to discover why he is in court

> But these haunting resemblances had unnerved him; he could do nothing but worry the question where he had met plaintiff's counsel. The name hung on the very tip of his tongue; yet would not out. A common, shoddy little man, prematurely bald, with a protruding paunch and a specious eye - he wouldn't have trusted a fellow with an eye like that farther than he could see him. Most improperly dressed, too; wearing neither wig nor gown, but a suit of loud, horsey check, the squares of which could have been counted from across a road. (pp.730-1)

This figure recalls Bolliver's counsel who "was a common little fellow of ungainly appearance: a double roll of fat bulged over the neck of his gown, and his wig, hastily re-donned after a breathing space, sat askew" (p.94) but the details do not quite coincide. He is, more significantly, Mahony's old friend Purdy, who has earlier been described as "This common, shoddy little man, already pot-bellied and bald" (p.484), who wears "Horsey checks" (p.486), and has "an eye grown shifty from overreaching his fellowmen" (p.529) and on whose recommendation Mahony had entrusted his entire fortune. Next, in a slight departure from the course of Bolliver's case, "It seemed that the plaintiff was drunk, not in a fit state to give evidence ... though surely that was his voice protesting vehemently that he had never been the worse for drink in his life?", there is another

connection with the events of the previous day. Then the would-be plaintiff, after reviling Mahony as a "damned, drunken old swine", had been himself accused of this failing by Mary: "'You!... with a face that shows everybody what your habits are ... to slander some one who's never in his life been the worse for drink?'" (p.728) This also refers to the ironic situation, mentioned earlier, of Mahony's symptoms being interpreted by the people of Barambogie as signs of drunkenness.

The defendant who now enters the witness-box has some resemblance to Bolliver: like him, he is a "poor old mangy greybeard" whose "shabby clothing was brushed" (p.95) "meticulously free of dust and dandruff." (p.731) But Mahony is the defendant here, as in the earlier case:

> Edging forward in his seat he craned his neck; then half rose, in his determination to see the fellow's face - and, having caught a single glimpse of it, all but lost his balance and fell, with difficulty restraining a shriek that would have pealed like the whistle of a railway-engine through the court, and have given him away ... beyond repair. For it was himself he saw, himself who stood there perched aloft before every eye, holding fast, with veined and wrinkled hands, to the ledge of the dock: himself who now suddenly turned and looked full at him, singling him out from all the rest. His flesh crawled, his hairs separated, while something cold and rapid as a ball of quicksilver ran from top to bottom of his spine. - Two of him? God in heaven! But this was madness. Two of him? The thing was an infamy ... devilish ... not to be borne. Which was he? (p.731)

The reference to the "shriek" is prophetic since the ability to restrain from shrieking later comes to be Mahony's test of sanity - at the moment when he goes completely mad he imagines that he utters this "insane scream". (p.780) Here Mahony is again presented as a man divided in two - he sees

himself as the townspeople of Barambogie see him. In a recollection of the meeting held for Archbishop Long, Mahony's appearance in the box, "which stood high, like a pulpit", is greeted with laughter and he once more has difficulty in reading. His plea for mercy

> "Me Lud, if the case goes against me I'm a ruined man. And he has got his knife in me, me Lud! ... he's made up his mind to ruin me. A hard man ... a cruel man! ... if ever there was one. Oh, spare me, me Lud! ... have pity on my wife and my two little children!" (p.732)

resembles Bolliver's "'My Lord, if the case goes against me, I'm done ... stony-broke! And the defendant's got a down on me, my Lord - e's made up his mind to ruin me. Look at him a-setting there - a hard man, a mean man, if ever you saw one.'" (p.96) Mahony, the onlooker, is horrified by this cringing, just as Mary had been when she found him "cowering" before his accuser. (p.727) His pride refuses to identify "The despicable sniveller! The unmanly craven!" with himself, as it had earlier refused to recognise any similarity between himself and Tangye:

> ... he disowned him - loathed him - spat at him in spirit: his whole being swam in hatred. But even as, pale with fury, he joined in the hyaena-like howl against clemency that was raised, a small voice whispered in his ear that his time was running short. He must get out of this place ... must escape ... save himself ... from the wrath to come. Be up and away, head high, leaving his ghost to wring its hands ... and wail ... and implore. (p.732)

But the way to freedom, as always, contains many obstacles; "just when he thought he was safe", another old acquaintance in the court calls his name, the crowd sets off in pursuit, and the dream concludes with a powerful presentation of the recurrent theme of escape and capture:

He fled down Little Bourke Street, and round and up Collins Street, running like a hare, but with a steadily failing strength, drawing sobbing breaths that hurt like blows; but holding his left hand fast to his breast-pocket, where he had the knife concealed. His ears rang with that most terrifying of mortal sounds: the wolf-like howl of a mob that chases human game and sees its prey escaping it. For he was escaping; he would have got clean away if, of a sudden, Mary and the children had not stood before him. In a row ... a third child, too. He out with his knife ... now he knew what it was for! But a shrill scream stayed his hand ... who screamed? who screamed? ... and with such stridency. Mary ... it could only be Mary who would so deliberately foul his chances. For this one second's delay was his undoing. Some one had dashed up behind and got him by the shoulder, and was bearing him down, and shaking, shaking, shaking ... (pp.732-3)

Mahony's attempt to kill his family as Bolliver has killed his pet rabbits recalls his thought on the night when he discovers his dual nature: "Were they dearer? In this moment of greater clarity he could no longer affirm it. He believed that the instinct of self-preservation had, in his case, always been the primary one." (pp.692-3) Mahony has, almost since the day of their marriage, seen Mary as the major hindrance to his plans of escape; as he becomes more and more insane, his resentment and hatred of her grow until, as we are shown in the dream, he comes to think that she, and the children whose needs she puts before his own, are responsible for his loss of freedom.

Thus it can be seen that Mahony's dream is a prime example of the careful construction, the attention to detail and the method of giving significance to apparently unimportant events through parallels with past and future, which are some of Richardson's main merits as a novelist. F.H. Mares has referred to the trilogy's "remarkable

richness of texture",[18] something which is, I think, nowhere more evident than in the section describing this dream. Here, Richardson's skilful and subtle combination of facts and characters from all three volumes not only provides an outward sign of the essential unity of the trilogy, but makes it difficult to agree with the view that she was lacking in imagination.

While waiting to learn whether or not he must face the disgrace of a real lawsuit, Mahony is terrified by the fear, anticipated in the dream, that he will be unable to restrain a betraying shriek when the Barambogie mill-whistle makes its "murderous din". (p.736) Although this does not happen, he decides that "Another day like this, and he would not be answerable for himself" and so determines to take the final escape of suicide. He goes into the bush with a bottle of poison but, before taking it, has the self-insight that pride has been "the most vital part of him". This causes him to doubt the wisdom of suicide and, after a great struggle with his pride, for the first time in his life he truly accepts the pain life entails as part of God's plan:

> Pain, a state of being so interwoven with existence that, without it, life was unthinkable. For, take suffering from life, and what remained? Surely, surely, what was so integral a part of creation could not spring from blind chance? ... be wholly evil? ... without value in the scheme of things? A test! - God's acid test ... failing to pass which, a man might not attain to his full stature. (pp.739-40)

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[18] The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: A Reconsideration", op.cit., p.64.

In token of this new determination to meet life, Mahony throws away the poison and, as he does so, experiences the "bull's-eye flash of light that was some day to break in upon him; solving the riddle and illuminating the why and wherefore of existence":

> he was lying, he found, in a pool of light; a radiance thick as milk, unearthly as moonlight. And this suffused him, penetrated him, lapped him round. He breathed it in, drew deep breaths of it; and, as he did so, the last vestiges of his old self seemed to fall away. All sense of injury, of mortification, of futile sacrifice was wiped out. In its place there ran through him the beatific certainty that his pain, his sufferings - and how infinitesimal these were, he now saw for the first time - had their niche in God's Scheme (pain the bond that linked humanity: not in joy, in sorrow alone were we yoke-fellows) - that all creation, down to the frailest protoplasmic thread, was one with God; and he himself, and everything he had been and would ever be, as surely contained in God, as a drop of water in a wave, a note of music in a mighty cadence. More: he now yearned as avidly for this submergedness, this union of all things living, as he had hitherto shrunk from it. The mere thought of separation became intolerable to him: his soul, ascending, sang towards oneness as a lark sings its way upwards to the outer air. For, while the light lasted, he understood: not through any feat of conscious perception, but as a state - a state of being - a white ecstasy, that left mere knowledge far behind. The import of existence, the mysteries hid from mortal eyes, the key to the Ultimate Plan: all now were his. And, rapt out of himself, serene beyond imagining, he touched the hem of peace at last ... eternal peace ... which passeth understanding. (p.740)

This illumination has been called "a trite answer to one of the eternal mysteries",[19] a criticism refuted by A.A. Phillips in the following passage:

> In establishing her thesis, Miss Dallimore is not helped by an unlucky mistake on a central point. She dismisses with contempt Mahony's interior monologue when he is contemplating suicide. To her the conclusion of this passage 'affirms a too easy, even a glib certainty', it is

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[19] Jennifer Dallimore, "The Malaise of Richard Mahony", op.cit., p.55.

'trite'. 'Victorian pie-in-the-sky' fairly paraphrases her estimate of it; and it is nothing of the sort. It is a typical example of the mystic revelatory vision. I am ill-read in mystic literature, but I have met this vision at least half-a-dozen times, and I have always been struck by the similarity, virtually the identity, of these experiences. The pattern does not vary; and Mahony's vision fits it.[20]

And it is interesting to note that an example of a very similar presentation of the "mystic vision" exists in the work of a more recent Australian writer. At the end of Patrick White's The Tree of Man Stan Parker, who has been searching for the answers to "the mysteries of life" and has an uncomprehending, unsympathetic wife but is in other respects very different from Mahony, is "illuminated": "A great tenderness of understanding rose in his chest. Even the most obscure, the most sickening incidents of his life were clear. In that light. How long will they leave me like this, he wondered, in peace and understanding?"[21] And in this light "It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums."[22] If, therefore, Richardson fails to convince us of the value of Mahony's vision, she is not alone in her failure - perhaps it is something which, apparently not being perceived in any literal way, cannot be translated into words. It might perhaps be argued that this illumination is not meant to be taken seriously, that it is a figurement of Mahony's disordered mind, but this is something I doubt since, as I shall show in the next chapter,

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[20] "Grahame Johnston's Australian Literary Criticism", Meanjin, XXII (1963), p.223.

[21] Op.cit. (1956), p.496.

[22] Ibid., p.497.

certain of its ideas, in particular the common bond of suffering, are expressed very strongly in the action of the trilogy.

One criticism which can be made of this scene, however, is that Richardson, limited by the need to use Victorian terms, fails to differentiate sufficiently between Mahony's new faith and the triteness of his earlier acceptance of God's will, which was undercut by his doubts and fears. For it is significant that Mahony has this illumination at a time when, no longer divided against himself, he can at last recognise and accept pain and suffering, even the "hideous spectre" of madness, as inevitable. The simple "But he struggled no more" (p.741) conveys the change in Mahony's attitude to life very tellingly. This new-found peace and unity is, of course, only momentary. Mahony emerges from the serious illness which follows his night in the bush with a mind so disintegrated that he can no longer be held responsible for his actions. That his achievement of self-knowledge is so useless, because powerless to prevent the working-out of his fate, is part of his presentation as a tragic hero. The energies and intelligence that may have resulted in important discoveries - we are told that Baron von Krause "had once spoken to [Mary], in warm terms, of Richard's intimate knowledge of the native flora, and lamented the fact that he should not have found time to systematise his studies" (p.653) - have been spent in a futile struggle against the acceptance of life and the fate it holds for all.

It is this sense of waste, both of his natural talents and of the discovery which is the outcome of all his suffering, which gives Mahony's story much of its tragedy. An effect which is, of course, also in large measure the result of the skill Richardson displays in organising her material so that Mahony's madness seems not only an inevitable, but the most fitting and tragic, outcome of the total action. Far from decreasing his tragedy, the emphasis on the physical nature of his decline serves, in the context of his earlier aspirations and fears, to accentuate it. Mahony, who has always believed that man is more than an animal, is gradually and inexorably reduced to a state of bestiality and nothingness. And to see this man, made noble by his rejection of the material values of his world, have as his last conscious thought "it had to do with money" (p.778) is, I think, to see a fall which is truly tragic.

CHAPTER VII

THE FORTUNES OF RICHARD MAHONY :

"not in joy, in sorrow alone were we yoke-fellows."

Although the phrase which I have chosen for my chapter-heading is, in the context of Richard Mahony's illumination, a reference to one of the general truths about the human condition, it also serves as an apt comment on the Mahonys' marriage. In Myself When Young Henry Handel Richardson refers to her mother and father as "these two widely differing parents" (p.5) and this divergence is equally noticeable in their fictional counterparts, Mary and Richard Mahony. Richard, as we have seen, is the pessimistic denier of life, who regards his fellow men with a suspicious reserve, and attempts to retreat from the restrictions of reality to the limitless world of the mind and spirit. Mary, on the other hand, is the optimistic affirmer of life, who is criticised by Richard for her ready friendliness and her tendency to see good in everyone, and is too busy dealing with material possibilities to be concerned with intellectual or spiritual ones. This difference in Richard's and Mary's attitudes to life is related to the difference in their aims and ideals: Mary believes that true happiness for herself and Richard lies in the attainment of financial security and professional and social standing; he values material success only as a means to the attainment of a

life devoted to "things of the spirit". It has been said that Richardson provides no answers for the "question of the meaning of life, and of suffering" which she raises in the trilogy. Jennifer Dallimore's article "The Malaise of Richard Mahony", source of the preceding quotation, contains the further complaint that Richardson "tries to give answers" by failing to present an adequate criticism of the views held by Richard and Mary.[1] It is true that there is no direct statement of Richardson's beliefs in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony; here, as in her earlier work, she presents her characters objectively. But in the course of doing so, as I shall try to show, she provides both meaning and criticism. The "meaning" is in part the same as that of The Getting of Wisdom, where Laura Rambotham learns that, in both life and literature, one must temper one kind of truth with another - neither fact nor fantasy is successful on its own. The Mahonys' marriage is a failure because it is one of conflict rather than complement: neither of them is able to see any value in the other's aims. Both are equally at fault in attempting to exclude suffering from their plan for life. For suffering is shown to be as unavoidable as the change and decay which cause it.

When Richardson is outlining the reasons for Richard's decision to marry Mary we see that his attitude to his bride is predominantly one of protective, and patronising,

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[1] Op.cit., Quadrant, V (1961), pp.55-6

tenderness. He fancies himself the knight in shining armour who is to rescue "little Polly" from the vulgarities of the Beamish household, and later from all the vulgarities of Australia. In return he will, he thinks, gain a devoted, complying "little woman" who will create a haven of comfort and refinement where he can escape from the surrounding wilderness. Richard's attitude to Mary is rather like his attitude to Purdy : a benevolent fatherly determination to overlook the defects of this young creature, to guide and protect her, coupled with a despotic fatherly determination to refuse to recognise this creature's right to disagree with his own outlook on life. Richardson has been frequently criticised for her "sexless" treatment of the Mahony's marriage; as I have said, an underlying reason for this may be that Richard's relationship with Mary is based on Richardson's with her mother. Richardson's reticence about sex can, in any case, be justified as part of her attempt to be true to her period - an attempt which has both good and bad consequences for the trilogy as a whole. It is the reticence found in Victorian novels, where only the arrival of children testifies to the characters not being totally sexless. Richard's love for Mary, as is seen in his attitudes to her before and after marriage, is completely in keeping with Richardson's presentation of him as "an early Victorian man, with all the prejudices and limitations of his kind".[2] But

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[2] 1912 Diary, p.18. (In the National Library)

Richardson's attempts to avoid anachronisms affect not only what she says about her characters but the way in which she says it. At times the trilogy seems less a novel about Victorians than a Victorian novel. This Victorian tone is most noticeable in the first volume, though in her 1930 revisions Richardson removed some of the passages in which it appeared most strongly. One of these is worth quoting for its description of Richard's feelings about his marriage and about the future. After obtaining John Turnham's consent to the marriage he meets John's wife and children and reflects that he will be able to share the joys of parenthood with Mary. In the revised version this chapter (8) ends with the words "her joy in them would also be his" (p.73) but the original continued with a fuller vision of their future happiness:

> - And now, letting his thoughts take wing, he saw them both, her woman's duty done, standing side by side to watch their young brood go forth. They were grey-haired now, and glad to rest, but their love for each other was still fresh and strong. - Oh, God was good, and the world a fair place to live in! The Divine Architect had ordered, not alone the huge, starry field of the heavens, but the narrow river twisting down to the sea, the tender intricacies of the human heart. The same Gracious Will stood revealed in one and all. There <u>was</u> a design in Creation![3]

But very early in the novel there are signs that Mahony will be disillusioned as to the "perfect harmony of mind" between himself and his wife. This phrase occurs in a description of his premarital letters to Mary (she is called Polly in the first section of the book but shall be referred to as Mary throughout this chapter):

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[3] <u>Australia Felix</u> (1917), p.80.

To the little black-eyed girl who pored over his letters at "Beamish's Family Hotel", he unbosomed himself as never in his life before. He enlarged on his tastes and preferences, his likes and dislikes; he gave vent to his real feelings for the country of his exile, and his longings for "home"; told how he had come to the colony, in the first instance, with the fantastic notion of redeeming the fortunes of his family; described his collections of butterflies and plants to her, using their Latin names. And Polly drank in his words, and humbly agreed with all he wrote, or at least did not disagree; and, from this, as have done lovers from the beginning of time, he inferred a perfect harmony of mind. On one point only did he press her for a reply. Was she fond of books? If so, what evenings they would spend together, he reading aloud from some entertaining volume, she at her fancy work. And poetry? For himself he could truly say he did not care for poetry ... except on a Saturday night or a quiet Sunday morning; and that was, because he liked it too well to approach it with any but a tranquil mind.

I think if I know you aright, as I believe I do, my Polly, you too have poetry in your soul.

He smiled at her reply; then kissed it.

I cannot write poetry myself, said Polly, but I am very fond of it and shall indeed like very much dear Richard to listen when you read. (p.76)

Here, not only the ironic reference to love's blindness, but the tone of the whole passage and, in particular, the emphasis on the personal "to listen when you read" in Mary's reply indicates the gap between Richard's optimistic predictions and reality. For poetry, music, anything of an abstract nature, can be appreciated by Mary only in their personal and practical applications. When Richard does read to her, Mary's inability to see any value in abstract or imaginative ideas is described in no uncertain terms:

Little Polly's professed love for poetry had been merely a concession to the conventional idea of girlhood; or, at best, such a burning wish to be all her Richard desired, that, at the moment, she was convinced of the truth of what she said. But did he read to her from his favourite authors her

attention would wander, in spite of the efforts she made to pin it down.

Mahony declaimed:

> 'Tis the sunset of life gives us mystical lore,
> And coming events cast their shadows before,

and his pleasure in the swing of the couplet was such that he repeated it.

Polly wakened with a start. Her thoughts had been miles away - had been back at the "Family Hotel". There Purdy, after several adventures, his poor leg a mass of suppuration, had at length betaken himself, to be looked after by his Tilly; and Polly's hopes were all alight again.

She blushed guiltily at the repetition, and asked her husband to say the lines once again. He did so.

"But they don't really, Richard, do they?" she said in an apologetic tone - she referred to the casting of shadows. "It would be so useful if they did" - and she drew a sigh at Purdy's dilatory treatment of the girl who loved him so well.

"Oh, you prosaic little woman!" cried Mahony, and laid down his book to kiss her. It was impossible to be vexed with Polly: she was so honest, so transparent. "Did you never hear of a certain something called poetic licence?"

No: Polly was more or less familiar with various other forms of licence, from the gold-diggers' that had caused all the fuss, down to the special licence by which she had been married; but this particular one had not come her way. And on Richard explaining to her the liberty poets allowed themselves, she shifted uncomfortably in her chair, and was sorry to think he approved. It seemed to her just a fine name for wanton exaggeration - if not something worse. (pp.104-5)

The choice of this particular couplet does not seem arbitrary, for in the trilogy "coming events" certainly do "cast their shadows before", as this passage, with its demonstration of the difference between Mary and Richard in their requirements for happiness and fulfilment, shows.

In Australia Felix Mary's inability to see beyond her immediate environment may seem only natural in a young, inexperienced and poorly educated girl - Richardson, through Richard, treats it with patronising amusement. Later in the novel, however, a slightly critical note is apparent

in Richard's thoughts, for Mary has already shown signs of breaking out of his protective shell:

> He watched, with a kind of amused tenderness, how at each forte passage head and shoulders took their share of lending force to the tones. He never greatly enjoyed Mary's playing. She did well enough at it, God bless her! - it would not have been Mary if she hadn't - but he came of a musical family; his mother had sung Handel faultlessly in her day, besides having a mastery of several instruments: and he was apt to be critical. Mary's firm, capable hands looked out of place on a piano; seemed to stand in a sheerly business relation to the keys. Nor was it other wise with her singing: she had a fair contralto, but her ear was at fault; and he sometimes found himself swallowing nervously when she attacked high notes. (p.249)

Here one is reminded of Madeleine Wade, of whom we are told in Maurice Guest, "Since all she did was well done, it was not possible for her to be a surprise to anyone". (p.528) In many ways Mary is another Madeleine, though her failings are treated less ironically and more sympathetically. For this insensitiveness to anything not directly apprehensible or useful is not a corollary of youth and inexperience, but a fundamental part of her personality. As Richard's attempts to escape the hampering limitations of life grow more desperate, he is less tolerant of Mary's ready acceptance of these limitations, and her lack of belief in anything beyond them. No longer the benevolent and fatherly protector of a child-wife, Richard becomes the rebellious child, associating Mary with the domineering mother who had whipped him as a boy, seeing her as the major obstacle in the path to freedom, as the embodiment of the malignant mother-goddess Australia.

In the working-out of this alteration in Richard's

feelings for Mary - part of the trilogy's underlying pattern of change and decay - one sees Richardson's constructive strength as well as her psychological perception. For the change in Richard from paternal husband to hating child has been preceded by Mary's change, roughly parallel with her change from Polly to Mary,[4] from child-wife to maternal-wife. At first Mary is prepared to accept Richard's views as her own, to regard everything he says and does as right. After six months of marriage "To her husband's habits and idiosyncrasies she had adapted herself implicitly . . . So there was no room for discord between them." (p.102) Nevertheless, the differences between them which will later produce so much suffering are already beginning to show. Husband and wife are opposed not only in their attitude to the arts, but in their attitude to people: Mary's excusing of Ocock's "want of refinement" leads Richard to ponder

> He was always struck by the weak or ridiculous side of a person, and had to dig laboriously down to the virtues. While his young wife, by a kind of genius, saw the good at a glance - and saw nothing else. (p.103)

This is a reflection of the difference in their attitude to life as a whole, Mary always taking an optimistic and pragmatic view of the world, Richard a pessimistic and metaphysical one. Richard at first believes that he would not wish to have "a wife who was only an echo of himself", even though these differences affect such fundamental traits

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[4] This was, of course, Richardson's mother's name but its connotations of suffering motherhood should be recognised.

of his character as his love of animals:

He had a profound respect for those creatures to whom speech had been denied; and he treated the four-footers that dwelt under his roof as his fellows, humanising them, reading his own thoughts into them, and showing more consideration for their feelings than if they had been able to speak up for themselves. Polly saw this in the light of an exquisite joke. She was always kind to Pompey and the stately Palmerston, and would as soon have forgotten to set Richard's dinner before him as to feed the pair; but they remained "the dog" and "the cat" to her, and, if they had enough to eat, and received neither kicks or blows, she could not conceive of their souls asking more. It went beyond her to study the cat's dislike of being turned off its favourite chair, or to believe that the dog did not make dirty prints on her fresh scrubbed floor out of malice prepense; it was also incredible that he should have doggy fits of depression, in which up he must to stick a cold, slobbery snout into a warm human hand. And when Richard tried to conciliate Palmerston stalking sulky to the door, or to pet away the melancholy in the rejected Pompey's eyes, Polly had to lay down her sewing and laugh at her husband, so greatly did his behavior amuse her. (p.103)

Later Richard is to see his lack of animal companionship as another of the sacrifices, involving the loss of all that is fundamental to his own happiness, which he has been forced to make for Mary. Mary's attitude to animals, like her attitude to poetry, shows the limitations of a view of life which sees happiness in material welfare, and refuses to recognise that people have souls as well as bodies. Just as she cannot conceive of the animals' "souls asking more" than food and freedom from physical injury, so she cannot seem to understand that human souls, if, indeed, she believes in other than a conventional way in their existence, require more than material comfort to make them content. In this she is the antithesis of Richard who believes, or wants to believe, that the spirit is more important than the

body, and is prepared to sacrifice material for spiritual well-being.

The first direct clash between these diametrically opposed ideas of happiness comes when Richard, with his business at the store daily decreasing, decides to return to England. This decision is motivated less by his "material anxieties", though they are great, than by the knowledge that they would have been much greater if he had not, through the sharp-dealing of Henry Ocock, won the law-suit brought against him by Bolliver. Richard fears that a longer stay in Australia may result in complete moral and spiritual atrophy. But when he tells Mary of his plan, her pregnancy reinforcing his desire to shield her from the harsher facts of life, he says nothing of the real reasons for it. She, interpreting them through her own attitudes, believes them to be lack of money, and the low social position he occupies. Waiving the idea that Richard's dislike of "place and people" is anything more than a consequence of his lack of success, she thinks that he would gain prosperity and recognition more readily by remaining in Australia (as usual, she is right) and so plans to bring this about. In her decision to keep this plan secret, Mary is influenced by the events of the previous evening, when she had angered Richard by repeating some disparaging remarks made about him by Purdy and Mrs. Beamish. Then, though she had agreed with Richard's "'It's bad enough to say things of that kind; but to repeat them, love, is in even poorer

taste.' ... her amazed inner query was: 'Not even to one's own husband?'" (p.111) Hence Richard, by disillusioning Mary as to the need for complete frankness between husband and wife, seems responsible for her concealments. Richard has always concealed things from Mary and, as their marriage progresses, he becomes more concerned to keep things from her disapproving eyes; Mary, with an increasing distrust in her husband's judgment, to guide him by circuitous means. It is, perhaps, easy to blame Richard for the failure in trust and communication between husband and wife but in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, as in all of Richardson's work, responsibility for anything that happens rarely resides in a single person. This demonstration of interaction, of complex causation, is, indeed, one of the particular values of Richardson's novels.

Attempts to see Mary as the real heroine of the trilogy, therefore, fail to recognise that she is partly to blame for Richard's tragedy. The tendency of Ultima Thule to make a stronger impression on the reader than the earlier books may, perhaps, be one of the reasons for such interpretations. For in Ultima Thule (originally dedicated to Richardson's mother) Richard is seen at his worst and Mary at her best as her loyalty to her husband allows her to transcend her earlier limitations. That she has limitations not only in her appreciation of literature, music and animals but, for all her generous and charitable instincts, in her sympathy for people, is demonstrated by

more than her failure to understand Richard's spiritual needs. Indeed, she is shown to be inferior to Richard in this respect. Richard's sympathy for his fellows, though restricted in its application by his dislike of familiarity and his consequent dislike of intruding into the affairs of others, is at times strong enough to express itself in what appear to Mary as quite quixotic ways. When John Turnham's first wife dies, Mary, because of her pregnancy, cannot help and Richard goes to Melbourne in her place :

> He didn't like the job. He was not one of your born good Samaritans: he relished intruding as little as being intruded on. Besides, morally to sustain, to forbear with, a fellow-creature in misfortune, seemed to him as difficult and thankless a task as any required of one. Infinite tact was essential, and a skin thick enough to stand snubs and rebuffs. But here he smiled. "Or my little wife's inability to recognise them!" (pp.118-9)

This last remark points to one of the reasons for both Mary's faults and virtues. She is not deterred from carrying out anything she thinks necessary by any doubts of her own ability or of the correctness of her actions, nor by any sensitivity with regard to her own feelings or the feelings of others. She judges everything in terms of sense rather than sensibility, sharing the pragmatic views of a society in which success justifies the ways in which it has been achieved, and limiting her finer feelings to what is practical. When Richard discovers John on the verge of a nervous breakdown, he forgets his former scruples and, in order to send John away for a complete rest, assumes full responsibility for his children as well as for his sister, Sarah, and young brother, Jerry.

Richard's sensitivity to the feelings of others is seen in his refusal to offer John the Victorian platitudes of consolement and in his immediate insight into the only way in which John can be helped, while the strength of his sympathy is demonstrated when he puts this insight into practice with no thought for himself. If Richard's impulsiveness leads him into many errors of judgment, it has also, like his pride, a good side: it enables him to respond to the problems of others in an immediate, selfless way. This impractical generosity, which is later to prompt him, in his straits for money at Barambogie, to give a sovereign to an ill washerwoman whom, in any case, he knows he attends gratis, contrasts with Mary's charity which is, like her other traits, constrained by her common sense. Although Mary later reassures Richard that he could not have acted in any other way, her first thoughts on hearing of his impulsive gesture are for herself. And not for the inconvenience and extra work this will bring her, but for the embarrassment:

> For the first time in her young married life, Polly felt vexed with her husband.
> "Oh, he shouldn't have done that ... no, really he shouldn't" she murmured; and the hand with the letter in it drooped to her lap.
> She had been doing a little surreptitious baking in Richard's absence, and without a doubt was hot and tired. The tears rose to her eyes. Deserting her pastry-board she retreated behind the woodstack and sat down on the chopping-block; and then, for some minutes, the sky was blotted out. She felt quite unequal, in her present condition, to facing Sarah, who was so sensitive, so easily shocked; and she was deeply averse from her fine-lady sister discovering the straitness of Richard's means and home. (p.124)

A similar limitation in Mary's sympathies is seen in her opposition to Richard's plan to take as his assistant an impoverished doctor called Wakefield, whose career foretells some of Richard's experiences in Ultima Thule. Mary also fails to sympathise with Richard's help to Devine who, ironically, is later to be such a help to her:

> One hot morning some few days later, Polly, with Trotty at her side, stood on the doorstep shading her eyes with her hand. She was on the look-out for her "vegetable man", who drove in daily from the Springs with his greenstuff. He was late as usual: if Richard would only let her deal with the cheaper, more punctual Ah Sing, who was at this moment coming up the track. But Devine was a reformed character: after, as a digger, having squandered a fortune in a week, he had given up the drink and, backed by a hard-working, sober wife, was now trying to earn a living at market-gardening. So he had to be encouraged. (p.171)

Thus we see that Mary tends to be motivated more by a concern for fortune and success than by "finer" feelings and principles. Her generosity, like her interest in poetry, is limited to the personal and the practical; she helps her family and friends, but even here there is a certain hierarchy. Her first reaction to John's plan to marry her old friend Jinny Beamish is a dismayed "'Jinny is a dear good girl and all that, but she is not John's equal. And that he can even think of putting her in poor Emma's place! - What shall I say to him?'" (p.229) Richard, on the other hand, might be said to have too many principles. This results in his alienation in a society whose only principle is success; where, as in the world of Maurice Guest, the successful people are those who put success before any other consideration. Mary has something of this outlook on

life; her preoccupation with material success causes her to have almost as little thought for Richard's feelings as Schilsky has for Louise's or Ephie's.

Mary's behavior can, perhaps, be excused by the fact that her ambitions are not for herself but for Richard. As, however, she wishes him to achieve her ambitions for him rather than his own, it is not as selfless as it seems. Her ideals are those of the society in which she lives: wealth and social position:

> In her heart she ascribed her husband's want of love for it to the "infra dig." position he occupied. If he mixed with his equals again and got rid of the feeling that he was looked down on, it would make all the difference in the world to him. He would then be out of reach of snubs and slights, and people would understand him better - not the residents on Ballarat alone, but also John, and Sarah, and the Beamishes, none of whom really appreciated Richard. In her mind's eye Polly had a vision of him going his rounds mounted on a chestnut horse, dressed in surtout and choker, and hand and glove with the bigwigs of society - the gentlemen at the Camp, the Police Magistrate and Archdeacon Long, the rich squatters who lived at the foot of Mount Buninyong. It brought the colour to her cheeks merely to think of it. (p.114)

Thus Mary is Richard's equal in holding ideals of happiness though, because hers are more capable of fulfilment, they may appear to be practical aims rather than ideals. Mary's tendency to see character in terms of environment, shown in her willingness to excuse shortcomings - such as Ocock's "want of refinement" - on the grounds of circumstance, underlies her belief that an improvement in Richard's fortunes will mitigate his attitude to Australia. This belief in the power of environmental influences is perhaps natural in one who has lived nearly all her life in a society where the ability to adapt oneself to a strange

and hostile environment is the prime requisite for success. It has a parallel in Richard's own belief that his misfortunes are the product of the Australian environment and that a change of scene will bring him happiness. In the 1912 Diary Richardson quotes some lines from The Brothers Karamazov which illustrate this point of view:

> Like so many another, he believed that with a change in dwelling-place all would be changed. If only he could get rid of these circumstances, this accursed spot! They would all be reborn, everything would begin afresh.[5]

After his discovery that England is no more "home" to him than Australia, Richard recognises that this is a fallacy, but Mary takes longer to do so: even after Richard's collapse at Barambogie she continues to hope that a change of scene will restore him to normality. This belief may be associated with her refusal to admit that there are other forms of happiness besides material and physical comfort, and other problems besides physical illness and material want. Although the environmental element receives strong emphasis in the trilogy, and does play an important part in Richard's tragedy, the source of this lies, as we have seen, in his own character. Life may "crush" Richard, but it does so because he is "never equal to it", and he is never equal to it because he has to fight himself as well. It is this view of man as victim not only of his environment but of forces within his own character that Richardson opposes to Mary's belief that happiness will result if the environment can be sufficiently controlled - that food and freedom from physical pain are

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[5] Op.cit., p.21, translated by Nettie Palmer in Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.85.

all that men, as well as animals, require. In this respect The Fortunes of Richard Mahony is, perhaps, a more "Australian" book than has been realised; Mary's optimism, her faith in material prosperity and her personal loyalty to friends and relatives are very similar to the fundamental beliefs of the Australian Nationalists of the 1890s. The historian C.M.H. Clark has expressed himself "dumbfounded at their optimism, astounded that belief in material progress and mateship should be their only comforters against earth and sky, man and beast",[6] and Mary evokes some of the same feelings in Richard. When Mary is deprived of these comforts by Richard's decision at the end of Australia Felix to give up his practice at Ballarat and return to England, she is also deprived of some of the certainty of her optimistic faith:

> No, her quarrel, she began to see, was not so much with him as with the Powers above. Why should her husband alone not be as robust and hardy as all the other husbands in the place? None of their healths threatened to fail, nor did any of them find the conditions of the life intolerable. That was another shabby trick Fate had played Richard in not endowing him with worldly wisdom, and a healthy itch to succeed. Instead of that, he had been blessed with ideas and impulses that stood directly in his way. - And it was here that Mary bore more than one of her private ambitions for him to its grave. A new expression came into her eyes, too - an unsure, baffled look. Life was not, after all, going to be the simple, straightforward affair she had believed. Thus far, save for the one unhappy business with Purdy, wrongs and complications had passed her by. Now she saw that no more than anyone else could she hope to escape them. (p.330)

But it is not until Richard is close to death at the end of Ultima Thule that Mary completely repudiates her optimism;

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[6] Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900 (1955), p.xv.

then, echoing an earlier idea of Richard's, she thinks: "What was life, but care and suffering? - for everyone alike." (p.826)

Anticipating Mary's disapproval of his "wild-goose scheme" of going to England, Richard has begun to feel that marriage involves restrictions: "One was bound ... bound ... and by just those silken threads which, in pre-marital days, had seemed sheerly desirable." (p.316) Images of confinement recur when he eventually tells Mary of the plan. With an intuitive knowledge that this is the only thing that will appeal to her, he has decided to "lay chief stress on his poor state of health" (p.321); but when Mary advances the sensible remedy of a holiday, he throws caution aside:

"...Now for your own sake, Richard, don't go and do anything rash. If once you sell off and leave Ballarat, you can never come back. And then, if you regret it, where will you be? That's why I say don't hurry to decide. Sleep over it. Or let us consult somebody - John perhaps --"

"No you don't, madam, no you don't!" cried Richard with a grim dash of humour. "You had me once ... crippled me ... handcuffed me - you and your John between you! It shan't happen again."

"I crippled you? I, Richard! Why, never in my life have I done anything but what I thought was for your good. I've always put you first." And Mary's eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, where it's a question of one's material welfare you haven't your equal - I admit that. But the other side of me needs coddling too - yes, and sympathy. But it can whistle for such a thing as far as you're concerned." (pp.323-4)

Here, in Richard's angry exaggeration and Mary's cautious incomprehension, both well conveyed by Richardson, we see the full extent of difference between them : he over-dramatises his needs, she sees their unreality and none of their reality. In much the same way, Mary's blindness to

Richard's condition in Ultima Thule partly results from his earlier hypochondria.

When the Mahonys do eventually reach England, Mary's forebodings are soon fulfilled. Richard, with his usual recklessness, buys a practice at Leicester which ends in failure. Yet when Richard decides to leave his second English practice - with no alternative but a return to Australia - it is as much for Mary's sake as for his own. In his decision to take up this practice at Buddlecombe Richard has again opposed Mary's wishes; she thinks they should go to London. At first Richard's action seems to have been the wise one, but after numerous conflicts with the ingrained prejudices and laws of provincial English society he comes to realise that in Buddlecombe he and Mary stand out like "over-large figures on a miniature background". (p.415) The very qualities which enhanced Mary's reputation in Australia - her ready friendliness, her dislike of formality, her abundant hospitality - make her seem vulgar in England. Although Richard criticises Mary for her inability to comprehend nuances of speech and behavior, his sympathies are entirely with her as he comes to share her view of the people they have left behind them. After the fiasco of Mary's party, which she has organised in a thoroughly Australian way, inviting people from different social circles and serving them a lavish supper - and which, incidentally, provides one example of the trilogy's supposedly non-existent humour - Richard berates Mary for her mistakes, but then tries to console her by joking about

their guests. His wish for an ideal life is made evident in these words:

"What we need, you and I, Mary, is a society that would take the best from both sides. The warm-heartedness of our colonial friends, their generosity and hospitality; while we could do without the promiscuity, the worship of money, the general loudness and want of refinement." (p.396)

This, of course, is what he rather than Mary, who has some of the Australian characteristics he is condemning, wants.

Richard's readiness to align himself with Mary helps to win some sympathy for him, as does the episode which convinces him that they must leave Buddlecombe at the very time when Mary thinks that his "fortunes seemed at last to have taken a definite turn for the better." (p.412) He has been summoned to the "Hall", become "a kind of protege of its mistress", and been invited to dine there, though Mary's existence has not been recognised. It is here that Richard overhears the remark about Mary which causes him to quit Buddlecombe, a decision which, since he feels he cannot tell her the reason for it, Mary can only attribute "to one of his most freakish and wayward impulses":

Mahony saw her trouble; saw, too, how rudely her trust in him was shaken. But he did not enlighten her - he would rather have cut his tongue out. For what had happened concerned Mary first of all; and though there was a chance she might have taken it less tragically than he - in real "Mary-ish" fashion - yet he felt as averse to bringing the words over his lips as to letting her see how deeply it had mortified him. (p.413)

Although it is clear that Richard's action is not without its selfish side - as he realises that Mary herself would probably dismiss the insult much as she had dismissed Purdy's behavior at the ball, the slight to his own pride seems to

be what concerns him most - it is hard not to feel pity for him in this situation. The care he shows for Mary's feelings may be unnecessary, but it is a likable trait, as is his dislike of repeating gossip. One's sympathy for Richard is increased when his reticence serves to widen the breach between himself and Mary by giving "a further push to her tottering faith in Richard's judgment." (p.412)

The consequences of this are, however, set aside for a time by the miraculous improvement in Richard's fortunes which greets the Mahonys' return to Australia; one which has been prepared for, and hence made acceptable, by the general emphasis on the rapidity with which fortunes are made and lost in the colony, and by the specific reference to the "Australia Felix" mine in a letter from Tilly. Mary's reaction to the news of their wealth is, as usual, not as impetuous as Richard's: "Could he have promised her from this day forth a tranquil and contented mind, it would have been the best gift of any." (p.422) But this "contented mind" could only be achieved at the expense of some of those qualities which make Richard an admirable character. As with his pride and his impulsiveness, his discontent of mind has both good and bad aspects; though it may underlie his failure to adapt to life, it also underlies his search for truth, his refusal to accept conventional standards and beliefs. For any reconciliation of the differences between Richard and Mary, he would need to share her belief in contentment, she to see the positive

aspects of his discontent. As in The Getting of Wisdom, fantasy would need to be grounded in fact, worldly wisdom to coexist with unworldly.

Even in prosperity, Richard and Mary find that they have only sorrow in common, though at first they both seem to have achieved happiness and fulfilment. Richard buys his dream-house, which he christens "Ultima Thule" because of its distance from Melbourne, and, seemingly with all his wants satisfied, settles down to a life of study and contemplation. Mary, too, has "now not a care left, hardly a wish unfulfilled" and even renounces her ambitions for her husband to "climb the tree, make a name". (p.454) Wealth and fulfilment do not, however, manage to restore their original confidence in each other; as Richard realises, "life in course brought, to even the fondest of wives, distractions, cares and interests of her own". (p.451) The impossibility of any return, to the old home, to the old happiness, is, of course, part of the general theme of the change involved in the course of life. Both now go their separate ways: Mary to aid and advise her friends and relatives, Richard to his cultural and intellectual pursuits, and are as unable as ever to sympathise with the other's joys. Richard finds the intrusions made on his study by Mary's long list of visitors increasingly irksome, and his annoyance is not lessened by a visit from Tilly, especially when she scoffs at spiritualism, which he is beginning to hope may provide the answers he has failed to find in science and theology. When Richard quarrels with Mary over

the need for Tilly to stay with them, she dares not tell him that Tilly is hoping to be reunited, and afterwards united, with her old sweetheart, Purdy. The situation is not eased when Mary, to further Tilly's plan, invites Purdy to the house. Richard realises that the friendship between himself and Purdy can never be resumed, so is annoyed at Mary's asking Purdy to come again. On her reply that Purdy is his "oldest friend", Richard launches into one of his most significant speeches:

"Best friend! Oldest friend! Good heavens, Mary! do think what you are saying. How can one continue to be friends with a person one never sees or hears of? Surely the word implies somebody with whom one has at least half an idea in common? People don't stand still in this world. They're always growing and changing - up or down or off at a tangent. Panta rei is the eternal truth: semper idem the lie we long to see confirmed. And to hug a sentimental memory of what a mortal once was to you, and go on trying to bolster up an intimacy on the strength of it - why, that's to drag a dead carcase behind you, which impedes your own progress. - No, the real friend is one you pick up at certain points in your life, whose way runs along with yours - for a time. A time only. A milestone on your passage - no more. Few or none march together the whole way." (p.485)

These comments can be equally well applied to their marriage, as it now seems that Richard does not have "half an idea in common" with Mary either. This is brought out most clearly in their different reactions to the news that Mary is to have a baby. Richard worries about how he may best bring up a child to prepare it to face all the questions that have so baffled him; while "Mary wrinkled her brow over none but the most practical considerations." (p.494) The attitudes which husband and wife take towards their children are equally dissimilar, as is shown in their

response to an early display of Cuffy's temper: enraged by his mother's willingness to nurse the twins when she said she had no time to nurse him, Cuffy has vented his anger on his rocking-horse. After consoling Cuffy and telling him why he has been wrong to beat his toy, Richard advises Mary

"If I were you, my dear, I should be careful to distribute my favours equally. Don't let the little fellow feel that his nose has been put out of joint. He's jealous - that's all."

"Jealous? Of his own sisters? Oh, Richard! ... I don't think that augers very well for him. - And surely he can't learn too soon that it's for him to give way to them - as little girls?"

For almost the first time in his knowledge of her, Mahony seemed to sense a streak of hardness in Mary; for the first time she did not excuse a wrongdoer with a loving word. And this her own child! (p.500)

This "hardness" in Mary, perhaps a product of her insensitivity to anything which is not physically real - she can make allowances for people on environmental or material, but not psychological, grounds - is to become increasingly noticeable not only in regard to the children, but to Richard when his insanity leads him to act in a childlike way.

Engrossed in her children, Mary has less time and thought than ever to spare for Richard. He finds companionship elsewhere in the person of Mrs. Marriner, "the youngish widow whose acquaintance Mary had made while visiting the Urquhart's station." (p.505) Mrs. Marriner, although appearing so briefly in the novel, is one of the most vivid of the minor characters. In the few things said about her and by her, all her attractions and pretences are realised. Her appearance is prepared for, with Richardson's

usual thoroughness, in Mary's letters to Richard from Yarangobilly. At first Mrs. Marriner is mentioned as the latest lady-love of that incorrigible flirt, Willy Urquhart - "a very charming person and interested unfortunately in everything Willy's interested in - horses, dogs, riding, cattle and sheep - to cut it short, all Louisa isn't" - but later we see that she has turned her charm, her ability to reflect the interests of the person she is with, on Mary:

She is really very charming and it isn't exactly her fault; she can't help pleasing. And so sensible, too. We had a talk, she and I, about poor Agnes and her failing - she knows all about it - and she quite agrees with me, it's really some one's duty to tackle Mr. Henry. (p.469)

Richard's initial attitude to Mrs. Marriner is rather wary and critical, but alters when he realises that she is interested in everything that Mary isn't - books, music, animals, spiritualism. Reflecting on the differences between Mrs. Marriner and Mary, Richard comes to see his wife as a stern judge who tries to convince him that his ideals are worthless, the remorseless mother who tries to shake him awake from his dreams. This view of Mary as censorious and coercing mother later comes to have an increasingly stronger grip on Richard as he associates her with his mother, who had thrashed him if his lessons were "ill done or left undone". (p.719) When he imagines telling Mary of the debt he has incurred to build the house at Hawthorn, "the years fell away, and he was a little velvet-suited lad, paling and quivering under the lash of a caustic Irish tongue." (p.693)

Ironically, Richard's recognition of Mary as the type

of mother-love has helped to dispel the dissatisfaction produced by his comparison of her and Mrs. Marriner. The discovery that John Turnham has cancer serves to reunite husband and wife in their facing of this sorrow. Helpless suffering brings out the best in Mary, and Richard feels that beside this measureless love his carpings about her deficiencies are trivial:

> There was nobody like Mary in a crisis: happy the mortal who, when his end came, had her great heart to lean on. That was worth all else. For of what use, in one's last hour, would be the mental affinity, the ties of intellect he had so lately pitied himself for having missed? One would see these things then for the earth-trimmings they were. A child faced with the horrors of the dark does not ask for his fears to be shared, or to have their origin explained to him. He cries for warm, enfolding arms, with which to keep his terror at bay; or which, if met these must be, alone can help him through the ordeal. Man on his death-bed was little more than such a child; and it was for the mother-arms he craved, to which he clung in passing, until, again like a child, he had dropped to sleep. Hope, faith and love, these three ... yes, but needed was a love like Mary's, compounded of utter selflessness, and patience, and infinite forbearance - a love which it was impossible to sin against or overthrow ... which had more than a touch of the divine in it; was a dim image of that infinite tenderness God Himself might be assumed to bear towards the helpless beings He had created. Measured by it, all other human experience rang hollow. (p.521)

This, of course, is the view of Mary given in the final chapters of Ultima Thule: the selfless, courageous, all-enduring giver of a love of which many critics have deemed Richard unworthy. No one can deny that Mary has these qualities, not that they are rare and valuable ones. But Mary's tragedy is that she withholds her help and sympathy until it is too late; like Richard, who realises the truth about himself in what is almost his last sane moment, Mary only manages to accept the truth about her husband, and to

fit her behavior to this, when anything that she does can in no way alter the situation. And more than these recognitions are wasted. Just as Richard wastes his talents in a hopeless struggle against life, so Mary wastes hers - the talent for love - by not giving it when it is most needed. For Richard's "terrors" are to appear before the hour of his death; the ordeal to be endured is to be not physical death but the death of the mind, the part of him for which Mary has least understanding and love. So, as his crisis approaches, her reaction is the opposite of that described above. Instead of "a great heart to lean on", she offers him stubborn disapproval and distrust; the "mother-arms" are not "warm, enfolding arms with which to keep his terrors at bay" but the dealers of chastising blows, a further terror to be avoided: "Mary? ... Mary's voice? Recoiling, he threw up his arms as if to ward off a blow, looking round at her with a face that was wry and contorted." This is Richard's last action before he becomes completely insane; Mary

> who had read into the outward fling of his arm towards her only an appeal for help, for comfort, was on her knees beside him, her bonnet awry, her dress in disarray, crushing the poor old head to her breast and crying: "Richard! My darling! What is it, oh, what is it?"
> But to these words, with which she had so often sought enlightenment, sought understanding, there was now no reply. (p.781)

With this tangible evidence of Richard's insanity making it no longer possible for her to avoid accepting the truth, Mary instantly becomes the protective, loving, all-forgiving mother of the earlier passage. She lavishes on this

creature, who cannot respond to it, all the love, the single-minded sympathy - the children now take second place - the consideration for his tastes, prejudices and interests, which she had previously withheld. And the very immensity and strength of this love, at a time when it is powerless, throws into even greater relief its earlier deficiencies. Mary's sins are those of omission rather than commission, which perhaps explains why they have often been overlooked.

It may perhaps be rather unfair to Mary to term her blindness to Richard's condition a sin, for it is presented in such a way as to seem natural and inevitable. She has always thought Richard odd, unaccountable and a hypochondriac, and he is now less ready than ever to seek her sympathy. He does not tell her about the money he has borrowed to build the Hawthorn house and so she cannot understand why he continually worries about money or why he decides he must give up the practice at Hawthorn. So she thinks he is more restless and irresponsibly fanciful than ever, and is less ready to believe him when he says that the practice at Barambogie is failing and that he is in bad health. Even after Richard's attempt at suicide - Mary, characteristically, puts its failure down to his "fondness for her, for his children" (p.743) - has made it imperative for them to leave Barambogie, Mary still refuses to recognise that something is radically wrong with him. When Mary objects to his plan of settling at Shortland's Bluff, Richard is forced to tell her

My affection, which was aphasia, may come on again at any time. It may also end in ... well, in my becoming a hopeless burden ... to you and every one. Nothing can be done: there is no treatment for it but a total absence of worry and excitement. So if you regret Narrong, you must forgive me: it was done for your sake. (p.748)

But although she has no ignorance to excuse her this time, Mary persists in her unwillingness to accept as true anything that would contradict her optimistic approach to life. She believes that Richard's illness and increased peculiarity have been caused by the unsatisfactory environment of Barambogie, and thinks that in a new environment he, and their lives, will return to normal.

As Mary is forced to learn, this ideal is as impossible of attainment as any that Richard has had earlier. The opening of the last section of Ultima Thule shows that Richard's suspicions and delusions are becoming more and more overpowering. He even resorts to physical violence in his quarrels with Mary, although he instantly repents of this. Mary is, however, unable to forgive him until he attributes his behavior to a fall he has had: "'A fall? How? Were you hurt?' Mary asked quickly. At any hint of bodily injury, and was it but a bruise, she was all sympathy and protection." (p.756) Once again Mary lives up to Richard's earlier accusation that her sympathy for him is restricted to his physical and material needs. Richard's behavior has by now become so queer that everyone who sees him recognises what is the matter with him. Everyone, that is, except Mary: "As if struck by a beneficient blindness, Mary, alone unseeing, alone unsuspecting, held to her way." (p.774) Naturally, nobody

requires Richard's medical services, so Mary decides to make some money by taking boarders; apparently recalling Richard's action over the debt, she determines not to tell him about this till things are irrevocably settled. But she is not the only one capable of revenge. When Richard realises what she is doing he behaves, in her words, "like a madman", and his hatred of Mary takes total possession of his mind. Richard's anxiousness to be alone in the house next morning raises some suspicions in Mary; she fears he may be going to kill himself

> But, this half-born apprehension spoken out, she fell righteously foul of herself: her reason, her common sense, that part of her which had waged such a life-long war with the fantastic, the incorporeal, rose in arms. Such nonsense! Really ... if one once began to let oneself go. ... (Besides, wasn't Bridget constantly in and out of the scullery?) Imaginings like these came solely from want of sleep. How angry Richard would be, too, if she reappeared! (pp.778-9)

So Mary, with a characteristic denial of anything that does not fit in with her notions of the reasonable, leaves Richard to carry out his last conscious act: the burning of the deeds and securities, symbols of the financial security which he sees as Mary's aim in life.

Now that she can no longer cling to her hopes for the future, Mary's sympathies are whole-heartedly with Richard. With some of his own pride, she refuses to follow the usual course for a woman in her position and become dependent on her relatives, but though willing to do anything, does not know what she can do. When it is suggested that she become a postmistress, Mary is "tossed and torn, between a womanly repugnance, her innate self-distrust, and her sound common

sense".

It was the sight of Richard that determined her. When she saw him sitting propped up among his pillows, his lower jaw on the shake; when she heard his pitiful attempts to say what he wanted - like a little child he was having to be taught the names of things all over again - when she looked at this wreck, every other consideration fell away. What did she matter? ... What did anything or anybody matter? - if only she could restore to health and contrive to keep, in something of the comfort he had been used to, this poor old comrade of the years. (p.786)

Fortunately, Henry Ocock is able to secure Mary a position on the condition that she can be ready to fill it in six weeks. With the assumption of Richard's responsibilities, Mary finds that she has also taken over many of his prejudices, "She would never have believed she was so sensitive, so touchy" (p.786), and the time spent learning her job becomes a "calvary" for her. But with the strength and perseverance with which she now overcomes all obstacles, she is able to leave for Gymgurra on time.

When they are packing, Mary insists on taking Richard's specimen boards with them, even though - in spite of Cuffy's protests - the children's toys must be left behind. This is in marked contrast to her behavior when they are leaving Barambogie. (See p.749) Richard's collections have been a recurring motif throughout the book, symbol of his intellectual aspirations and, in their unclassification, of the defeat of these aspirations. They have been a kind of status symbol for Richard and for Mary, too, who, when Baron von Krause visits them at Barambogie, cleans and arranges these cases because "she wasn't going to let people think that, because he had come to live up country, he was

therefore running to seed." (p.653) Now "those dirty old cork-boards with butterflies pinned to them - most of them had got their wings knocked off them now - and the old glass boxes with bits of stone in them, and dead flowers" (p.789) are, in their dilapidated state, an apt symbol for Richard himself. Mary's determination not to be parted with these useless things demonstrates her new loyalty to everything connected with Richard. This may be attributed not only to her love for Richard, which seems increased by his helplessness and, perhaps, by a wish to make up for her earlier neglect, but also to her new awareness of some of the reasons for his seemingly "fanciful" behavior. One of Mary's jobs at Gymgurra is to meet the mail-coach that arrives in the middle of the night:

> Almost at once it became a nervous obsession (she who had had such small patience with Richard's night fancies!) that, did she even doze off, she might fail to hear the knocking - calculated though this was to wake the dead! - fail in her duty, lose her post, bring them all to ruin. (p.798)

The change in Mary's attitudes is demonstrated in her decision to bring Richard home from the asylum. Earlier, unable to afford the fees of the private home, she had agreed, since from a common sense point of view and for the sake of the children it seemed the only solution, to his being certified as a lunatic and confined in the state asylum. But she becomes increasingly uneasy about this decision, and eventually goes to Melbourne to see if Richard is being properly cared for. The reception she gets at the asylum convincing her that this is not the case, Mary does

everything she can to get Richard released, succeeding only after she has used a form of "spiritual blackmail" on Henry Ocock. Mary is now motivated by something other than common sense; she acts in a way which seems "fanciful and foolish" to others, because determined by love and imagination. When the warder tells her that Richard refuses to eat - "'No sooner do I bring him his grub than he ups and pitches the dishes at me head'", Mary replies

"Do you mean to tell me he ... that you give him fresh crockery to break every day?"

"Crockery? Ho, no fear! The plates and cups is all of tin."

At this Mary laughed, but very bitterly. "Ah! now I see. That explains it. For I know my husband. Never would you get him ... nothing would induce him ... to eat off tin."

"Needs Sèvres no doubt!"

"No! All he needs is to be treated like a gentleman ... by gentlemen."

But she had to keep a grip on her mind to hinder it from following the picture up: Richard, forced by this burly brute to grope on the floor for his spilt food, to scrape it together, and either eat it or have it thrust down his throat. So she shut her ears, made herself deaf to their further talk, stood as it were looking through the speakers and out beyond - at her ripening purpose. (p.806)

Mary has now adopted Richard's standards of suiting one's behavior not to what is thought practically possible, but to what is demanded by the realisation that man is more than an animal.

A further change in Mary's attitudes is apparent in her recognition that unpleasant, "unnecessary" events are part of the pattern of life:

But she had no time to think of herself - to think at all, in fact - nor did she linger regretfully over what had been, or grieve in advance for what was bound to come. And Richard's condition ceased to sadden her: valiantly she accepted the inevitable. (p.822)

This resignation to pain as an essential part of life is similar to that achieved by Richard in the bush at Barambogie. His thought, "take suffering from life and what remained?" (p.739), is echoed by Mary when Richard is dying. She is not convinced, as he is, that there is a life after death, and feels that even if she does see him again he will not be "the same Richard to look at, and with all his weaknesses, who had belonged to her for nearly thirty years", for

> If heaven existed, and was what people said it was, then it would surely turn him into something different: a stranger ... an angel! - and what had she to do with angels? She wanted the man himself, the dear warm incompetent human creature at whose side she had been through so much. Who had so tried, so harassed her, made her suffer so. - Oh, as if that mattered now! What was life but care and suffering? - for every one alike. (p.826)

It is surely significant that both Richard and Mary should express this same resignation to suffering after they have been forced to realise the limitations in their conceptions of the ideal life. Mary's resignation may seem more pessimistic than Richard's: she does not appear to see the value of suffering as he does: but this disparity is in keeping with the disparity in their ideals. Mary has thought suffering impossible in a world run on the principles of "sound common sense"; when she realises that the world is not, alas, run in this way, the change is one from optimism to pessimism. The change in Richard's attitudes is in the opposite direction: he has always taken a pessimistic view of life as conspiring to make him suffer: his efforts to escape from life to Life have been a denial that suffering has any value. The truth of his realisation that sorrow

rather than joy is "the bond that linked humanity" has been shown throughout the trilogy in his relationship with Mary. For it is the disparity in their views of happiness which produces most of the friction between them, suffering, as at the time of John's death, or the death of their child, which brings them closer together. Neither can share in or sympathise with the joys of the other - when Mary is most happy, Richard is most discontented, and vice versa - in sorrow alone are they "yoke-fellows". The Fortunes of Richard Mahony also demonstrates that man does, indeed, "attain his full stature" only by accepting, and so passing, the "acid test" of suffering. Richard, by rejecting suicide, proves himself for once "equal to life"; Mary is seen at her best in the closing stages of Ultima Thule. Hence the answers to the "mysteries of life" which Richard receives in his illumination cannot be dismissed as mere products of his disordered mind; the validity of some of them is demonstrated throughout the novel.

Nor can it be agreed that The Fortunes of Richard Mahony is a disordered book, that, in Jennifer Dallimore's words, "the life of Richard Mahony raises questions that are too big for Henry Handel Richardson to cope with."[7] After quoting Richard's and Mary's views on suffering, Miss Dallimore writes

> Neither Richard's beatific vision, which affirms a too-easy, even a glib certainty, nor Mary's pessimistic and

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[7] "The Malaise of Richard Mahony", Quadrant, V (1961) pp.55-6.

limited view seem to me to be at all satisfactory as comments on the weighty and terrible action of the book. As Leonie Gibson points out in Henry Handel Richardson and some of Her Sources, the 'pulpit platitudes' of Mahony's moment of illumination seem to distance it, not to make it more immediate. In expression and concept, this is a trite answer to one of the eternal mysteries. Certainly the answer is Mahony's, and not necessarily the answer of the novel that contains him. But one has the sense that Richardson is herself emotionally committed to Mahony's view, since it is never really 'placed', its inadequacy is not demonstrated. Mary's view provides no very convincing criticism of Richard's - (I don't feel that it is intended to do so) - because Mary is so obviously lacking in any kind of spiritual awareness that she cannot comment authoritatively.[8]

The first criticism to make of this is that, as I have said, Richard's and Mary's views are not really opposed: both contain the recognition that suffering is an essential, perhaps the most essential, part of life. As Miss Dallimore says, Mary's "spiritual awareness" is limited, and so she cannot perceive the value of suffering, even though this is demonstrated in her own growth as a character. Recognising that Mary, with her belief that life consists in "merely keeping stability and order in the narrow circumscribed world of domestic comfort and material rewards", has been "in part responsible for Richard's final collapse", Miss Dallimore says "If the book is suggesting that the Marys of this world are its hope, its sure foundation ... it is then severely critical of its own affirmation of value."[9] But Richard's insanity has forced Mary to step outside this "narrow circumscribed world", to sacrifice her pride, her

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[8] Ibid., pp.54-5.

[9] Ibid., p.55.

practical principles, even her care for her children, has forced her to take a more realistic attitude to life. Miss Dallimore overlooks this change, and the equally significant change in Richard, in saying that Richardson "lets stand unchallenged both Richard's glib statements of faith and Mary's complacent ideal of devoted service".[10] Richard's earlier statements of faith - for example, at the time of John's death - are glib, because of his underlying fears. But the faith which enables him to overcome these fears, to resist the impulse to escape which has dominated his life and throw away the bottle of poison, cannot be dismissed with this word. Similarly, Mary's earlier optimism, her belief that prosperity and practicality can overcome the ills of the world and her expression of this belief in her "devoted service", can be called complacent. But this is not the right term for her behavior after Richard's collapse, nor for her recognition of the inevitability of care and suffering.

If the impression of "glibness" and "complacency" persists it is partly the result of the stylistic inadequacy of the two scenes which immediately follow Richard's and Mary's recognitions that life and suffering are inseparable. Although one could not agree with Professor Robertson's praise of the style of The Fortunes,[11] it can be said that

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[10] Ibid., p.56.

[11] "The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", Myself When Young, pp.206-7.

in general Richardson succeeds in presenting her characters in spite of the frequent unoriginality and convoluted arrangement of her words. No one would read Richardson's novels for their prose style; this, like everything else, is subordinated to her character-drawing. The profits and dangers of taking one's style from one's characters can both be seen in the parts of Ultima Thule narrated by Cuffy. Here the use of childish expressions gives these scenes immediacy and naturalness, but the resort to babyish spelling occasionally threatens to blur the distinction between character and author. But in the two scenes mentioned previously - Richard's illumination and his death - the style does hinder the presentation of character. Both these scenes have a Victorian tone which, while dominant in the earlier volumes, is otherwise largely absent in Ultima Thule. Richard's illumination is "distanced" because stylistically it reflects the past rather than the present, his new faith is described in terms which are too like those used for his old "glib" variety. His death-bed farewell to Mary is even more unsatisfactory, since it tends not only to conceal Mary's development but to contradict one of the most fundamental themes of the novel.

> How long she sat thus she did not know: she had lost count of time. But, of a sudden, something ... a something felt not heard, and felt only by a quickening of her pulses ... made her catch her breath, pause in her crying, strain her ears, look up. And as she did so her heart gave a great bound, then seemed to leave off beating. He had come back. His lids were raised, his eyes half open. And in the breathless silence that followed, when each tick of the little clock on the chest of drawers was separately audible, she saw his lips, too, move. He was trying to

speak. She bent over him, hardly daring to breathe, and caught, or thought she caught the words: "Not grieve ... for me. I'm going ... into Eternity."

Whether they were actually meant for her, or whether a mere instinctive response to the sound of her weeping, she could not tell. But dropping to her knees by the bedside, she took his half-cold hand in her warm, live one, and kissed and fondled it. And his lids, which had fallen to again, made one last supreme effort to rise, and this time there was no mistaking the whisper that came over his lips.

"Dear wife!"

He was gone again, even as he said it, but it was enough ... more than enough! Laying her head down beside his, she pressed her face against the linen of the pillow, paying back to this inanimate object the burning thankfulness with which she no longer dared to trouble him. Eternity was something vast, cold, impersonal. But this little phrase, from the long past days of love and comradeship, these homely, familiar words, fell like balsam on her heart. All his love for her, his gratitude to her, was in them: they were her reward, and a full and ample one, for a lifetime of unwearied sacrifice.

Dear wife! ... dear wife.

He died at dawn, his faint breaths fluttering to rest. (pp.826-7)

As I have said, it is not alone the melodramatic overemphasis, for example, the exclamation mark given to a dying whisper, and the deplorable cliche of the last sentence which gives this scene its sentimental tone. Throughout the trilogy the emphasis has been on change and decay, on the impossibility of attempts to recapture the past. In this scene, however, the past is momentarily recaptured in the "little phrase, from the long past days of love and comradeship" which in rewarding Mary's "lifetime of unwearied sacrifice" appears to give this more value than, in the total context of the novel, it could properly be said to have. For it is surely part of Mary's and Richard's tragedy that the change in their attitudes to suffering comes too late to prevent the calamities that befall them.

Richard may at last see the error of his struggles against recognising the truth but this cannot halt the inevitable process of decay. Mary may at last give Richard unqualified love and understanding but this, too, is wasted by being given at a time when it is no longer of any use and cannot be appreciated. But in the death-bed scene Richardson appears to be trying to cancel out this sense of waste, of tragic purposelessness, by allowing Richard a momentary return to sanity to thank Mary for her love. And it could perhaps be said that Richardson was using Richard's illumination for a similar purpose, that she was attempting to give both the Mahonys one moment of achievement in a life of failure.

This, of course, is merely speculative, but if Henry Handel Richardson's intentions were of this nature then she has failed to realise them. The failure is not a very serious one, except, perhaps, for the diminution of the effect of Richard's death by the sentimental way in which it is described, though it might be thought so if one demanded a more positive meaning for the novel. The questions of just what makes a tragedy tragic and whether a term derived from drama can be legitimately applied to a novel are ones which I wish to recognise rather than answer. It is possible that the tragic effect, catharsis or whatever, can only be produced in the restricted and concentrated world of the theatre. But though one may hesitate to call The Fortunes of Richard Mahony a tragedy, it does contain many tragic elements. We see a man caught

in a trap from which there is no escape for, while ignorance or blindness may contribute to his capture, knowledge cannot produce his release. What is done cannot be undone, Mahony may realise the mistake of struggling against life but his struggles have already accelerated the working-out of the fate he has tried to escape. But while Mahony may be the initiator of his tragedy, he does not deserve all the misfortunes which come to him. Life may not be the actively hostile force it is in Maurice Guest, but neither is it, as Mary earlier thinks, run on the principles of "sound common sense". Injustice and unnecessary waste abound.

The over-powering sense of waste, of Mary's talent for love as well as of Richard's talent for discovery, is, for me, the final and strongest impression left by The Fortunes of Richard Mahony. And it is just this sense of waste which enables one to agree with Professor Robertson's idea that The Fortunes of Richard Mahony is a less pessimistic book than Maurice Guest, though perhaps not for the same reasons. There is no sense of waste in Maurice Guest because in the negative world of that book nothing is of value except selfishness and that is certainly never purposeless. Even after death Maurice's sightless eyes "stare, with an expression of horror and amaze, at the naked branches of the tree" (p.561) - he is still a misfit. If one compares this with the ending of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: "The rich and kindly earth of his adopted country absorbed his perishable body, as the country itself

had never contrived to make its own, his wayward, vagrant spirit." (p.831): one sees that the tone has altered from one of rejection to acceptance. This alteration can be seen as a reflection of the change in Richardson's attitudes to life and death outlined in my first chapter. For her, as for Richard and Mary, this change involved resignation to the inseparability of life and suffering, affirmation of pain as well as joy. And while this may not result in "a book ad majorem gloriam of Australia", or of Mary, as Professor Robertson supposes,[12] there is in the trilogy a more sympathetic presentation of both characters and environment than there was in Maurice Guest. This modification of the nihilism of Maurice Guest contributes to the tragic effect of The Fortunes of Richard Mahony since there is now something to be wasted, and less reason for this waste to occur.

Nettie Palmer has said that "the moral discovery of the trilogy was the social nature of man, his dependence on the community"[13] but to agree with this one would need to ignore the part Mary's "social nature" plays in her own and Richard's tragedy. In general The Fortunes of Richard Mahony points, like most of Richardson's work, to the need to adjust one's aims and ideals to the conditions of the world in which one lives, conditions which are wider than

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[12]"The Art of Henry Handel Richardson", p. 200.
[13]Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.122.

the conditions of the community. As in Maurice Guest life is seen to involve continual change and movement. There is a particular emphasis on the impossibility of halting or reversing this progression. The only way in which the past can be recaptured is in the euphasia of insanity - Richard imagines himself back at the time of his first success at Ballarat. And if the past cannot be relived neither can it be long remembered:

> All that was mortal of Richard Mahony has long since crumbled into dust. For a time, fond hands tended his grave, on which in due course a small cross rose, bearing his name, and marking the days and years of his earthly pilgrimage. But, those who had known and loved him passing, scattering, forgetting, rude weeds choked the flowers, the cross toppled over, fell to pieces and was removed, the ivy that entwined it uprooted. And, thereafter, his resting-place was indistinguishable from the common ground. (p.831)

But there is a certain continuity discernable beneath the change and decay: "Every man is not only himself . . . men are lived over again; the world is now as it was in ages past." In so far as Mahony's fears and aspirations are universal ones, his story can be relived and remembered, his tragedy appreciated through the common bond of suffering. It is, perhaps, just this recognition of the ways in which men are "yoke-fellows" that, combined with the naturalness and inevitability produced by her skill at character-drawing and construction, enabled Richardson, in spite of the limitations imposed by her style and methods, to create in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony both a convincing tragic character and a profound and moving picture of life.

CHAPTER VIII

LAST WORKS, FINAL WORDS

Henry Handel Richardson's two last works, *The End of a Childhood* (1934), a collection of short stories including "Four Further Chapters in the Life of Cuffy Mahony" which give the book its title, and *The Young Cosima* (1939), a biographical novel whose main characters are "Wagner and von Bülow - and the woman behind their music", are generally and justifiably, passed over in any assessment of her achievement. But though they may add nothing to Richardson's stature as a writer, these works are of interest in so far as she employs in them certain themes and methods found in her more important novels. The failure of *The Young Cosima*, in particular, provides some insight into the reasons for the merits and limitations of Richardson's writing. Before going on to these general conclusions I shall, however, discuss the thematic resemblances between these two books and the rest of Richardson's work.

It is disappointing that the best documented period of Richardson's life should be the one in which she produced her least interesting works. For not only do nearly all the secondary sources of information about her date from 1930, but most of her letters also postdate the popularity of *Ultima Thule*. In these there are numerous references to her two last books and to their treatment by publishers and

reviewers. One to Jacob Schwartz, the publisher of Two Studies (1931), dealing with his proposal to print the series of stories of girlhood entitled Growing Pains, contains the following interesting statement: "Frankly, I don't think I've enough to fill a volume. I've always concentrated on the big books, and am not a person who can turn from one thing to another."[1] Later, in a letter of 25 January 1932, she definitely declined Schwartz's plan:

> I hope you won't be too disappointed about the stories. It's all my fault for being such a miserably unproductive writer. But I think if you had gone through the schooling I have - finding it absolutely impossible to place a short story - you would not have wasted much of your time on trying to write them either. It seemed wiser to stick to the big books which I knew I cld get published.
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> Well, perhaps during the year I may feel inclined to add one or two to the collection. But if I don't, you'll know it's because I have to keep my strength for the long book I'm at work on.

Here is the explanation of Richardson's meagre output of short stories and also, perhaps, of the poor quality of those she did produce. She was unable to "turn from one thing to another": her best work gains much of its effect from a slow and gradual accumulation of detail.

In 1934, realising that The Young Cosima would not be finished for some time, Richardson

> consented to the collecting of my sketches and shorter stories, and their publication in one volume. To which I added a couple of further chapters on the boy Cuffy, for it was thought that, after the success of Ultima Thule, some interest might be taken in his future. This was not so; he seemed already forgotten; and The End of a Childhood had a very mediocre press.

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[1] Letter of 12 January 1932. (In the J.K. Moir collection in the Public Library, Melbourne) Except where stated, all references to Richardson's letters to Schwartz are to this collection.

For myself, I have always regretted the appearance of so mixed a bag. The book contained some of my most recent and, I thought, some of my best work; but the contents emphatically did not hang together. The difference in tone between the parts was too marked, the dates at which the stories had been written were too far apart for any homogeneity to exist in subject, treatment, style.[2]

The stories in The End of a Childhood certainly do show a considerable diversity, although most of them are to some extent concerned with the problems of truth and illusion, joy and pain. While they cannot be dated with any high degree of accuracy, the earliest is "Mary Christina", originally published in The English Review in 1911 under the title "Death". Dealing with the dying hours of an elderly woman, this story "written soon after H.H.'s mother died . . . shows the bitterness with which H.H. rebelled against her mother's early death - and the manner of it."[3] As is usual in Richardson's work, fairly close correspondences may be found between fact and fiction: Mary Christina dies in November, at the age of fifty-nine;[4] her death is a slow and agonising one, which cannot be averted by the watchers at her bedside. If one were able to compare the "unfinished 'diary' account of her mother's illness" found by Miss Roncoroni[5] with this story more resemblances could probably be discovered. There is a hint of the change in Richardson's

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[2] "Two Studies and The End of a Childhood", Southerly, XXIII (1963), p.20.

[3] Olga Roncoroni, Henry Handel Richardson: Some Personal Impressions (ed. Purdie and Roncoroni, 1957), p.99.

[4] Cf. O.M. Roncoroni, "1895-1903", Myself When Young, p.142. Miss Roncoroni gives Mrs. Richardson's age as 57, but as she was born in 1837 she must have been 59 when she died in 1896

[5] Ibid., p.142.

attitudes to life and death, which has been discussed earlier, in one of her letters to Jacob Schwartz about this story: "I'm so glad you approve of the change of title. Death never seemed to me quite right - or at least not since I came to years of discretion. The sketch is more about 'dying' than Death."[6] But the anger and resentment which Richardson felt at the time of her mother's death is apparent in "Mary Christina" both in the detailed account of the senseless agonies of death and in the attitude to life. As Mary Christina looks back over her life she sees it as transient and meaningless: "Joy and grief, love and hate, rapture and despair, were, in very truth, one and the same - the thin, blue spire of smoke, that ascended from a phantasmal fire." (p.285) And the concluding image of the night-light - "It threw living shadows on the wall." (p.287) - reinforces this idea. Death brings peace, but it is the peace of "the sleep of nothingness: an eternal forgetting ..." (p.286) and the struggle for life would make it seem that its impermanence is still preferable to this changeless repose.

The view of life as "an idle beating of the air" given in this story is also seen in its partner in Two Studies, "Life and Death of Peterle Luthy". This and the other "Tale of Old Strasbourg", "The Professor's Experiment", were written between the completion of Australia Felix in 1915 and the commencement of The Way Home in 1919, when the

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6 Letter of 25 November 1931. (In the Mitchell Library)

stresses of the First World War made it, as Richardson felt, beyond her "to begin a new book, and one on so remote a subject".[7] Richardson mentions some notes she had for these stories; they were presumably made while she herself was living in Strassburg. Miss Roncoroni records two entries from Richardson's 1899 diary "which have a bearing on the little Strassburg story, The Life and Death of Peterle Lüthy; June 3rd: 'went to see E.'s baby'; June 25th: 'went to see dead baby'."[8] "Peterle Luthy" is, perhaps, the most strictly naturalistic of Richardson's works. On 12 November 1931, Richardson wrote to Jacob Schwartz "I meant the sketch to be a kind of replica of some dark old Dutch painting." Life is seen as a monotonous working for necessities, with the gloom relieved by the occasional delights of dancing, drinking, and making love. Peterle is an illegitimate baby, unwanted, uncared for, and ungrieved: "And before the sun went down that night, it was almost as though Peterle had never been." (p.181) In common with Maurice Guest, one of the themes of this story is "the survival of the fittest" - Peterle's death is the result of negligence - no one in the family is prepared to sacrifice pleasure to look after him. All the characters are shown to be primarily interested in getting what they want from life: Henriette's stepfather tries to bribe her into staying with him; she cannot grieve over a death which lightens her load. Nature and humanity alike

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[7] "Some Notes", p.16.

[8] "1895-1903", Myself When Young, p.146.

pursue their course with no thought for the effect of their actions on the lives of others.

A somewhat similar theme can be found in "The Professor's Experiment", though here it is presented in a more ironic manner. The experiment of the title is the Professor's marriage - his rebellion against the strict ordering of his life by his older sister Annemarie. After the Professor's wife and child have died, Annemarie is shocked to find him working as if nothing had happened, and begins to question the wisdom of devoting her life to his: "Who was Paulchen that he should demand such a sacrifice? Was his life of so much more worth than hers?" (p.231) The story ends as it has begun, with plans for a rebellion; now it is Annemarie who makes them. Earlier, an attempt by the Professor's wife to defend her father's shortcomings on the grounds that they make him happy had been cut short by Annemarie's"'Happy? Pray, what has that to do with it? You talk as if happiness was the sole aim of existence!'" (p.219) It would seem as if she has finally realised that this is indeed the case. The theme of the useless self-sacrifice, of the futility of trying to devote one's life to serving another, connects this story, too, with Maurice Guest where, as we have seen, most of the conflicts arise from the characters' differing aims and ideals, and where attempts to find fulfilment and happiness through another person end in failure. Johanna Cayhill, who in the severity of her appearance, manner and ideas is very like Annemarie, is one of those whose sacrifices are unappreciated. One wonders if there is any

significance in the "ann" common to both characters' names, especially as the main character in the story "Sister Ann", which will be discussed later, is also a severe spinster, who tries to regulate the lives of her younger sisters.

Richardson was presumably thinking of these two Strassburg tales when she told Schwartz of the difficulties she had experienced in "placing" her stories. With the success of Ultima Thule, she apparently decided that this difficulty would no longer arise, and embarked on the other stories included in The End of a Childhood:

> In my original scheme, the story of the Mahonys was to be carried on to the second and even third generation. But by the time Ultima Thule was finished, I felt that to set to work on another long book on the same subject went beyond me. Clearly as the lives and fates of Mahony's children were outlined in my mind, the impetus to put them on paper was spent. And laying by the couple of chapters I had written, I turned to the group of sketches called Growing Pains, and the story Succedaneum.[9]

Richardson's inability to carry on "the story of the Mahonys" perhaps shows that her main interest in it was the character of Mahony himself. Certainly, the story of Mahony's family minus Mahony makes very dull reading. Mary rejects a proposal of marriage from Henry Ocock and then, her practical abilities for once deserting her, falls off a step-ladder and receives a mortal injury. This death provides a convenient ending for the "Four Further Chapters", though Richardson did tell Mrs. Kernot that "Mary's death

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[9] "Two Studies and The End of a Childhood", Southerly, XXIII (1963), p.20.

and Cuffy's future planned from the beginning of R.M."[10] Many of the incidents in these four chapters can be traced back to Richardson's own childhood; the garden where the children play, their games, Cuffy's embarrassing twitch, all have their counterparts in Richardson's description of her life at Maldon in Myself When Young. Cuffy's behavior after his mother's death - his initial rebellious refusal to accept this calamity gradually gives way to "other and pleasanter thoughts" (p.66) - perhaps shows the change in Richardson's attitudes to death which I have mentioned earlier. As he drives off with Tilly, Cuffy's thoughts are not of the past but of the future; the ending recalls Laura's race away from her school experiences at the end of The Getting of Wisdom:

> And, from now on, his spirits continued steadily to rise, hope adding itself to hope, in fairy fashion. Just as mile after mile combined to stretch the gulf, that would henceforth yawn, between what he had been, and what he was to be. (p.67)

Exactly "what he was to be" we shall never know. Nettie Palmer mentions "a study of Cuffy's development as a composer" which "was to have ended on the slopes of Gallipoli";[11] in the letter previously referred to, Richardson told Mrs. Kernot "Two more chapters to be written of Cuffy and if after that any more it would be C. as a middle-aged man." Whatever the plan, confronted with the

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[10] In a letter of 11 December 1934. (In Mrs. Kernot's notebook, Mitchell Library Uncat Mss Set 325) All references to Richardson's letters to Mrs. Kernot are to the extracts in this notebook.

[11] Henry Handel Richardson, A Study (1950), p.116.

evidence of "The End of a Childhood" it is hard to regret that it was not carried out.

The series of sketches grouped under the title Growing Pains are, as Nettie Palmer says, "brief visions of girlhood, each as slight as if "Laura" had dropped an eyelash on the page."[12] Most of them, like The Getting of Wisdom, deal with the initiation into the truths of life which is one of the painful experiences of adolescence. The two exceptions are "The Bath" in which Richardson is seen at her most openly sentimental, and "The Bathe", where the initiate is of a rather tenderer age. Richardson termed this story "a grotesque" and thought it "perhaps a little obscene";[13] certainly it is the most unpleasant of the collection. Once again, Richardson's theme is the ugly reality which lies beneath the conventional trappings of life: the child is horrified by her glimpse into the future: "Something had happened which made her not like any more to play. Something ugly, Oh, never ... never ... no, not ever now did she want to grow up. She would always stop a little girl." (p.76) In much the same way, the boy and girl of "The Wrong Turning" find the romance of their boat-ride destroyed by their intrusion into the men's bathing area: "Something catastrophic had happened, rudely shattering their frail young dreams; breaking down his boyish privacy, pitching her headlong into a reality for which she was in no

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[12] Ibid., p.131.

[13] In a letter to Basil Burdett, 30 October 1932. (In the Public Library, Melbourne)

wise prepared." (p.123) This unwillingness to face "the facts of life" is also the theme of "Conversation in a Pantry" and "Two Hanged Women"; in the latter there is more than a hint of Lesbianism which serves as a further link with The Getting of Wisdom. In "Preliminary Canter", too, Nell's reactions to Peggy's flirtation are reminiscent of Laura's jealousy. Failure and disillusionment are also present in "'And Women Must Weep'" whose subject is the common one of a girl's first - and totally unsuccessful - ball. All the characters in these stories find their dreams in conflict with reality; all prefer to retain their ideals rather than question and reject them. "Sister Ann", written after the completion of The Young Cosima and "originally intended to be the last of the 'Growing Pains' collection",[14] also deals with the theme of the adjustment of ideals. Ann, believing that her family could not manage without her, rejects a proposal of marriage, but is eventually persuaded by her suitor to realise that "'every mortal has his own idea of happiness, and yours is plainly not theirs'".[15]

The story in The End of a Childhood which has received most critical attention is "Succedaneum", since in its use of an artist hero it has a particular relevance to Maurice Guest and The Young Cosima. It was originally published as

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[14] Olga Roncoroni, Some Personal Impressions, p.117.
[15] "Sister Ann", Southerly, XXIII (1963), p.31.

"Substance and Shadow", and both titles are echoed in the conclusion where Mocs, after rejecting love in favour of art, has "his face set once more for what, to him, had never ceased to be the one Reality ... all else but a ghostly surrogate." (p.274) As this makes obvious, "Succedaneum", too, is concerned with the conflict between illusion and reality, a theme demonstrated mainly through the contrast between the ideal woman Mocs seeks and the actual women he finds. Mocs, at a time when his creative inspiration has failed, becomes obsessed with the eyes of a poster-portrait, and with the need to discover their original in the face of the mysterious "Bianca Josefa del S". In his wanderings in search of this woman he meets a waitress whose eyes are identical with those on the poster, with whom he finds "a happiness without compare." (p.261) But Mocs is still unable to miss an opportunity of seeing the real Bianca, who turns out to be a sorry substitute for the ideal. This can, indeed, be inferred from the description of the poster where it is implied that the power the eyes have over Mocs stems from the skill of the artist who has drawn them:

> And now he saw that they held a vital spark, a kind of spiritual promise, which none of the living had possessed: as if the unknown artist had condensed and compressed in them a sum of human experience. And gradually it began to seem that their message was aimed specially at him; as if these eyes were striving to make some wordless revelation to him, of mysteries in his art, in life, to which he had not attained. (p.242)

That Mocs' search is inspired by art rather than reality hints at his ultimate forsaking of Salli and love for art - his "Reality". In the choice between love and art Mocs makes

the decision that would seem likely to bring him most happiness; earlier we have been told that "no other human joy touched the joys of creation: this acme of lightness, this sense of walking on rainbows, this supreme surrender to a force outside oneself!" (p.239)

This theme of the sacrifices which must be made for art connects "Succedaneum" with The Young Cosima, though it is a connection which has perhaps assumed too great an importance in some interpretations of Richardson's work. Leonie Kramer, for example, rightly priases Richardson's "curiously clear view of conflicts of character and attitude", but in discussing these conflicts tends to over-emphasise the artist and his needs:

> She sees, to simplify her view, two main kinds of people in the world - those who dedicate themselves solely to the business of living, and those whose lives are a mere means to an end, which is the expression of themselves as artists. Since their aims are different, both kinds of people will have different values, which are bound to clash. For the single-minded pursuit of artistic perfection or even of artistic expression demands a kind of inspired selfishness, which can be both brutal and destructive of the ordinary man's world.[16]

But most of the main characters in Richardson's novels are not concerned with "the single minded pursuit of artistic perfection", though they are all seeking fulfilment and happiness, a pursuit shown to be carried out just as brutally by the "livers" as by the artists. In The Fortunes of Richard Mahony the conflicts between Richard and Mary

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[16] "Henry Handel Richardson: The Limits of Realism", Melbourne Critical Review, III (1960), p.78.

result from their differing notions of happiness, as do the conflicts in Maurice Guest, with the failures in that book being those who lack the "inspired selfishness" which is a prerequisite for survival in their world. The artists attempt to find fulfimment and happiness in "the joys of creation"; the "livers" in a well-ordered existence in which there is always "something to do"; the dreamers in ways which, because in opposition with the laws of their world, are bound to fail. In The Young Cosima, as I shall show, Cosima's decision to leave von Bülow for Wagner is primarily motivated by her wish to fulfil her own ideal of happiness, self-sacrifice.

Henry Handel Richardson wrote of her last novel

> As early as 1931, the idea of a book on the most critical period of Cosima Wagner's life had come to me. As far as I could see, the tangle of her intimate relations with Bülow and Wagner had never been fairly or honestly treated. She was either gushed over for her adherence to one, or abused for her deception and desertion of the other. The tracking down of the motives and circumstances that led up to this momentous step promised to be of interest; and once more my husband studied book-lists on my behalf, and obtained for me the books I needed. But his sudden death in 1933, and the removal of my home from London to the country, once more threw my writing-life into disorder. By this time, too, the complexity and vastness of the subject I had undertaken were beginning to stagger me. To master it would take much longer than I had anticipated...[17]

As it was, The Young Cosima was not completed till towards the end of 1938, when Richardson asked Oliver Stonor "Are you in the same orphaned state as myself?"[18] From other

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[17] "Two Studies and The End of a Childhood", Southerly, XXIII (1963), p.20.

[18] In a letter of 3 October 1938. (In the National Library) All references to Richardson's letters to Stonor are to this collection.

remarks made in her letters one sees that Richardson found the writing of this novel very difficult. On 5 January 1938 she wrote to Stonor

> I am struggling with my very last chapters and have hardly time to breathe. The book has been something of an undertaking. I'd never have begun it, had I thought I was going so far from the British Museum. The literature on the subject is endless, and it has all had to be bought.

Some of the books Richardson consulted are listed at the end of The Young Cosima; the complete collection is at present in the University of Tasmania Library: "There are about one hundred volumes, mostly German, and some have marginal pencil notes in Henry Handel Richardson's handwriting."[19] The reason for all this research was given in a letter of 4 May 1938 to Mrs. Kernot:

> Heavens, how hard it has been to discover why these three people acted as they did. - You see I am committed to truth in this book and everything must be avoided that savours of fiction, embroider with conversations though I may. A Herculean Task and nothing much to show for it when it is done I fear -

Thus, as she wrote to Mrs. Kernot on 12 January 1937, Richardson had to make her "way through a veritable sea of facts". While Richardson was always limited in what she could do with her characters by her insistence on probability, in The Young Cosima she had the additional restriction of having to keep both feet planted on history. In a letter of 29 December 1937, she told Mrs. Kernot

> You talk of my characters growing under my microscope. But that's what makes the especial difficulty of the present

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[19] L.A. Triebel, "Henry Handel Richardson's The Young Cosima", Southerly, IX (1948), p.18.

book, they are not free to grow - or except in any direction but one. Their fates are already laid down for them, I can only follow, analyse, explain.

Other letters to Mrs. Kernot and Oliver Stonor testify to Richardson's not unfounded doubts of her achievement in The Young Cosima. Yet when the book was published she did not take kindly to what, as she told Stonor in a letter of 30 March 1939, one of her friends had termed "'The soprano yelpings of ignorant reviewers.'" Earlier, on 16 January 1939, she had written to Stonor

Yes, the L.S. is very unfair. It's easy to make fun of anyone's writing by pulling scraps from their context. And not even quoting them correctly!
Then, for all their cleverness, these reviewers aren't subtle enough. The "technique of the ivories" for example is what Hans is thinking, not what I am saying. (They are actually words culled from his own mouth) But this method of writing had been a trap for the unwary ever since the days of M.G. and I ought to be used to them falling into it.

The remark about "words culled from his own mouth", and the various comments in her letters to Mrs. Kernot, show that Richardson was determined to include nothing in the novel - not even the "conversations" - that could not be traced directly back to an authority. Arnold Gyde, who apparently felt rather guilty about his part in Richardson's decision to tackle the subject, writes

Almost, I must say, to my horror, I learnt that she had taken the idea to heart. Not a quick biography, no; indeed, reflection should have warned me that such a thing would be uncongenial and impossible. What she proposed was a novel, in fiction form yes, but in which every morsel of dialogue was to be based on factual evidence from one of the letters or upon any authentic Wagnerian source.[20]

And Miss Roncoroni says of one of the "ignorant reviewers": "Poor man, he did not know that those phrases were literal

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[20] Some Personal Impressions, p.37.

translations from the letters of the people into whose mouths H.H. had put them in her novel."[21] "Literal translations" does, indeed, seem to explain some of the stylistic horrors of the novel. In many places besides the "technique of the ivories" - and one cannot blame the reviewer for singling this out - The Young Cosima reads like a bad translation from the German: "If Minna would but hold hers, refrain from the retort obvious, instead of eternally seeking to prove herself in the right, they need never quarrel at all." (p.79) This, of course, is not the only fault. It does not help an appreciation of Hans' and Cosima's sufferings to be told "Yet, though at moments she thought her heart would break, she never ceased to guide and propel him along the road, the Via Dolorosa he had to follow. But it was a Sisypus task." (p.335) This is rather reminiscent of the unfortunate dragging-in of Shakespearian allusions in Ultima Thule; both attempts to give a wider significance to her characters' fates must be said to fail.

In this heavy reliance on her sources one sees the culmination of Richardson's efforts to fit her style to her characters; here she takes her style directly from her characters, and takes it with a curious insensitivity to the differences between the spoken and written word. One does not doubt that the "technique of the ivories" may be traced back to von Bülow, but surely "culled from his own pen"

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[21] Ibid., p.114.

would be more correct. Just as the "uncomfortable compound of pomposity, cliches, and plain clumsiness"[22] found in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony may have partly resulted from Richardson's wish to reproduce "the speech of a bygone day", so the excessive formality and inflation of the style of The Young Cosima may be explained by the "literal translations" from the characters' letters. Richardson seems to have been quite deaf to the differences between the formal phrase-making of the letter writer and the more casual cadences of thought and speech.

Considering her determination to avoid everything "that savours of fiction", one wonders why Richardson bothered to write a novel instead of a straight-out biography. The answer may, perhaps, be found in Miss Roncoroni's explanation of Richardson's aims in The Young Cosima:

> She took a different view of Cosima's actions from that held by many in England whose theories were affected by the almost regal atmosphere surrounding Cosima at Bayreuth after Wagner's death. H.H. was concerned with the woman herself, and her object was to try to show the motives and influences which determined Cosima's actions during the earlier days . . . H.H. was not out to defend or condemn (or to glorify!) Cosima - merely to show her, Wagner, Liszt and von Bülow as she felt they really were.[23]

Apparently Richardson thought that these "motives and influences" could best be examined in fictional form. This passage also deserves attention because it, like Richardson's

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[22] Leonie Kramer, "The Limits of Realism", Melbourne Critical Review, III (1960), pp.77-8.

[23] Some Personal Impressions, p.100.

comments on the book quoted earlier, emphasises her main sphere of interest in The Young Cosima - the character of Cosima herself. To see this novel largely in terms of the artist and his needs is to overlook Cosima's role in it. For one of the things about her which Richardson seems most concerned to demonstrate is the extent to which she is responsible for both her marriages. Or, to put it in the terms used earlier in this chapter, her need for von Bülow, and later for Wagner, is shown to be stronger than their need for her. Cosima's ideal, the end towards which she fashions her life and the lives of others, is stated early in the novel:

"Do you remember a sermon we once heard preached, by Abbe Gabriel? Perhaps you won't; for it's so long ago. Well, in it he said that the life of a true woman ought to consist wholly of self-sacrifice, she herself stand for the 'sacrificial offering'. I never forgot that; the words seemed to burn themselves into me. At the time it was Papa I dreamed of dedicating myself to - I was so young then, I didn't understand. Now, I know Papa doesn't need me; but poor Hans does; and if I can help him, and through him the greatest of all Causes - why, it seems to me a chance I dare not miss." (p.42)

Cosima, prevented by her father from using her artistic talents, has determined to gain her happiness at one remove by sacrificing her life to that of a more fortunate direct follower of the "Cause". So she decides to marry Hans von Bülow, perhaps because he is the only available idol:

She watched and assisted at Bülow's struggles to win a public for this 'new music'; and love and marriage were the natural result; though compassion for Hans, as for someone weaker than herself, seems to have bulked large in Cosima's feelings.[24]

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[24] Henry Handel Richardson, "The Story of Wagner and von Bülow - and the woman behind their music", Southerly, XXIII (1963), p.63.

This phrase "someone weaker than herself" connects Cosima with those other women in Richardson's works who decide to sacrifice their life to that of a person they think in need of their help and protection: Mary Mahony, Johanna Cayhill, Annemarie, Sister Ann. All of these characters find their sacrifices wasted; far from being grateful, the weaker characters usually resent the demands and restrictions placed on them, and long to be free to pursue their own ideas of happiness. Hans von Bülow is in this respect no different from Ephie Cayhill, Richard Mahony and the others, and so Cosima, too, is frustrated in her attempt to gain fulfilment through self-sacrifice.

In a letter of 3 May 1939 which apparently gave Oliver Stonor quite a shock, Richardson said of one of the reviews of <u>The Young Cosima</u>

It's very excellent except for his foolish remark abt Hans being glad "to see C. turn her back on him". How could H. be when, according to the code of the day, it meant an utter and final separation from Wagner? C.'s loss he might have got over, also the ruin of his career and the disgrace of a divorce, but to lose Richard meant cutting out his deepest roots and he fought against it as long as he could. I shrank from using the word "homosexual" in a book about that early date, but surely the fact is there for any one with eyes to see?

On 18 May, she wrote

I ought not to have rapped out the word "homosexuality" in my last letter. I'm apt to forget the jar it may give. My excuse is, I read Freud and his works so early in life - before his <u>name</u> was even known in England - that his theories have become a commonplace to me. - All I meant in this case was that Hans didn't need or greatly care for women; his deepest feelings went to his men friends, and to Wagner in particular. And men liked <u>him</u> where women didn't.

This presumably explains von Bülow's reluctance to marry Cosima; he seems to consent to the match primarily as a

favour to Liszt. In the manuscript draft of The Young Cosima, where Liszt more directly traps von Bülow into agreeing to the marriage, this is clearly evident:

> Just for the moment the boy at his side was incapable of saying anything. He cld hardly believe his ears; and at the same time felt as though a net had been flung over his head. And when he did speak he only stuttered "I ... but ... but I -"
>
> "No hurry. Take your own time."
>
> But desperately afraid that his silence shd be construed as unwillingness, he now managed to blurt out "But Master, dear, dear Master, much as I would ... for as far as I'm concerned ... and the idea of really being a son to you wld fulfil my dearest dream. But, Maitre, I haven't the least, not the least idea of ... of how Mlle. Cosette feels."[25]

And although the scene was considerably changed, Hans is still shown to dislike Liszt's idea: "(Time, yes, yes, time ... hold to time! ... as to the drowning man's straw.)" (p.10) Later, he thinks

> - For, to pass to himself, the idea of marriage had never crossed his mind. He didn't think he was the marrying sort. Quite certainly not when, as here, a variety of obstacles blocked the way. A single one would have been enough for him! Again, much as he admired Liszt's daughters, there was often a something about them - a curiously quizzing glance, or a polite silence - that rendered him subtly uneasy. On the whole, he felt more at home with the Master himself than with either of these two young girls. (pp.37-8)

The ending of this passage provides one of the hints of Hans' homosexual tendencies which Richardson scatters throughout the novel. Another can be seen in the opening description of him - "His companion on the other hand had a face round as a girl's and as smooth" (p.3) - for it will be remembered that Richardson employs such feminine comparisons in her descriptions of the homosexual Krafft in

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[25] Transcribed as far as possible in its final form. (Manuscript in the National Library)

Maurice Guest. And in two other passages Richardson, through Cosima, makes fairly explicit references to this. Cosima says of Hans' kindness to her brother "'But then I think he loved Daniel nearly as much as I did.' And almost inaudibly: 'In one way, perhaps, better than he has ever loved me.'" (p.223) Later, in reply to von Bülow's "God in Heaven! Can a woman not love without - without ...'", she retorts "'Could you have, if you'd been a woman? Loving Richard as you did, and loved by him in return? Oh, be honest, Hans, be honest! You know he has always had first place in your heart.'" (p.327) Hans, it appears, has not heeded the advice given in "Succedaneum" about the "pull" of love; for him, serving Liszt and serving Wagner take precedence over everything else, even his own creativity. And, as Cosima comes to realise, it is in this servitude that Hans, for all his complaints about the neglect of his own work, finds his true happiness:

> By the time she arrived, twenty-four hours after him, he was hard at work copying the text of the Meistersinger. (Once, she would have blamed Wagner for this. Now, she was juster; saw that Hans burned to make himself indispensable; to recapture his place in Richard's heart.) (p.179)

The conflict between Cosima and Hans is thus, like the conflict between the Mahonys, the natural outcome of the difference in their aims and ideals - though here it might be even truer to say the similarity. Cosima has thought to find fulfilment in helping Hans develop as an artist, but he, too, has an impulse to self-sacrifice, and does not want any help in this task. As Cosima tells Wagner, Hans does not really need her:

"But what I'm trying to say has nothing to do with my feelings for him. It's he who doesn't want me any more. Or need me. Unless to nurse him when he's ill, or to keep the children quiet. And it's not enough. One can't exist on it. . . . Oh, Richard, he should never have married - not me or anybody. He's one of those men who don't need a wife. Or children either." (p.224)

This is said on the night Cosima confesses her love to Wagner: something he seems to view with more alarm than bliss:

Fate? He chewed the word; sitting there with her, with Hans' wife, in his arms. An embarrassment, a calamity even, that he would have given the world to avert. By God, he had never asked for this; or done anything to foster it." (p.227)

But, a true artist, Wagner is quite prepared to accept anything that Fate, or Cosima, offers to his advantage. The point is, though, that it is not so much he who needs her and takes her from von Bülow, as it is she who needs him and takes him from von Bülow, and from anyone else who might steal her opportunity for sacrifice. Earlier in the novel there have been signs that Cosima is jealous of Wagner's love for Madame Wesendonk: "(Delicate and highly-strung were Hans' words for her. Strange, thought Cosette, how easily men let themselves be influenced by a pure profile and a lovely mouth.)" (p.115) This jealousy recurs after she has attended a performance of Tristan:

But even as she formed these words a thought so cruel smote her that it drove everything else before it. Tristan? - what had Tristan to do with her? Not because of her, or through her, or for any love of her, had this supreme cry of human passion been uttered. Another - not she- had called it into being. And only now that herself she had lived through it, and been scorched by it, did she grasp all that this implied. The knowledge was wormwood. . . .
- Nor did it end here. For, as she lay and wept, at her meanness, her irreparable loss, a still more ruinous thought insinuated itself. And this was that at some future time the same thing might happen again: still another come into Richard's life, and, playing upon his loneliness, his

tenderness of heart, take the place that might have been hers. That should have been hers. That was hers; that she, and she alone, had been born to fill. And that no one, while there was breath in her body, should steal from her. - And with this, her founderings were over: doubts, guilt, compunction crumbled to dust. For she could not see it happen - and live. (pp.256-7)

And so she resolves that "to keep her place at his side (to keep him hers) she was prepared for any sacrifice." Hans' bitter comment on the humble tone Cosima adopts with Wagner - "(The worse, of course, for those who were taken in by it. For she'd have her own way in the end.)" (p.289) - is supported by Richardson's presentation of Cosima. In her relationships with both von Bülow and Wagner, she is shown to be quite adept at getting her own way. After she has succeeded in persuading Wagner to pay no heed to Hans' "preposterous idea that I should go to Rome, to my father, for two whole years", we are told "For now her heart was light as air. She had got what she wanted." (p.291)

It is because of the emphasis given to Cosima and her needs that I disagree with interpretations of The Young Cosima solely in terms of the conflict between the demands of the artist and the demands of ordinary people. It is true that this idea can be used as a justification of Cosima's actions; a justification which Richardson appears to be offering at the end of the novel: "For she had heard what she believed to be a 'call'; had found her life-work. And whether she went towards it in joy or in pain was not hers to decide." (p.337) But, as Richardson has shown throughout The Young Cosima, Cosima's decision to renounce respectability and her husband for Wagner is not motivated

so much by a selfless desire to "serve the highest" as by her own needs. She desires to devote herself to the "Cause"; Wagner provides the perfect means which she is determined not to let slip from her grasp. It is Cosima rather than Wagner who triumphs over von Bülow. He, like all of Richardson's failures, has ideals which cannot be realised, for he is not a woman. Richardson was, as in all her novels, careful to give no definite indication of her views in The Young Cosima; she wrote to Mrs. Kernot on 27 March 1939

> There are no finger-posts in Y.C. It's not mine to judge or take sides. I leave that to my readers, satisfied if I have really brought my characters alive before your eyes. Privately though Hans had my sympathy, he was very hardly done by and Cosima did not achieve her end without bitter suffering.

Thus, once more Richardson's sympathies were with the person who failed to attain his ideals - failed because they were in conflict with the realities of his situation - rather than with the person who found fulfilment.

Since The End of a Childhood and The Young Cosima both, in various ways, reveal the limitations in the methods of writing Richardson adopted, they serve as useful reference points for an assessment of her achievement. In the short stories the poor style and somewhat sentimental attitude to childhood which also flaw her "big books" are more evident because there is nothing to compensate for them. The naturalistic method of making a point by accumulation of detail, by repetition rather than strong contrasts or other means of emphasis, is not suited to the short story.

Richardson has no space to display her talents at character-drawing and construction. In The Young Cosima Richardson's attempts to present her characters naturally, to subdue her own feelings to theirs, to write as they would have, and in fact had, written results in a book which lacks any merit in style and characterisation. It is a very plane view of the Wagner-von Bülow-Cosima triangle - a piece of reportage rather than a study of character. Richardson's insight into Cosima's motives, seen in her presentation of Cosima's jealousy, tends to be vitiated by the final affirmation of Cosima's ideals at their face value. And this also happens with the other characters. Richardson fails to demonstrate dramatically the truth or falsity of the source-book statements she incorporates in the novel. We are never taken beyond the surface facts; The Young Cosima has none of the depth that is found in Richardson's best works.

Richardson's thought that a writer should aim for depth rather than breadth,[26] and one of the ways in which she attains it in her novels is through the contrast between what is believed to be true and what actually is true. Throughout Maurice Guest, The Getting of Wisdom and The Fortunes of Richard Mahony there is a constant undercutting of the supposed by the actual, of the present by the past and future, which is missing in The Young Cosima. By this ironic use of anticipation, repetition and contrast,

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[26] See H.M. Green, A History of Australian Literature (1961), I, p.593.

Richardson is able to give a pattern to the seemingly unselective and objective presentation of her stories, to give them point as well as probability. As well as insisting on probability, objectivity and depth, Richardson believed that the creation of "real and intense" characters was the novel's "main end and object, the conflict of personalities its drama."[27] Apparently this aim was not so well formulated at the beginning of her writing career. Her first novels were originally planned as studies of a milieu,[28] and many traces of this remain, particularly in Maurice Guest. Here the chief character does not really "take command"; Maurice Guest's fate is less significant in itself than in its place in the overall design of failure and success, romance and realism. But in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony and The Young Cosima there is a constriction of interest to a few main characters; less space is devoted to the description of background and more to these people and the conflicts between them. In The Young Cosima, as a result, the characters seem almost entirely set apart from their world and this adds to the "unreal" quality of the book. This lack of background can, perhaps, be explained by Richardson's determination to put nothing in the novel which she could not prove her characters were likely to have thought or said. While her sources presumably contained

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[27] See her letter to Nettie Palmer, 24 November 1929, quoted by Palmer in A Study, p.192.

[28] "Some Notes", pp.9 and 12-3.

plenty of information about Cosima's opinions of people, they probably did not say much about her impressions of her surroundings. Similarly, as I have said, Richardson's heavy reliance on facts in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony may have resulted from her wish to describe the Australian environment not as it appeared to her but as it would have appeared to her characters. The Leipzig scene in Maurice Guest is also presented through the characters' eyes, as is the school environment of The Getting of Wisdom, but as Richardson was historically a contemporary of the characters in these books she could, without going against her canons of realism, rely on her own impressions rather than on source-book facts.

Thus Richardson's failure to create a vivid impression of the Australian landscape in The Fortunes of Richard Mahony can be seen to result from her fidelity to character, a realism equally present in Maurice Guest but made more obvious in the later novel because of the dominance of a character whose outlook was historically removed from Richardson's. And though Richardson's realism may have imposed many limitations on The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, one wonders whether she would have succeeded so well in her main aim, the portrayal of Mahony, if she had presented his surroundings in any other way. At the end of her article "The Limits of Realism", Leonie Kramer quotes a remark made by Krafft in response to one of Maurice Guest's demands for "absolute truth": "Truth? - it is one of the many miserable conventions the human brain has tortured itself with, and

its first principle is an utter lack of the imaginative faculties."[29] The passage which leads up to this remark is interesting since it shows some of the difficulties involved in the methods of writing used by Richardson:

"Do you believe, when you answer a question in the affirmative or the negative, that you are actually telling the truth? No, my friend, to be perfectly truthful one would need to lose oneself in a maze of explanation, such as no questioner would have the patience to listen to. One would need to take into account the innumerable threads that have gone to making the statement what it is. Do you think, for instance, if I answered yes or no, in the present case, it would be true? If I deny what you heard - does that tell you that I have longed with all my heart for it to come to pass? Or say I admit it - I should need to unroll my whole life before you to make you understand. No, there is no such thing as absolute truth. If there were, the finest subtleties of existence would be lost. There is neither positive truth or positive untruth; life is not so coarse-fibred as that. And only the grossest natures can be satisfied with a blunt yes or no." (pp.265-6)

No one could, I think, accuse Richardson of being a "gross nature" for in all her works she follows Flaubert in eschewing a one-sided outlook on her characters, and tries to be "perfectly truthful". Richardson's objectivity, and probability, result in the feeling that her characters are determining their own fates; she can rarely be accused of contrivance, of twisting her story to express a principle or gain effect. But these two aims have corresponding defects - Richardson has to tell all in order to avoid the crudeness of absolutes, what she tells must seem natural and inevitable. She cannot employ the selective compression which generates a fast-moving and immediately interesting and impressive novel. Like Krafft's questioner, the reader

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[29] Op. cit., Melbourne Critical Review, III (1960), p.79.

of Richardson's major novels is confronted with "a maze of explanation". It is only on the second, and later, readings that much of the point of Richardson's mass of detail becomes apparent, that one recognises the skill with which she combines the "innumerable threads" of her story. And it might be asked if, in working in this way, Richardson is not making too great a demand on the reader's patience, especially as the style of her writing is no compensation for its length. While some of the stylistic deficiencies, particularly in her later works, can be explained by her attempt to write in her characters' idiom, Richardson rather than her characters must be blamed for the bad writing that results. Sometimes the cliche may seem deliberate and purposeful - as in the description Maurice Guest's first view of Louise or the Proem to The Way Home - but it occurs too frequently for any justification.

Considering all this, one is tempted to conclude that Richardson might have been able to employ her insight into the problems of life and human nature more successfully if she had had different aims as a novelist: if she had recognised that breadth may be another way of gaining depth; that truth to fact does not equal truth to life; that the novels "that endure" usually owe their endurance to more than their "real and intense" characters. Richard Mahony is certainly such a character, but The Fortunes has not maintained its initial popularity. The restrictions which, given Richardson's methods, were necessary if Mahony's character was to make such an impact, result in a lack of

balance and variety in the trilogy which might, indeed, be said to contribute not only to its unpopularity but to its failure to rank as a truly great novel. But Richardson's very success in the creation of Mahony makes one hesitant of criticising the ways in which this was achieved. Her methods are so closely related to her themes, her failures so entangled with her attainments, that any attempt to consider one without the other seems impossible. In The Young Cosima someone says that Hans von Bülow is hampered by "his ability to see two sides of a thing at once". (p.37) This ability also in a sense hampers Richardson's work, while at the same time being the source of much of its value. Although her determination "to be perfectly truthful" may lead to the loss of immediacy, compactness and "the finest subtleties" of expression, it also results in presentations of "the conflict of personalities" which are neither over-simplified nor obviously biased. In both Maurice Guest and The Fortunes of Richard Mahony Richardson reveals an insight into the complexities of the human character and the demands and difficulties of life which, in spite of their many defects, gives these novels both validity and power. Richardson's concentration on failure, mistakes and mismatches does, perhaps, tend to make her books, as well as her characters, "unlovable". But while one may not love Richardson's work, her achievements in the analysis of character and conflict make it impossible to conclude that the life devoted to its production was, like those of so many of her characters, entirely wasted.

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Preface by 'E.F.L.R.'
Signed, corrected manuscript, never typed, from which the book was printed.
Pagination: [1], v, 304.

133/2 MAURICE GUEST. Original uncat version with 20,000 clearly readable words scored through for cutting. Unsigned typescript with many manuscript corrections.
In three parts.
Pagination: Part I. [3], 1-149, 147-195, [1].
Part II. [1], 197-375
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133/3 MAURICE GUEST. Final copy from which the book was printed.
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b) Notes. Unsigned typescript with manuscript corrections, in pencil. 23 pp.

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