READING AS COLLABORATION IN TIMOTHY FINDLEY'S *FAMOUS LAST WORDS*

Jamie Dopp

> What matters [in a text] . . . is the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce, and second to put an improved apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers— that is, readers or spectators into collaborators.
>
> Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer"

As many commentators have already noted, *Famous Last Words* poignantly explores the difference between fact and fiction, history and story, or, to use the moral terms employed in the novel, "truth" and "lies." The novel is also well-known for the way its formal innovations, particularly the framing story of Freyberg and Quinn, position the reader as an active and critical agent. As Donald Hair, amongst others, has put it, the form of the novel "prods, challenges, stimulates, [and] provokes" the reader (Hair 11). What remains in these lines of inquiry, it seems to me, is to describe more specifically how the reader is positioned in *Famous Last Words*, and to show how this positioning affects and is in turn affected by the novel's exploration of history and story, of "truth" and "lies."

In this article I'd like to argue that *Famous Last Words* works to position the reader as a collaborator in the sense described by Walter Benjamin. Other commentators have noted the "Brechtian-like" estrangement that is the main effect of the framing narrative (see Hutcheon, *Poetics* 18) but so far the implications of this parallel are largely unexplored. Benjamin's term, with its reference back to Brecht's theatrical practice, nicely captures the doubleness of the positioning that occurs in *Famous Last Words*, a positioning

that turns readers into active agents while at the same time enforcing certain historical and ideological limits on the reader's agency.

"Collaboration" might be said to contain both "positive" and "negative" connotations. On the positive side, the term implies the power of one who has an active role in meaning making, of one who shares, as a virtual equal, in the production of the text. On the negative side, it implies the limits of one who cannot make meaning alone, whose meaning is always dependent upon larger collective forces, and, even more tellingly, the limits of one who is in some way guilty, whose act of meaning making always (also) involves "collaborating with the enemy." "Collaboration," then, points to the trade-off of agency and historical determination in the reader summarized by, for instance, Anthony Easthope (with a little help from Roland Barthes):

> As Barthes says, 'in the text, only the reader speaks' [S/Z 151, italics original], though of course this never takes place in a voluntary or unconstrained fashion, since what the reader 'speaks' is always a historical text (even if it was composed only yesterday), and since the individual reading always takes place within a practice of reading that is socially determined. (Easthope 24)

Reading, because historically implicated, is never entirely solitary; the reader has an active role to play but this role is constrained by social and historical determinants.

As I suggested above, Benjamin's primary example of an art that embodied the collaborative ideal was Brecht's epic theatre. Brecht himself uses the term "collaboration" in relation to his audience only indirectly (Brecht 82) but his famous description of the "alienated" audience suggests the two key elements: epic theatre "arouses [the audience's] capacity for action" but also "forces [the audience] to take decisions" (37). This pair of elements—the one emphasizing the reader's power, the other insisting on limits to that power—explains the complex mix of self-reflexive playfulness and political polemicism in Brecht's plays. Self-reflexivity for Brecht is a way to acknowledge the openness of history and the provisional nature of historical representa tion, a way to invite the spectator to collaborate on further meanings; but the same self-reflexive elements always also have a didactic purpose:

> By means of a certain interchangeability of circumstances and occurrences the spectator must be given the possibility (and duty) of assembling, experimenting and abstracting. (60, italics added)

The second, didactic element is what distinguishes Brecht's use of self-reflexivity from, for instance, the ironic defamiliarizations of postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon rightly identifies the difference in terms of contradiction. Postmodernism, she argues, "remains content to critique through ironic contextualization and through demystification of its own (and others') signifying practices" (*Poetics* 214). Both Marxism and postmodernism foreground contradiction in order to represent the provisionality of events and representation, but while postmodernism remains content to signal the political potential in this, Marxists like Brecht see the provisional as only one moment in a larger dialectic that tends towards a new synthesis, a moment of polemical certainty.

Famous Last Words, it seems to me, has a similar dialectical quality, which explains why, like a piece of Brechtian theatre, it presents a complex play between confident assertions about the truth of history and a recognition that all analyses of history—its own analysis included—are limited by their historical and ideological origins. The self-reflexive elements in the novel open a space for the reader's positive collaboration, but the polemical assertions of certain "truths" of history—namely, the facts of fascism and the holocaust, and the implication of certain aesthetic tendencies in their rise—challenge the reader to consider his or her own culpability for these truths. By the very act of reading *Famous Last Words*, the novel seems to imply, the reader shares in certain tendencies that lead Mauberley to his own guilty acts and evasions, his own collaboration with the enemy; like Mauberley himself, then, the reader is challenged to confront his or her own attraction to imaginative literature, his or her own preference for "fiction" over "fact," for the comfort of "lies" (like *Famous Last Words*!) over the harsh demands of "truth."

The most apparent device for positioning the reader in *Famous Last Words* is of course the framing story of Freyberg and Quinn. The framing narrative implicitly challenges the reader to choose between the opposing interpretations of the two soldiers. Quinn, who is an aesthete himself, interprets Mauberley's account as an honest attempt at veracity and is inclined to forgive him.

Quinn is an admirer of Mauberley's writing (he has read "every word he ever wrote" [46]), and believes that no matter his faults and weaknesses Mauberley did not deserve to die as he did ("Mauberley was dead in a corner; murdered; wearing rags. And surely this was sad—unjust—no matter what he'd done" [47]). Freyberg, on the other hand, sees the account as a self-serving confession and is immediately suspicious of it. Freyberg is obsessed with Dachau, obsessed with tracking down and punishing those responsible for Nazi atrocities. He is a maker of lists, a detective/collector who seeks a truth based solely on the "facts" (43). For Freyberg there can be no justice after Dachau:

> Freyberg never spoke of justice. *Justice* was civilized, so how could you speak of justice in the context of Dachau? All that remained for Freyberg was vengeance. After vengeance, maybe—just maybe—justice could be reinstated. (47)

To forgive Mauberley, according to Freyberg, is to contribute to the process of forgetting, of effacing history, and thus to excuse or condone the evil of which he has been a part.

Most readers, I think, begin by identifying with Quinn, and thus by sharing in Quinn's identification with Mauberley. The first part of the novel seems designed to elicit this response. The opening section, told in the historical mode, presents Mauberley as a hunted victim, and his hunter, Estrade (who turns out not to be his actual killer), as obsessed and sinister (12). As E. F. Shields has pointed out, a reader of novels is also likely to identify somewhat with a character who is a writer ("Perfect Voice" 89). Sympathy for Quinn's position is further encouraged by the initial presentation of Quinn as sensitive, literate, and a look-alike for Tyrone Power (39). Freyberg, on the other hand, seems crude and intolerant. His list-making is a common literary motif for a dehumanizingly "scientific" attitude, and his stale candy-bar breath is symptomatic of the noxious words he apparently speaks. Initial reactions, however, are not always to be trusted. One of the key effects of the framing narrative is that it forces the reader to re-examine his or her initial identification with Quinn, thus turning that identification—with its inclination to forgive Mauberley—into an object of critical inquiry.

The re-examination is triggered in part by Freyberg, who makes a number of acute observations about Quinn and Mauber-

ley, and in part by Quinn himself, who displays a telling naïveté at times. As Stephen Scobie has pointed out, Freyberg's summation of Mauberley's career "may be partial, but as far as it goes it is undeniable" (Scobie 211). Mauberley indeed "walked with Mussolini . . . sat down with von Ribbentrop" and "wrote Fascist garbage" (Findley 149). Freyberg perceptively identifies an emotional and moral vacuum in Mauberley's account when he explains that he cannot spare feeling for Mauberley's circle because "they cannot spare . . . feeling for me" (155). At the end, it is Freyberg, not Quinn, who grasps the political reality behind the order to vacate the hotel. Quinn naïvely holds to the belief that Mauberley's account "means [the guilty] will not go free;" but Freyberg understands—as history indeed verifies—that by 1945 the Allies were turning towards a new enemy, the Communists, and were thus looking "to find some other place to lay the blame . . ." (392).

If Freyberg is shown to be more astute than at first he appears, Quinn is shown to be less reliable. Certain warning signs are present from the beginning. One is the extent of Quinn's identification with Mauberley, which involves even emulating Mauberley's personal habits: "If Mauberley had smoked two pounds of cigarettes, then so would he" (60). Another is in the allusions to the Book of Daniel (the first epigraph of Mauberley's account [52] and the cryptic message of de Broca's skywriting [283]) which ironically contrast Daniel's power of interpretation with those of the characters in the novel, particularly Quinn, who sees "interpretation" as his forte (58). Perhaps Quinn's military occupation—a demolitions expert—also hints at his limits as an interpreter. In the beginning, Quinn vows to interpret his way to the truth of Mauberley's account, to "put the pieces together;" his job, however, suggests his involvement in an opposing process. The irony of Quinn's occupation becomes acute with Freyberg's prediction of the fate of the wall-writing: "[It will be] Defaced . . . . Blown up" (392). Quinn's occupation hints at his implication in what the demolition of the wall-writing would signal: the erasure of history and the escape of those guilty of the atrocities.

As the novel proceeds, it becomes clear that Quinn shares a number of weaknesses with Mauberley. Like Mauberley he has a healthy suspicion of the "us/them" distinction so dear to Freyberg, but also like Mauberley his suspicion takes the form of detachment, a refusal to commit to any side, and a related tendency to aesthe-

ticize experience. Both the strength and the limits of Quinn's interpretation can be seen in his reaction to the scene showing the Duke of Windsor before the mirrors:

> How right it was and wonderful that Mauberley should have his king confront himself in a dream. The kings in Shakespeare did the same thing. They always met themselves in dreams—as ghosts. (254)

Here Quinn articulates the truth of Mauberley's account in aesthetic terms: it is artistically right that the king should confront himself in a dream. The observation is an enlightened one as far as it goes, but, tellingly, it evades the thorny questions of the historical "truth" and political implications of the account. Perhaps the most telling instance of Quinn's failure as an interpreter occurs when he forgives Mauberley on the basis of Mauberley's own lack of commitment:

> There was one good thing, however, over which Lieutenant Quinn could relax. Mauberley's only role had been to play the messenger. And for that Quinn was grateful. (148)

The irony here is that the character who comes to be known as "the messenger" in *Famous Last Words* is Reinhardt, the most sinister member of the Cabal. Quinn fails to recognize that it is precisely in his role as "messenger" that Mauberley is most implicated. Not only is Mauberley's retreat from direct involvement culpable, but, as Mauberley's own story shows, in the complexly manipulated world of the Cabal, the "messenger" is impossible to distinguish from the "upper echelons."

Upon re-examination, then, it is impossible to choose decisively between Freyberg and Quinn. As interpreters, each of them has strengths and weaknesses—indeed, each of their strengths is also their weakness. Quinn's appreciation of the aesthetic, of the "truth" of literary and mythic patterns, and Freyberg's insistence on "hard facts" ("his dreadful will to force your nostrils into the dirt and your ears into the centre of the scream" [290]) are what is both right and wrong about their points of view. Quinn, in his tendency to forgive Mauberley and his desire for the consolation of "lies," fails to account for the moral responsibility imposed by history; Freyberg, in his fanatical insistence on "truth," fails to acknowledge the need for imagination, for a recognition of the human "I

am"—fails to acknowledge how his own single-mindedness reproduces the "us/them" mentality characteristic of fascism.

The framing story, then, helps to position the reader as a collaborator in the senses implied by Benjamin and Brecht. From the positive point of view, the framing narrative puts the reader in an active, critical position, inviting the reader to grapple with the issues raised by the differing views of the characters. This "positive" collaboration, however, is not simply a free space for the perpetual play of meanings; the play of meanings is limited by, amongst other things, the moral imperative embodied in the epigraph from Thornton Wilder: ". . . one does not know what one knows, or even what one wishes to know, until one is challenged and must lay down a stake." What the framing story does exceedingly well, it seems to me, is to turn the reader's tendency to identify with Quinn and Mauberley into an object of critical inquiry. To identify with Mauberley is to face a simple equation: Mauberley was a collaborator; my identification with Mauberley makes me a collaborator too. The framing narrative pushes the reader to take personally what Quinn is forced to consider about Mauberley, namely, how it was that "Mauberley, whose greatest gift had been an emphatic belief in the value of imagination, could have been so misguided as to join with people whose whole ambition was to render the race incapable of thinking" (48).

The answers to Quinn's question lie in the origins of Mauberley's belief in the imagination, origins which, the novel seems to suggest, are emblematic of contradictions inherent in the imagination itself. The interesting thing about Mauberley is that the very quality that makes him most worthy of forgiveness and identification, his "emphatic belief in the value of imagination," is the quality that leads him into collaboration with the fascists. How is this so?

A key theme in *Famous Last Words* is Mauberley's quest to say "I am," his attempt to affirm himself and thus to say "yes" to life. As Quinn intuitively recognizes, Mauberley's wall-writing is an attempt to reproduce the affirmation embodied in the handprint at Altamira:

> But Quinn, disoriented, looked up and saw not words but pictures: animals drawn on the ceiling above his head. Deer—bison— stars—the moon and Mauberley's handprint. (76)

Mauberley's entire career, the novel leads us to believe, has been a quest to make such an affirmation. He is attracted to Wallis Simpson because of her emphatic claim to life:

> *"I want my life,"* she had said.
> And, since my father died, I had been waiting for someone—anyone—to say those words out loud. (75-6)

Mauberley's tragedy is that although his artistic sensibility allows him to see himself quite clearly, even to see what is required for him to authentically say "I am," the same characteristics that lead him to this sensibility prevent him from acting on the knowledge. At one point he echoes the epigraph from Wilder ("If we are brave enough to put our words on paper, then we must be brave enough to have them turn on us" [175]), but his conduct throughout leaves unclear whether he ever really accepts responsibility for his actions.

The novel explains Mauberley's contradictory character by reference to his personal history. Mauberley, we are told, has inherited his mother's yearning for perfection and his father's revulsion for "the raucous and wilful repudiation of civilization" by the industrial world (67). At the same time, because of the tragic fates of his parents, he has inherited "the fear of descent and the fear of being powerless in the presence of desire" (142). The result is self-paralysis: he is tormented by desire, by the repressed/returning need for order, love, selfhood, and meaning (and all their capitalized idéalizations), but he also has a deep seated "fear of physical contact and commitment" (142). These contradictory elements are perhaps most readily symbolized by the white of his clothing. On one hand, white symbolizes Mauberley's desire for an affirmation based on the beautiful, the ordered, the perfect; on the other hand it symbolizes his retreat from contact and commitment. On the verge of his most culpable act—his ordering of the death of Harry Oakes—his continuing obsession with white clothing takes on a Pilate-like irony:

> In the morning, white on white, and even my underclothing bleached as white as salt, I carried down the box of corpses [geckos from the night before], wondering how it could be so light, so weightless in my hands, and gave it across the table to Mavis Boodle, noting unavoidably as I did the multitude of oranges she had killed and was squeezing into a glass to keep me alive. (374)

Typically, at his key moment of decision, Mauberley shows himself to be morbidly aware of his own guilt and yet incapable of correcting himself.

Ultimately, I think, Mauberley's contradictory impulses point to a paradox in the imagination itself, which simultaneously allows people to imagine the beautiful, the ordered, and so on, and tempts people away from the "real" world in which such ideals must truly be confronted. Another way to put this is that imagination, like fiction, is "a gigantic defense mechanism" to help us "carry on and live in the world" (Davis 11). Like psychological defenses generally, the limit of fiction—what always marks the reading of it as, to a certain extent, "collaborating with the enemy"—is that it helps us to live in the world by taking us away from the world, by offering imaginary resolutions to the world's problems. As Lennard J. Davis puts it:

> Readers, with their collective obsession for following the lives of fictional folk, are being helped to avoid the various dehumanizing aspects of modern life, but paradoxically . . . are helped by being lowered further into that dehumanizing pit from which they are trying to escape. (Davis 22)

The idea of imaginative writing as a defense mechanism is, of course, not new. Freud, almost a century ago, argued much the same thing:

> The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously. . . . We may lay it down that a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality. (Freud 132-34)

What is interesting in Mauberley—and in Findley's work in general—is how this defensive aspect points to an ambivalence about imagination (or fiction) itself. In *Inside Memory*, Findley argues that imagination is the human race's "greatest gift," and he cites with approval another saying by Thornton Wilder: "*cruelty is nothing more than a failure of the imagination*" (314). The story of Mauberley, however, illustrates how a bottomless craving for what the imagination promises—that elusive "I am"—can lead to disaster. The "anyone" in Mauberley's "I had been waiting for someone—

anyone—to say those words" speaks volumes about the source of Mauberley's downfall.

As portrayed in *Famous Last Words*, then, the allure of fiction mirrors the painful doubleness in human beings that Findley, throughout his writings and in various interviews, connects to the rise of fascism. This doubleness consists of an ingrained craving for perfection and an equally ingrained sense of worthlessness for the failure to achieve perfection. In a CBC *Anthology* interview, Findley recalls a moment of personal revelation during the writing of *The Butterfly Plague*, when he first realized that his own being was defined by "the impossible quest of being perfect, and what it did to us all to be told we must be, but of course you can't be—slap, slap" (Ingham 40). Susan Sontag's description of the main features of fascist aesthetics makes an obvious parallel:

> Fascist aesthetics . . . flow from (and justify) a preoccupation with situations of control, submissive behavior, extravagant effort, and the endurance of pain; they endorse two seemingly opposite states, egomania and servitude. (Sontag 91)

In *Famous Last Words*, Mauberley's attraction to the "beautiful" Nazis follows this pattern, as does his own and others' self-deluding infatuation with King Edward. To identify with someone like King Edward is to share in the promise of royalty: "Everyone in all those pictures taken then [on the King's yacht] was smiling; everyone was radiant; everyone was infallible" (98). But, as Mauberley soon discovers, such an identification can lead to political disaster as well as personal annihilation.

By turning the reader's tendency to identify with Quinn and Mauberley into an object of critical inquiry, *Famous Last Words* invites the reader to examine the Mauberley-like impulses in him- or herself. By linking those impulses in Mauberley to "an emphatic belief in the value of imagination," the novel channels that inquiry into a meditation on the value and limits of fiction itself. Ultimately, I think, the novel points to an ambivalence at the heart of the imagination, which, on the one hand, remains "our greatest gift," but which also addresses those tendencies that, unchecked, can lead to the evils of fascism. Imagination allows us to say "I am;" it allows us to imagine harmony (the perfect!) . . . and, as Findley puts it, "If you can imagine harmony, you can achieve it" (*Inside* 314). Yet the depth of our yearning to say "I am," the

depth of our yearning for the perfect, for the radiant unsplit self, makes us prey to manipulation. As Findley puts it in the *Anthology* interview, "all power-hungry people can touch the rest of the people where they are hungry to be powerful too" (Ingham 38).

The full complexity of reading as a collaborator emerges with the novel's presentation of history. Clearly, *Famous Last Words* foregrounds, in now somewhat familiar fashion, the element of "story" in "history." It does this by, for example, its well-documented intertwining of fictional and "real" elements (see Hutcheon, *Canadian* 68-9 or Shields, "Mauberley's Lies") and its foregrounding of moments in which history is manipulated: the lies told to shore up the image of the King (98); Hemingway keeping his encounter with the Spanish aristocrat out of the newspapers (125-9); the doctored reports of the death of Trotsky (256). This foregrounding of the story in history connects to both positive and negative connotations of collaboration. On the positive side, the idea that there can be no complete, objective account of events opens a space for the reader; it means that there is no "last word" in historical accounts, only partial versions that need to be further collaborated upon. On the negative side, it implies that the reader is caught up in the same limiting factors as the account ("the individual reading always takes place within a practice of reading that is socially determined" [Easthope 24]).

What is crucial about the novel's exploration of history, however, is its Brechtian-like mix of self-reflexive playfulness and polemicism. For although the novel foregrounds the story in history, it also shows that the provisional quality of historical events or accounts does not mean that history is not "real" or without "real" effects. The novel contains a number of images for how history strikes back: the cat that Pound pokes and pokes until it "makes a leap at [his] face" (82); Queen Mary's log-book of gowns and hats and her tendency to litanize (100); Wallis's "Oh" the moment she realizes that "history might have aces up its sleeve" (107); the Duke before the mirrors when he realizes he is literally only a figurehead (246). Perhaps the most affecting episode occurs when Freyberg punches Quinn in the stomach and then denies having done so: the denial illustrates how easy, how fallacious, and how immoral it is to elide the "reality" of events (393). Historical accounts are open to manipulation and interpretation, and yet history, like Freyberg punching Quinn in the stomach, like Harry Reinhardt putting the ice-pick through Mauberley's eye, has a way of making itself felt.

When referring to the mix of "real" and "fictional" elements in the novel, then, it is well to remember that along with a self-reflexive playfulness about history there is in the novel a spur for the reader to explore the "real" historical facts. The novel directly accuses various historical personages of Nazi sympathies, including Ezra Pound, Charles Bedaux, Charles Lindbergh, Henry Ford, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The novel's portrayal of Pound raises the question of fascism's attraction for other famous artists of the period (T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and others). The effect of these accusations is that, as Dennis Duffy notes, almost every conversation about the novel "begins with someone asking a question as to how factual [the] material is" (193).

Indeed, to a degree, the novel seems to invite a Freyberg-like absolutism when it comes to determining the blame for historical events. Remember that, to a certain extent, Freyberg's assertions about "Dachau" remain unanswerable (53-4). The holocaust does make intellectualizing about the provisional quality of history taboo; there is no question of historical provisionality, of fictiveness in representations of the holocaust: "Art takes the sting out of suffering . . . . It is therefore forbidden to make fiction of the holocaust" (Michael Wyschogrod, in Foley 344). Or Jean Amery: "No bridge led from death in Auschwitz to 'Death in Venice'" (Foley 344).

In my own "outside" reading, I came across a book by Charles Higham called *Trading With The Enemy*. In this book of "real" history, Higham argues for a complexly intertwined conspiracy of "real" Allied and fascist businessmen called "The Fraternity."

> [Several] of the greatest American corporate leaders were in league with Nazi corporations before and after Pearl Harbour . . . . Those leaders interlocked through an association I have dubbed The Fraternity . . . . The tycoons were linked by an ideology: the ideology of Business as Usual. Bound by identical reactionary ideas, the members sought a common future in fascist domination, regardless of which world leader might further that ambition. (xiv)

Higham also has this to say about the relationship between Henry Ford and Adolf Hitler:

> Ford's book *The International Jew* was issued in 1927. A virulent anti-Semitic tract, it was still being widely distributed in Latin America and the Arab countries as late as 1945. Hitler

> admired the book and it influenced him deeply. Visitors to Hitler's headquarters at the Brown House in Munich noticed a large photograph of Henry Ford hanging in his office . . . . Ford was one of the few people singled out for praise in *Mein Kampf.* (155)

To accept any kind of apology for these actions, to forgive the perpetrators of them—as to forgive Mauberley—is, as Freyberg says, to "whitewash the truth" and to begin the process of forgetting (154).

Freyberg's view, of course, fortunately, is not the whole story. To circle back to the framing narrative: the debates between Freyberg and Quinn make clear that Freyberg's view of history, with its unflinching recall and lack of forgiveness, has its own way of whitewashing the truth. If Quinn is seduced by the white represented by Mauberley and his suits, the whitewash of lies, beauty, and the aesthetic, then Freyberg is seduced by the white of black-and-white, the absolute and inhuman certainty of a "truth" that is only part of the story. Freyberg's position misses, among other things, the fact that the perpetrators of fascism "were responding to . . . the whispers of chaos, fire and anger in [all of us]" (77).

And yet, a certain polemical force remains—a force generated by the novel's appeal to something like a historical "real." The mix of playfulness and polemicism is perhaps most evident in the image of the Cabal, that mysterious group in the novel that Lindbergh says "goes beyond mere Nazism" (116). The Cabal nicely dramatizes the overdetermination of historical events. Overdetermination implies not that the causes of events are unknowable or the effects unreal, but that, like the images in dreams, there are more causes and effects than can ever be accounted for. The Cabal gives historical events in the novel an added explanation, a further "reality," that, ironically, emphasizes at the same time how all explanations are only partial. So the plot to kidnap Edward in Portugal is further explained as one of the Cabal's machinations; and Rudolph Hess's flight to England takes on new meaning and new mystery. As Mauberley notes, the Cabal's presence makes it impossible for the writers of history ever to get it right:

> At the heart of everything that shakes the world, there need be nothing more than a casual remark that has been overheard and acted on. There is more in history of impulse than we dare to know. (180)

And yet the Cabal has a real, almost God-like power to affect events:

> If what I mean is not yet clear, then think of God as being Himself created by another being who one day whispered in His ear: "begin." (180)

Most significantly, the Cabal muddies the waters about who is finally responsible for such horrors as fascism. The novel never makes clear who inhabits the "upper echelons," not even if these "people" are fictional or real (both kinds of characters are apparently implicated). In many ways, Harry Reinhardt is the most powerful member of the group; with his stunning beauty and equally stunning capacity for violence, he is an emblem for fascism itself (rather like the butterflies in *The Butterfly Plague*). Yet Reinhardt is also just "the messenger." Importantly, the episode in which Mauberley is most directly responsible for an evil act—the murder of Harry Oakes—is also the episode in which Mauberley gives orders to Reinhardt. In that moment of giving orders, Mauberley himself operates as the "upper echelons" (375). Insofar as we as readers continue to forgive Mauberley or to identify with him (as I still tend to do: I still can't accept that his horrible death was justified) we have to face that within us we carry impulses that might someday, under the right (or wrong) circumstances, have us collaborating with the enemy ourselves, might even have us becoming members of the "upper echelons."

WORKS CITED

Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken, 1986. 220-38.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre*. Ed. and Trans. John Willett. London: Eyre Methuen, (1964) 1974.

Davis, Lennard J. *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction*. London: Methuen, 1987.

Duffy, Dennis. "Let Us Compare Histories: Meaning and Mythology in Findley's *Famous Last Words*." *Essays in Canadian Writing* 30 (Winter 1984-85) 187-205.

Easthope, Anthony. *Poetry as Discourse*. London and New York: Methuen, 1983.

Findley, Timothy. *Famous Last Words.* New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, 1981.

————. *Inside Memory: Pages from a Writer's Workbook.* Toronto: HarperCollins, 1990.

Foley, Barbara. "Fact, Fiction, Fascism: Testimony and Mimesis in Holocaust Narratives." *Comparative Literature* 34.4 (Fall 1982) 330-60.

Freud, Sigmund. "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming." *The Felican Freud Library No. 14: Art and Literature.* Trans. James Strachey. Ed. Albert Dickson. London: Penguin, 1985. 129-42.

Hair, Donald. "To Catch the Reader Unaware." *Brick* 17 (Winter 1983) 8-14.

Higham, Charles. *Trading with the Enemy: An Exposé of the Nazi-American Money Plot, 1933-1949.* New York: Delacorte, 1983.

Hutcheon, Linda. *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1988.

————. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction.* New York: Routledge, 1988.

Ingham, David. "Bashing the Fascists: The Moral Dimensions of Findley's Fiction." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 15.2 (1990) 33-54.

Scobie, Stephen. "Eye-Deep in Hell: Ezra Pound, Timothy Findley, and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." *Essays in Canadian Writing* 30 (Winter 1984-85) 206-227.

Shields, E. F. "Mauberley's Lies: Fact and Fiction in Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words.*" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 22.4 (Winter 1987-88) 44-59.

————. "'The Perfect Voice': Mauberley as Narrator in Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words.*" *Canadian Literature* 119 (Winter 1988) 84-98.

Sontag, Susan. "Fascinating Fascism." *Under the Sign of Saturn.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980. 73-105.