

"EVERY MAN'S JUDGEMENT":
ROBERTSON DAVIES' COURTROOM

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"God's judgement is final, but not single," says a character in *General Confession*; "it is, let us say, the Supreme Court. But there is the judgement of one's fellow-men, which is essentially trivial — a kind of police court. And there is every man's judgement upon himself. . . ." (GC, p. 251).¹ While it is no doubt true that any writer inevitably must treat characters' opinions of themselves and each other, it is nevertheless equally true that Robertson Davies frequently stresses the act of evaluation, both for its external and internal ramifications. From his earliest plays, he has explored this idea of judgement, especially as an arbitration between innocence and guilt, becoming more complex and subtle in his treatment of the subject. The embodiment of objective legal judgement, the courtroom, which figures prominently in such various works as *At My Heart's Core*, *A Masque of Aesop*, *Leaven of Malice*, *General Confession*, and *The Manticore*, thereby serves but as an explicit, external form of the broader, more complex, and subjective "police court" of a man's judgement by and of others which runs through almost all his plays and novels. Davies himself does not seem to feel that such external judgements are, as his character claims, "essentially trivial." Increasingly, though, he emphasizes "every man's judgement upon himself," and with his last novels, the trilogy consisting of *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore*, and *World of Wonders*, he gives this idea its fullest articulation, even while simultaneously developing a conception of truth which makes any kind of judgement uncertain, whether by characters or readers — a conception far removed from that supported by the ironic certainties of the earliest works.

In some ways at least, the judgements upon guilt or innocence seem related to Davies' much-discussed and generally explicit treatment of another

¹All page numbers will be drawn from the following editions and enclosed in the body of the text preceded by the given abbreviations:

- HC *At My Heart's Core* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1950).
- MA *A Masque of Aesop* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1952).
- MF *A Mixture of Fraillties* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolsen, 1958).
- FB *Fifth Business* (New York: New American Library, 1970).
- FMF *Fortune, My Foe* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1949).
- GC *General Confession in Hunting Stuart and Other Plays* (Toronto: New Press, 1972).
- LM *Leaven of Malice* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1954).
- M *The Manticore* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972).
- TT *Tempest-Tost* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1951).
- WW *World of Wonders* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1975).

kind of evaluation — that involving aesthetics. Indeed, Davies' concern with the predicament of art and the artist in Canada leads him to envisage in many of his early works situations which emphasize the act of judgement. And, significantly, these situations parallel the many instances of moral judgement both because they too are often couched in terms of legal judgement and because they emphasize the act of assessment as an activity itself open to judgement. Thus, for example, in *Fortune, My Foe*, Davies has one of his sympathetic characters deride two gauche and tasteless "experts" who themselves have inadequately judged a representative work of European culture: "I was a judge," says the incensed Rowlands; "I judged them, and found them wanting. I drove them forth because they were unworthy" (*FMF*, p. 94). Similarly, in *A Masque for Mr. Punch* (1963) in a scene reminiscent of the courtroom, the traditional Punch play is judged by an adjudicator and professor (as well as by parodied figures of Tennessee Williams and Samuel Beckett). Again Davies' irony directs the audience's assessment of the judges — they are satirically tried and found wanting. Even as late as *The Manticore* (1972) an incidental act of aesthetic evaluation reflects on the judge: David's response to the formally unattractive picture of Christ standing over a Boy Scout's shoulder Davies makes a key to the reader's evaluation of David.

But in his concern with the fundamental processes of judgement, Davies goes far beyond such aesthetic matters, ultimately dealing with the profound problem of the self in contact with the transcendent forces of good and evil. While most of Davies' works contribute to the evolution of his exploration and articulation of that problem, in his earliest works he does little more than return, repeatedly, to employ the act of judgement as a key part of plot development or as an interesting means of examining character. In two of his earliest plays, Davies presents external judgement in its most rudimentary form — faulty assessment is the mainspring of the simple plot. In *The Gates of the Righteous* (1949) the eloping couple have misjudged the bandits they seek to join, and discover that the supposedly idealistic highwaymen actually hold conventional beliefs. In *The Voice of the People* (1949), similarly, an ignorant man stands rebuked for his hasty conclusions about a letter to the editor and his vengeful answer to its supposed author.

At My Heart's Core (1950), however, is the first work to consider the nature of judgement to any degree. Underlying the action are two sorts of moral judgement. First, Cantwell, like many of Davies' characters, attempts to exact revenge, in this case for what he considers to have been a slight against himself and his wife by the aloof and superior Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Traill, and Mrs. Moodie. The discontent with their lives in the backwoods which he attempts to arouse in the three women is explicitly the result, in Mrs. Moodie's words, of his endeavour "to cast our sins of omission in our teeth, and to stand in judgement upon us" (*HC*, p. 84). Second, the three women, again like so many of Davies' characters, judge themselves adversely and suffer guilt, in this case for their susceptibility to Cantwell's seductions. At this point in his

development, however, Davies treats the guilt rather cursorily. What emphasizes the underlying nature of both of these aspects of moral judgement is the fact that Davies climaxes the play with his favourite device of courtroom confrontation. The women's resentment towards Cantwell leads to legal prosecution when Stewart, the returned husband and a magistrate, sets up court in his home: Cantwell is the defendant under arrest, the women are the plaintiffs, Sally becomes the sergeant at arms, the poker acts as a mace, and the whole of Upper Canada is facetiously designated as the witness room. Upon gleaning the nature of Cantwell's crime, Stewart declares it "beyond the jurisdiction of this enquiry or of any court I have ever heard of" (*HC*, p. 79), thus foreshadowing the similar claims of Knapp in *Leaven of Malice* and indeed the whole notion of the superior importance of moral truth evinced in the second trilogy. For Cantwell's is not a legal but a moral offense — indeed, considering the frequent references to Cantwell as the Devil and his role as tempter, even a spiritual offense of metaphysical import.² Stewart's passing emotional judgement in calling Cantwell a scoundrel, however, provokes the latter to invert the court and accuse the judge: "In every court the wisdom and honour of the judge are upon trial and if the accused receives less than justice the judge is guilty" (*HC*, p. 80). Here then explicit is the underlying premise of so much of Davies' concern with the act of judgement.

The one act *A Masque of Aesop* (1952) similarly centres on a trial, but presents a much simpler view of the act of judgement. The citizens of Delphi are enraged with Aesop for voicing "thoughts other than those which they recognize as sane, safe and sanitary!" (*MA*, p. 12), and they desire Apollo to ensure, by intervention with his aunts, the Fates, that Aesop will drown when flung in the river. Apollo's first verdict is against the mob, like Professor Rowland's reaction and that of Cantwell, is a judgement of the judges: "To punish you for your impudence, I shall sit in judgment upon the man of whom you complain" (*MA*, p. 12). The rest of the play is a trial with three fables presented as evidence and concluded by Apollo's verdict. He rebukes the men of Delphi for being blinded to truth by "concerns of self and petty advantages" (*MA*, p. 47) and transforms Aesop visually into a noble teacher. He balances this verdict by a "sentence against [Aesop], as just as it is light," that, because the latter has scorned rather than loved mankind, his fables will be the delight of few but children. In this children's play, Davies presents a judge whose ability to discern the degree of guilt is unquestioned. For children at least, Davies is able to waive the uncertainties which increasingly cloud the act of assessment and to present a judgement whose chief significance lies in its satisfying accuracy.

²M. W. Steinberg points out that Cantwell's vengeful treatment of the women is "entirely disproportionate to the occasion" and actually "an expression of unmotivated evil." In the symbolic structure of the three temptations, each concluded with the sound of the Redeemer's horn, Cantwell becomes a satanic figure. See "Don Quixote and the Puppets: Theme and Structure in Robertson Davies' Drama," *Canadian Literature*, No. 7 (Winter 1961), p. 48.

Leaven of Malice (1954) is far more complex than these plays in its treatment of external judgement and contains suggestions as well of the self-judgement to become increasingly important to Davies. Indeed, it is his last work to centre mainly on people's evaluation of each other, and the one to explore most fully all its repercussions. The question of legal judgement runs throughout the novel, giving a focus to both structure and theme, and more than in any of Davies' other works, the legal framework is used to arouse suspense as the act of judgement is postponed until the climax. Indeed, the process of justice arising from Professor Vambrace's attempts to sue the *Salterton* newspaper for "libel" provides the framework for the novel: it furnishes the subject for much character-revealing gossip and speculation; it affects the personal aspirations of such characters as Ridley, who gives up hopes for an honorary degree from Waverley University; and it influences central relationships, particularly in drawing Pearl and Solly together and away from their parents. It also gives unity to the action of the novel, which abounds in subplots — Ridley's difficulty in firing Swithin Shillito, Solly's problems with his job and research, Higgin's relationship with Edith Little and the Morphews, and so on — by involving central characters from all subplots in the final confrontation. When the opposing lawyers meet in the *Bellman* offices, the action of the novel reaches its climax in a "court" scene, whose importance as an act of judgement Davies is careful to stress: "They'll talk a lot about court," Marryat tells Ridley, "but *this* is the trial" (*LM*, p. 281). The lawyers, manoeuvring to gain the dominating chair in the "court," reflect the tendency of many unjustifiably to take for themselves the position of judgement. This position, however, is retained by Marryat and Ridley: "they were on the *Bench* and the two lawyers were, so to speak, in court" (*LM*, p. 284). Once again, of course, Davies is judging the judges — the lawyers, at least, are on trial, though Davies' pointed irony, as much as the proceedings of the court, direct the reader's verdict. The court itself tries two defendants — Cobbler, falsely accused of placing the engagement notice, is acquitted, but Higgin is convicted. Yet, significantly, the judges, like Stewart in *At My Heart's Core*, thus find themselves faced with less a legal than a moral offense, malice. As in Davies' later works, litigation is inadequate to the most important kinds of guilt.

The process of legal justice Davies counterpoints by the less formalized but more pervasive judgements of opinion and gossip. He presents his background community as one acutely aware of their position as moral scrutineers: "Everyone knows" (*LM*, p. 254) how much Solly loved Griselda Webster; "everybody knows" (*LM*, p. 255) that Pearl has a poor life at home; and "everyone knows" (*LM*, p. 261) that Ridley's wife is in an asylum. Repeatedly *Salterton* gossip acts as a vehicle for people's verdicts on each other, and often specifically for defamation of character. Thus, for example, Davies presents Mrs. Bridgetower's First Thursdays as a kind of court of gossip in which Cobbler and Ridley are tried. Miss Puss Pottinger attempts to

demonstrate that Cobbler is guilty of placing the "libellous" engagement notice in the newspaper. Mrs. Bridgetower, secretly believing the culprit to be Vambrace, withholds judgement. The group is more nearly united against Ridley, hoping for personal and irrelevant reasons — his apparently Philistine treatment of Higgin, his ascendancy over Shillito, his cooking habits, his marital status, his possession of a secret — to have him fired from his job and prevented from receiving an honorary degree from Waverley. As Davies' irony underlines, their vilification is a perverted judgement based on malice, malice which is evident, as Dean Knapp later says, "in unfounded charges against people we dislike" (*LM*, p. 301).

In the figure of Ridley, Davies develops another type of judge, the professional man of opinion. Ridley's job demands impartiality and discernment, "for however foolish an editor may be in private life, when he puts on his editorial 'We,' he is like a judge who has put on his wig, and has added a cubit to his stature" (*LM*, p. 89). In fact, Davies originally intended to make the Editor the central intelligence of the novel, drawing on his own experience as columnist and editor, and to call it *The Barber's Chair* in accordance with Ridley's idea of a newspaper that suits all tastes — "that fits all buttocks" (*LM*, p. 19).³ Even with his more peripheral role in the final version, Ridley in his editorial capacity gives the broadest reflections upon the people and situations which make up Salterton. The detachment, yet interpretive imagination, which his profession ideally imposes upon him makes him a forerunner of the critic Aspinwall in *A Mixture of Frailties*, the historian Dunstan Ramsay in *Fifth Business* and *World of Wonders*, and the psychiatrist Dr. von Haller in *The Manticore*.

It is in *Leaven of Malice*, the novel which most fully explores people's judgements of each other, that Davies first gives significant attention to a person's appraisal of himself. In previous works, when characters have attempted to stand aside from their conduct to judge their own guilt or innocence, their act has been dealt with only briefly or has not been presented seriously. Hector Mackilwraith in *Tempest-Tost*, for example, suffers a sense of guilt for having "boasted that he would smirch a girl's honour" (*TT*, p. 317), but his guilt is so disproportionate to his mere intention to kiss her, so fraught with intense embarrassment at the outcome, and so invested with comic hints, then withdrawals, that it emerges at its most serious as merely pathetic. Gloster Ridley in *Leaven of Malice*, however, does have a serious cause for his sense of guilt, for he feels that, whatever a courtroom's objective verdict would be, he has murdered his wife:

Suddenly the car went out of control, and we turned over in the ditch. That is the phrase the papers always use — "the car went out of control" — you see, it accuses nobody. It is for the court to make accusations. But in this case there was no court. . . . And what I have never been able to decide is whether that accident was really an accident, or whether I created it.

(*LM*, p. 264)

³Elsbeth Buitenhuis, *Robertson Davies* (Toronto: Forum House, 1972), p. 46.

As an indirect result of the accident, his wife has broken down mentally and been hospitalized "near to being dead, to being nothing at all" (*LM*, p. 264) for nearly twenty years. Ridley's self-condemnation has influenced the rest of his life, which "has been devoted to making [himself] into a person who couldn't possibly . . . have done that murder" (*LM*, p. 264), and has inspired his immediate desire for an honorary degree as verification of his present respectability. The judgement here is clearly an internal one, Ridley's conviction of himself. However much it dominates Ridley, though, it still does not dominate the novel. The reader knows nothing of Ridley's guilt until he confides in Mrs. Fielding, and at that point she quickly reassures him. Self-judgement is not yet explored in any depth.

General Confession (1956), written shortly after *Leaven of Malice*, approaches the idea of self-judgement in dramatic form. Casanova, conjuring up spirits for the amusement of Amalie and her lover Hugo, inadvertently produces three aspects of himself — his ideal of womanhood (Marina), his better judgement (Voltaire), and his contrary destiny (Cagliostro) — who have come to take part in his only nominally voluntary self-appraisal. Davies once again emphasizes the crucial act of judgement by making the third act a trial scene, with Amalie as judge, Marina as defense lawyer, Voltaire as clerk, and Cagliostro as prosecutor. Since Casanova refuses at first to try himself, he faces this external court without compunction. Immediately admitting himself guilty of the seven deadly sins, he declares himself to have offended only against God and to be beyond the jurisdiction of the court. Like the court in *Leaven of Malice*, and for the same reasons, this one thus breaks down, and, like the court in *At My Heart's Core*, this one also stands accused itself: "the offenses named are part of the common condition of man, and everyone here is at least as guilty as [Casanova]" (*GC*, p. 257). After elaborate defense of himself, however, Casanova suddenly and rather arbitrarily capitulates and, like many of Davies' other characters, accepts his own guilt: "Damned! Damned a thousand times then! What other judgement can there be for me, or any man, brought thus before himself?" (*GC*, p. 268). Davies' treatment of the matter is still superficial, however, for though he has Cassanova accept the three phantoms as truly parts of himself, he does not make his character seem at all penitent. Indeed, the play discusses self-judgement far more than showing it in action. Its significance here resides primarily in its tentative approaches to this theme and in its evident affinities with the later *Manticore*.

Despite Davies' increasing interest in self-judgement, evident in his last four novels, he continues to make use of the forms of external judgement. Thus *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958) is concerned both with aesthetic assessment and with people's evaluations of each other. The background community of Salterton functions again as a force of opinion, not only gossiping about the conditions of Mrs. Bridgetower's will, but actually effecting a sentence — insofar as their moral values, embodied in the Bridgetower Trust, prevent a grant from going to a young women who is not a virgin. The

efforts of major characters to pass external moral judgements also continue to be important, as Solly Bridgetower re-evaluates his mother, and Monica Gall similarly re-evaluates her Canadian family and background and her new English contacts and environment. Nevertheless, in this novel self-judgement emerges far more centrally than in any work hitherto.

To some extent, self-judgement is of the type in *Leaven of Malice* — like Ridley, several characters speak of a sense of guilt. Four different people confess to Monica that they feel themselves responsible for Giles Revelstoke's death, but in all four cases the guilt is described briefly by the characters themselves and not developed. Indeed, the general clamour for responsibility becomes almost comic, and decreases the impact of Monica's own declaration of guilt. For Monica, though, the attempt to assess her own feelings and actions is her fundamental dilemma. As she moves from acceptance of the standards of her family and Thirteener faith to acceptance of a freer sexual morality and a conviction of the supreme value of art, she is not merely accommodating herself passively to the beliefs around her. The conflicting attitudes toward life are part of her, and their mutual incompatibility gives rise to her intense sense of hypocrisy: she is "perplexed and tormented unendurably" over "keeping two sets of mental and moral books — one for inspection by the light of home, and another to contain her life with Revelstoke, and all the new loyalties and attitudes" (*MF*, p. 266). And Davies characteristically emphasizes her bifurcated moral sense by giving it dramatic form in her conflicting inner voices: thus, in England she realizes that "some of the mental judgements she passed on people around her were unquestionably her mother's, and couched in her mother's roughest idiom" (*MF*, p. 163), whereas in Canada she finds that her new assessment of her family and fellow Thirteeners is expressed in Giles's voice: "Don't be a hypocrite; you're ashamed of them" (*MF*, p. 285). Her external judgements here illustrate her own internal change and the confusion which she brings to her attempts to assess her own actions. Although she gladly becomes Giles's mistress, she cannot escape the guilt typical of many Davies' protagonists. Although she uses birth control, she does so "with an ill-defined but strong notion that if the consequences of sin were avoided now, some triply-compounded exaction would be made at last" (*MF*, p. 231). As she works on Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, she feels accused by her role as False Witness and reproached by the religious grandeur of the music, for "Christian myth and Christian morality were part of the fabric of her life" (*MF*, p. 233). Partly through Domdaniel's reassurance that "chastity is having the body in the soul's keeping" (*MF*, p. 242), she comes to accept her relationship with Giles and subordinates her self and her talents to his creative genius: momentarily she is guilt-free.

Giles's suicide imposes a greater burden of guilt, for she feels herself responsible — "first I broke his heart, and then I deserted him when he was dying" (*MF*, p. 362). She realizes too late that he was not dead when she found his body and that she could have saved him. Yet, Davies implies, her

self-judgement is in some ways too harsh. It becomes evident, for example, that though Monica does not feel justified in condemning Giles's selfishness in dying with her letter clutched accusingly in his hand, she is quite ready to condemn herself for her selfishness and culpability. Indeed, as Davies further suggests, in the courtroom of one's own mind, one can all too easily overlook evidence for the defense. Domdaniel, Monica's confidant, emphasizes that what is essential is not understanding Giles's motives but being fair in her assessment of her own: "you must — you absolutely must — make a judgement on your own behaviour" (*MF*, p. 364). But Davies is not yet ready to dwell on the problem: in accepting her own behaviour and the faults it implies, Monica loses her sense of guilt surprisingly quickly. She is able to acknowledge to herself that the sight of Giles's apparently dead body had given her "a pang of relief, of release" (*MF*, p. 376). It seems to be her shame for such a "blasphemy against her love" (*MF*, p. 376) rather than guilt for his death which induces her to dedicate her life to his music: "Perhaps, working for a worthy perpetuation of his work, there might be atonement" (*MF*, p. 376). Still, in her self-condemnation and half-formed ideas of expiation, Monica embodies in dilute form the elements which later make up Ramsay in *Fifth Business*.

In the last three novels, the emphasis shifts away from the forms of external judgement toward the internal courtroom. Characters' assessments of each other do, of course, remain essential to the novels, but most often as they affect the characters enacting the judgements. Of greater importance are the judgements individuals make of themselves. Ten years before *Fifth Business* was published, one critic noted that Davies was interested less in character than in ideas and social manners: "The last thing he wants is to delve into the recesses of Calvinist or Catholic hearts . . ."⁴ This statement, although it ignores the sense of guilt attendant upon Monica Gall, was otherwise true at the time. It is not until Dunstan Ramsay that Davies examines the Calvinist conscience and develops fully the theme of self-indictment.

In *Fifth Business*, the basic impulse of the book, Dunstan Ramsay's compulsion to write his autobiography, arises from his desire to be judged fairly. Incensed by a condescending newspaper evaluation of him on his retirement, he presents his own evaluation of his life as a defense to his former Headmaster, who represents the school world he has left. In its frame, then, *Fifth Business* is concerned with external appraisal. In its content, however, it is a man's trial of himself. Dunstan Ramsay condemns himself at the age of ten for his part in the act which sets the trilogy in motion. When Percy Staunton throws a snowball with a stone in it at Ramsay, he dodges it, and it hits the pregnant Mary Dempster instead. As a result, she gives birth prematurely to Paul and goes mad herself. At the time, Staunton denies knowledge and

⁴Hugo McPherson, "The Mask of Satire: Character and Symbolic Pattern in Robertson Davies' Fiction," *Canadian Literature*, No. 4 (Spring 1960), p. 21.

responsibility, and Ramsay, not daring to confess his part, takes the whole weight of guilt on himself. His strict Presbyterian upbringing and his own vivid imagination intensify his "agony of mind" (*FB*, p. 21): "I was alone with my guilt, and it tortured me. . . . I was of the damned" (*FB*, p. 22). The rest of Ramsay's life is shaped by his judgement of himself regarding Mary Dempster. Indeed, Davies uses her very name to emphasize her two key roles in the mind of the guilt-ridden protagonist. In her aspect of "Mary," human yet divine, she possesses Ramsay's love and his veneration: as an adolescent boy he is "in love with Mrs. Dempster" (*FB*, p. 28), and in later life he becomes obsessed with the idea that she is a saint. The fact that he sees her in his battlefield vision as Mary Madonna suggests that he is particularly drawn to the saint who intercedes for the forgiveness of sin. In her aspect of "Dempster," or "judge," she is the cause and the focus of Ramsay's self-condemnation. As a boy, he is compelled by his desire for expiation to assume her care even after forbidden to help her by his mother. As an adult, he is compelled by the same desire to take on the legal and financial responsibility of maintaining her in an institution. His weekly visits to her there are both acts of atonement in a "life sentence" (*FB*, p. 162) and repeated acknowledgements of his guilt: "It was as though I were visiting a part of my own soul that was condemned to live in hell" (*FB*, p. 162). And yet, wanting to keep the financial burden to himself, he is possessive in both love and guilt: "She was mine" (*FB*, p. 162).

Ramsay's self-judgement, itself judged externally, Davies shows to be disproportionately harsh. Padre Blazon guides the reader's assessment of Ramsay's guilt in suggesting that he should "accept the possibility that [his life] may be purchased at the price of hers" and stop tormenting himself: "Forgive yourself for being a human creature, Ramezay" (*FB*, p. 160). Leisl, too, accuses him of being inhuman in being kind to everyone but himself: "You make yourself responsible for other people's troubles. It is your hobby" (*FB*, p. 201). "That horrid village and your hateful Scots family made you a moral monster" (*FB*, p. 194). Ramsay's self-condemnation seems particularly exaggerated to Boy, who, despite his greater responsibility, has utterly forgotten the incident of the snowball: ". . . I think you've let the thing build up into something it never was The difference between us is that you've brooded over it and I've forgotten it" (*FB*, p. 235). In this case, however, Boy's reaction, however "healthy," is so clearly inadequate to the integrity of Ramsay's guilt that he himself becomes judged in the readers' eyes for his smug insensitivity to the reality of the spirit. Though Ramsay's guilt is obviously irrational, it has a significance beyond purely rational assessment, a significance that arises from the fact that it is integral to Ramsay's intuitive acceptance of the "Magian" world view explored by the whole trilogy. That such a judgement as Ramsay makes upon himself must indeed arise from the self in response to a spiritual reality and not from external sources Davies makes clear by contrasting Ramsay with Boy and Paul. Not only has neither of

them blamed himself for Mary Dempster's madness, but both have rejected external attempts to make them feel guilty. Boy, first as a child and then as an adult, is accused by Ramsay, and both times denies that he is at fault. Paul as a child is accused by his father of robbing his mother of her sanity by his birth, and he, too, refuses to accept the blame: "I was too young for the kind of guilt my father wanted me to feel . . . I couldn't stand it. I cannot feel guilt now" (*FB*, p. 232). The burden of guilt which Ramsay carries is something a man can impose only on himself.

The judgemental forces of *Fifth Business* — in fact, of the whole trilogy — come to be symbolized by the stone in the snowball Boy throws, the stone which Ramsay uses for years as his paperweight. For Ramsay, the stone is in part merely "a continual reminder of the consequences that can follow a single action" (*WW*, p. 357). But more important, because it arises from his "dark, judgmental Ramsay blood" (*WW*, p. 347), is the fact that he primarily keeps it as a reminder of the nasty side of Boy's character and his grudge against Boy: "I harboured it for sixty years," he tells David in *The Manticore*, "and perhaps my hope was for revenge" (*M*, p. 290). Boy Staunton, taking the paperweight and committing suicide with it in his mouth, may have "swallowed" the stone out of spite toward Ramsay. Yet, if he does indeed take Magnus' advice "to come to terms with what the stone signified" (*WW*, p. 354), it may represent his own last judgement of himself, his acknowledgement of wrong-doing and his penitence. For David Staunton, the stone is "Exhibit A in the case of the murder of Boy Staunton" (*M*, p. 12) and represents both suspended legal judgement and his confused personal assessment of his father and his own relationship with him. The stone is thus associated with both external and internal judgements and links the major characters of the trilogy in their various "judgemental" involvements with it. It is thrown not only at the beginning of *Fifth Business* but also at the close of *The Manticore* when Ramsay flings it over a cliff from David and himself; increasingly informative reflections upon it conclude each of the three novels.

In *Fifth Business*, because Davies deals with a single continuous sense of guilt described by Ramsay in retrospect, that guilt functions chiefly as a key to Dunstan's sensibility. In *The Manticore*, however, the same kind of self-judgement becomes dynamically related to the development of the novel: David Staunton's evaluation of others and himself changes throughout the novel and is recorded as immediate action in the present. And where Ramsay's self-judgement is emotional and irrational, David's, as befits his character, is, superficially at least, rational and clinical, achieved through psychiatric sessions with Dr. Johanna von Haller in Zurich. In *The Manticore*, Davies once again uses the form of the legal court, but this time to make clear the process of David's judgement. In order to evaluate his own conduct, David Staunton enacts a trial in his own mind with himself as the prosecuting lawyer, the defending lawyer, the witness, and the judge. "It's a way I have of looking at what I have done, or might do, to see what it is worth," he explains to Dr. von

Haller. ". . . in the end Mr. Justice Staunton must make up his mind and give a decision. And there is no appeal from that decision" (*M*, p. 63). The decision, he later admits, is usually against Prisoner Staunton: "The victories have usually gone to the prosecution" (*M*, p. 72). In attempting to weigh his behaviour on detached and rational grounds, David is a development of *Tempest-Tost's* Hector Mackilwraith with his notebook columns of *Pro* and *Contra*. The more dramatic form of a courtroom, though, is appropriate to the mind of an eminent criminal lawyer, and one who enjoys playing a role in court. Yet, ironically, Davies implicitly shows the limitations of the very form of appraisal he has hitherto used so extensively himself. The inadequacy of purely rational verdicts, the kind with which courts must be solely concerned, becomes gradually evident to David as he undergoes psychiatric analysis, and as he learns to accept his true nature, he no longer finds necessary any "demanding, humiliating sessions in Mr. Justice Staunton's court" (*M*, p. 264).

At first, David sees analysis as a process by which he will be interrogated and tried. The fact that while suspicious and guarded he views the treatment in terms of the courtroom further suggests the limitations of such rational forms of external judgement: he notes of the Director of the Jung Institute, "he was an intelligent examiner, and at times I was conscious of being an unsatisfactory witness. . . ." (*M*, p. 5). Similarly, in his sessions with Dr. von Haller, he frequently likens her approach to that of a lawyer, analyzing her "trick" of inspiring confidence by not placing a desk between them (*M*, p. 20) and comparing her ability to remember a client's story without notes to his own (*M*, p. 31). He insists that she, like a lawyer, wants to "worm things out of people they don't want to tell" (*M*, p. 13) and to make people "look stupid" (*M*, p. 67). Gradually, David loses his suspicions, and recognizes that "with Johanna von Haller [he] was arguing not for victory, but for truth" (*M*, p. 170). Although she does refer to their sessions as "my court" (*M*, p. 208), she insists that she is not the judge. Instead she guides his assessment of himself — "for that is the kind of court you are to appear in," she tells him, "the court of self-judgement" (*M*, p. 73).

Through Jungian analysis, David comes to re-evaluate himself. He accepts that although his reasoning powers are formidable, his ability to feel is undeveloped. Somewhat like Casanova in *General Confession*, he learns to recognize aspects of his own character — such as the Shadow, the Friend, and the Anima — but also learns to face them critically. Thus his self-judgement, unlike Ramsay's, is essentially one of acceptance rather than condemnation. He is led to acknowledge the Shadow, "that side of oneself to which so many real but rarely admitted parts of one's personality must be assigned" (*M*, p. 92), and to accept the "concept of Staunton-as-Son-of-a-Bitch" (*M*, p. 93) capable of all the petty and malicious acts of his past. In re-assessing himself, he simultaneously re-assesses others, recognizing that external judgements which he had believed to be objective had often been influenced by the makeup of his own character: "our

great task," Dr. von Haller explains, "is to see people as people and not clouded by archetypes we carry about with us, looking for a peg to hang them on" (*M*, p. 231). Ironically, it is only after he has accepted the subjective truths of psychology that David is able to judge externals accurately, to "recognize the objectivity of the world": "The absolute nature of things is independent of my senses . . . and what I perceive is an image of my own psyche" (*M*, p. 269). Having distinguished between what is subjective and what is objective, he is capable of clarifying both external and internal judgements. Thus, in his penultimate novel, Davies has attempted an elucidation of the psychological process itself of judgement, having in *Fifth Business* shown the effects of that process on an imaginative sensibility.

Perhaps because he has in these terms reached a kind of final development of his concern with such judgement, in *World of Wonders* he does not explore the issue to the extent he has in the first two books of the trilogy. Self-judgement does not shape Magnus Eisengrim's past life as it has Ramsay's, nor does it dominate his present life as it does David Staunton's. Certainly in recounting the story of his life Magnus evaluates his past conduct, but he seems equally interested in passing judgement on others. In fact, in *World of Wonders* Davies develops the theme of judgement mainly by giving the fullest articulation of ideas present throughout the trilogy — the limitations of any sort of external or internal evaluation when the grounds for making it are subjective — and by placing the theme in metaphysical perspective by showing the insignificance of any human verdict in terms of the "Greater Justice."

The process by which Davies begins the trilogy with Ramsay's sustained guilt and moves in *The Manticore* to consider David's growth to the acceptance of self is paralleled by his treatment of Magnus in *World of Wonders*, shifting as that character does from early self-condemnation to later self-commendation. Although he denies at the end of *Fifth Business* that he felt any guilt for his mother's madness, he evidently does feel degraded by his schoolmates' "filthy jokes about hoors when they saw [him]" (*WW*, p. 99) and by his father's insistence that the disgrace is his own fault: "A disgraced and ruined home, and for what reason? Because I was born into it" (*WW*, p. 99). When he is sodomously raped and then kidnapped by Willard, his intense guilt, like Ramsay's at a similar age, is bound up with a terror of God whose foundation lies in a strict religious upbringing: "I knew for a certainty that I had angered God. . . . God certainly knew about me, and undoubtedly had terrible plans for me. . . ." (*WW*, p. 45). From the vantage point of the present, Magnus simultaneously affirms and denies his complicity in the rape, recalling that he did smile at Willard's sexual advances, yet simultaneously suggesting that he did so not from free will but from the Devil's machinations. The sense of guilt which torments him during his years of subjection to Willard, however, does not carry over, as Ramsay's early guilt does, into his adult life. Indeed, he seems to ease much of his inner torment by torturing Willard in return,

withholding death from him in revenge. And for this act he seems to condemn himself only in retrospect and not to feel penitent. Willard's eventual death sets him free to change and, he hopes, to leave his more despicable characteristics behind. On joining Sir John Tresize's theatre company he takes stock of himself but balances his faults with virtues. As his speech and manner become polished and his character improves, his estimation of himself also improves, until in the present, as the greatest magician in the world, he sees himself as superior to all around him. He has "a full share, a share pressed down and overflowing, of the egotism of the theatre artist" (*WW*, p. 8). So far has Davies moved from the pointedly ironic tone of the first novels that, like Ramsay's, Magnus's assessment of himself remains an objective fact, essentially beyond reader judgement.

Insofar as the significant external judgements of the novel centre on revenge — the enactment of negative judgement — this kind of evaluation considered by Davies in previous works receives its culminating development. Cantwell in *At My Heart's Core* exacts retribution on the ladies, the mob in *A Masque of Aesop* seeks vengeance on the storyteller, and various characters in *Leaven of Malice* are motivated by petty desire for revenge. In *World of Wonders*, Magnus revenges himself in the past on Willard and in the present of Roly Ingestree, and both times satanically enjoys doing so. His past treatment of Willard is not taken seriously by Ramsay, who suggests that Magnus, because of his Baptist upbringing, "blames himself whenever he can, and because he knows the dramatic quality of the role, he likes to play the villain" (*WW*, p. 155). His present exposing and goading of Roly Ingestree are prompted by a desire to revenge what he sees as Ingestree's cruelty to Sir John Tresize, itself presumably revenge for Sir John's treatment of Ingestree. "I try not to judge people," Magnus insists to Ramsay, "though when I meet an enemy and he's within arm's length, I'm not above giving him a smart clout. . . . As I did with Roly" (*WW*, p. 355). However, the very fact that he calls Roly an enemy belies his words, since it implies that a verdict had already been passed, even if revenge had not been taken. He does make a valid distinction, though, between his own desire for revenge, which is prompted by and passing with the occasion, and Ramsay's, which has been, he feels, a latent part of his life. Magnus, moreover, takes revenge when he wants it, while Ramsay merely contemplates a vague possibility of ever doing so on Boy Staunton.

Despite his extended treatment of judgement throughout his works, in his latest works Davies largely undercuts the entire process of reaching judgements, whether internal or external, whether passive or enacted in such form as revenge: no assessment, he suggests, can ever be objectively accurate. In *The Manticore* David has grown to accept this fact, realizing that his evaluation of others has been determined largely by his own personal makeup. In *World of Wonders*, Davies goes further, suggesting that subjectivity is inescapable. A man's account of himself is necessarily a mass

of selected details, true perhaps in themselves but obviously not the whole of truth. "... what's an autobiography?" Ingestree reflects. "Surely it's a romance of which one is oneself the hero" (*WW*, p. 289). A man's interpretation of others is equally dependent on truths selected according to point of view. "Who is anybody?" asks Leisl. "For me, he is whatever he is for me. Biographical facts may be of help, but they don't explain that" (*WW*, p. 89). The relativity of viewpoint is especially evident in the manner that Ingestree and Magnus are shown to clash on their personal interpretations of Sir John Tresize and Milady and of the acting company's tour of Canada: "You two sound as if you've been on different tours" (*WW*, p. 254), says Kinghovn. Similarly, within the trilogy as a whole, shifting viewpoints result in quite different assessments of characters who overlap from book to book. Ramsay, for example, is seen through the eyes of a newspaper reporter as a doddering old schoolmaster, through his own eyes as a recognized hagiographer and "fifth business," and through David Staunton's young eyes as Old Biggerlugs. Boy Staunton is to Ramsay a "lifelong friend and enemy" (*FB*, p. 9), to David a father whose overpowering identity has deeply influenced his own, and to Magnus a fellow "wolf." The exploration of judgement which runs through Davies' work thus culminates with a stress on the inherent limitations of any form of personal appraisal.

The trilogy further concludes the treatment of judgement by placing the theme in the context of transcendent judgement on the lives of men. Increasingly in the trilogy, Davies develops this metaphysical view, largely absent from the earliest works: here men's lives are shaped by otherworldly influences, which, in Magnus' "Magian" world view, are ever present in the immediate world. Ramsay, Leisl, and Magnus all insist upon transcendent forces of good and evil, and Magnus declares that the Devil once intervened directly in his life. In describing Boy's last decision, Magnus refers to the "Great Justice," a personally appropriate nemesis determined by external forces. The Great Justice administers the final judgement on the affairs of men: "part of the glory and terror of our life is that somehow, at some time, we get all what's coming to us" (*WW*, p. 355).

With this kind of metaphysical perspective closing his latest published work, Davies has clearly reached a point far from that at which he began his earliest plays and novels. However, the manner in which his treatment of the current of ideas centering around judgement changes through his writing career is, of course, characteristic of his overall development. Relatively external and simple, explicit in their ironic direction of ideas, Davies' early works give way to more subjective and complex works, ones that deliberately suspend or even disorientate reader understanding, placing the whole epistemological framework in a vale where spiritual reality becomes of sole significance. Whether or not Davies has thus achieved any kind of stable viewpoint from which he will continue to write, he seems to suggest in *The Manticore* that the process by which he himself has reached that position has

been a kind of spiritual progress, an act of self-exploration and self-judgement:

To *live* is to battle with trolls
in the vaults of heart and brain
To *write*: that is to sit
in judgement over one's self. (*M*, p. 73, p. 228)

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