

## A Will and Two Ways The Ambivalence of Evil in Robertson Davies's *The Deptford Trilogy*

Orthodox Christianity has always had for me the difficulty that it really won't come ... to grips with the problem of evil. It knows an enormous amount about evil, it discusses evil in fascinating terms, but evil is always the other thing: it is something which is apart from perfection, and man's duty is to strive for perfection. I could not reconcile that with such experience of life as I had, and the Jungian feeling that things tend to run into one another, that what looks good can be pushed to the point where it becomes evil, and that evil very frequently bears what can only be regarded as good fruit—this was the first time I'd ever seen that sort of thing given reasonable consideration, and it made enormous sense to me. I feel now that I am a person of strongly religious temperament, but when I say "religious" I mean immensely conscious of powers of which I can have only the dimmest apprehension, which operate by means that I cannot fathom, in directions which I would be a fool to call either good or bad.

Robertson Davies, Interview with Donald Silver Cameron (Davis 82)

**W**hile it might seem something of an exaggeration to ascribe anything so elaborate as a systematic theology to Robertson Davies's *The Deptford Trilogy*, there is such a large component in it of metaphysical speculation as to the role of the sacred in temporal affairs that it would be difficult to think of a more appropriate term. William James defined the religious attitude as comprising "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (50), using the word "divine" to refer to "such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely" (56). Evaluated in the light of such a formula, which scrupulously avoids partisan representations of the phenomenon it describes in terms of specific creeds or tenets of faith, *The Deptford Trilogy* may reasonably be classified among those works that are essentially

religious in tenor if not in doctrine. The deliberate, and on occasion decidedly contrived, use of Jungian archetypes to impart a universal resonance to the events depicted in the novels is one fairly obvious manifestation of the tendency to interpret individual experience in terms of some sort of transpersonal reality.<sup>1</sup> But no less interesting from this point of view is the fact that the trilogy embodies an extended, and on the whole coherent, meditation on what is frequently referred to as the “problem” of evil and the ambiguous role it plays in human affairs. What the trilogy as a whole articulates is in effect a series of variations on the idea that what appears in the immediate view to partake of evil might paradoxically prove to be beneficial in its ultimate consequences, from which it is only a short step to suggesting that evil might have as necessary and as important a role to play in the cosmic scheme of things as good itself.

On occasion the notion that what appears to be evil on one level might conduce to some variety of good on another expresses itself in terms of the concept of the fortunate fall or *felix culpa*. In one of Davies’s later novels, *The Rebel Angels*, a character whose professional activity as a man of finance might be expected to predispose him to such a view formulates his version of the idea in the following terms:

I’m beginning to wonder if we haven’t got the legend of Eden all wrong.... God threw Adam and Eve out of the Garden because they gained knowledge at the price of their innocence, and I think God was jealous. (*The Cornish Trilogy* 298)

This is not exactly theological speculation of the highest order, and it does not perhaps accord very closely with the spirit of more explicitly Christian versions of the doctrine.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless it does, in its own way, render an aspect of the conception that is a frequently reiterated theme in literature.<sup>3</sup> The idea is that a comprehensive knowledge of self, and the enlargement of moral perspective that this entails, are benefits that can be attained only through a confrontation with—and even an incorporation of—evil. According to such a view, the loss of Eden is a necessary stage on the road to psychic development,<sup>4</sup> and not to have partaken of the forbidden tree of knowledge would have been to condemn humanity to a condition little superior to that of the bestial. C. G. Jung, with whose thought Davies frequently acknowledged a profound affinity, alludes to the apparent paradox implicit in this situation when he remarks in one of his works that “the legend of the fall ... is the expression of a dim presentiment that the emancipation of ego-consciousness was a Luciferian deed” (108). However negative it might be in its immediate consequences, it would seem what goes by the

name of evil is in fact indispensable to the existence of self-conscious humanity, and that the failure to recognize the indispensable role it plays in life is tantamount to not existing as a moral agent at all.

Very much the same fundamental idea—that what appears to be evil might, insofar as it promotes the expansion of human possibilities, paradoxically lend itself as the instrument of good—is already implicit in Davies's first cycle of novels, *The Salterton Trilogy*. Although there is little suggestion in this case that there might be any sort of metaphysical machinery at work to ensure that good will emerge out of evil, this is what in fact occurs in the long term. The second novel in that trilogy, *The Leaven of Malice*, begins with the publication in a Salterton newspaper of a fictitious wedding announcement, and traces the repercussions that this prank has in the lives of various people. Only at the end of the book does it emerge that the author of the hoax is Bevill Higgin, a fatuous and frustrated little man intent on wreaking vengeance upon individuals he mistakenly believes have slighted him. What ironically ensues from this gratuitous—and as it turns out misdirected—act of mischief is that the two young people named in the engagement notice, though initially divided by personal antipathy as well as by family enmity, grow so fond of one another that they finally decide to marry in good earnest. Thus the impulse of revenge has worked quite unexpectedly to bring about the happiness of those against whom it was directed, in accordance with a principle that a churchman explicates when he remarks on the “quite unforeseen good results” that can follow from an act of malice (*The Salterton Trilogy* 469).<sup>5</sup> Nor does the leaven of malice cease its paradoxically beneficent operations at this point, for everything that occurs in the final novel in *The Salterton Trilogy*, *A Mixture of Frailties*, is also the indirect outcome of the same single precipitating event. It is in pique at the marriage brought about by Higgin's hoax that Solly Bridgetower's mother, herself impelled by the desire for posthumous revenge, leaves instructions in her will that her fortune should not pass immediately to her son but be devoted to financing the artistic education of a young lady of the town. This provision makes it possible for the gifted Monica Gall to escape from her repressive and spiritually claustrophobic background and to complete the education in sentiment and sensibility that comprises the Jamesian subject of the novel, though not before she has participated in a number of events that suggest that the consequences of Higgin's fraudulent engagement notice are not likely to exhaust themselves at any point in the foreseeable future.

This idea that a single event might, though circumscribed and seemingly trivial in itself, generate a maelstrom of infinitely ramifying consequences, and thereby become a catalyzing or even destructive influence in an incalculable number of individual lives, anticipates the dynamics at work in *The Deptford Trilogy*.<sup>6</sup> The originating event in this case, one which fatally conditions the trajectory of those lives that are immediately affected by it and which has repercussions in the lives of succeeding generations as well, is the single act of boyish malice that Percy Staunton commits in the opening pages of *Fifth Business* when he launches a snowball containing a stone at his friend Dunstable Ramsay. The snowball strikes a woman named Mary Dempster, and the resulting shock provokes both the premature birth of her son and the onset of what would appear to be her own mental collapse. Just short of sixty years after the event, Staunton is found dead with the identical stone lodged in his mouth, the precise circumstances of his death being, at least at the time, a matter of conjecture. In *The Manticore* Staunton's son David takes the stone, by now become something of a talisman, with him to Switzerland, where Dunstan Ramsay attempts to exorcize the demons of the past by throwing it over a cliff. And *World of Wonders* chronicles the life of the man whose premature birth was the direct consequence of the snowball-throwing incident, and whose subsequent life has unfolded under the shadow of that event. Thus the trilogy as a whole would seem to constitute an extended illustration of what Dunstan has to say in the penultimate page of *World of Wonders* concerning "the consequences that can follow a single action" (824). Looked at from one point of view, the sequence of material events, and the repercussions they have in the inner lives of those caught up in them, follow with relentless logic from an *acte gratuit* that has no significance in itself and that would therefore appear to represent the irruption of pure contingency into the world. The conventional metaphor of a stone being cast into a pool and generating an endlessly proliferating series of ripples, though never explicitly invoked, has a peculiarly appropriate application to the snowball-throwing incident, and in view of what this particular snowball contains might even have inspired it.

It becomes increasingly apparent, however, that there is nothing straightforward about how either the crucial event itself, or the manifold consequences deriving from it, are to be interpreted. First of all, Dunstan several times expresses the opinion that Staunton's treachery in concealing a stone in the snowball he threw at his friend was symptomatic of a permanent facet of his personality and therefore a presage of how he would continue to

act throughout his entire life. At one point he taxes Staunton with the accusation that “the stone-in-the-snowball has been characteristic of too much you’ve done for you to forget it” (254), although in view of the fact that he makes this charge some sixty years after the event it is perhaps arguable that the perversity of memory is all his own. Examined from the point of view of the doctrine of psychological predestination that Dunstan seems to favour, therefore, the snowball-throwing incident is not a random event devoid of significance but a manifestation of individual character, and in terms of such a perspective it will therefore appear to *be* character and not chance that determines events in *The Deptford Trilogy*. But even this is not the “final” explanation of what occurs in these novels. There is more than a suggestion in the trilogy that what ensues from the incident cannot in the least be regarded as negative in the final analysis, that for a number of different characters the event marks the inauguration of a special destiny and is therefore no more entirely to be attributed to the perverse operations of malice than it is to the vagaries of chance.

It is Paul Dempster, the most innocent and seemingly the most pathetic victim of the snowball-throwing incident, who gives clearest expression to the opinion that the events precipitating his premature birth cannot be viewed as anything but fortunate in the final reckoning. In his case the metaphor of the *felix culpa* would seem to be particularly appropriate, as he himself implies when, at the end of *Fifth Business*, he remarks that Staunton is in his debt “for eighty days in Paradise” (255)—the allusion being to the paradisaical womb from which he was untimely ripped. In *World of Wonders* Paul, now known as Magnus Eisengrim, narrates the story of his extraordinarily varied life, which, though darkened at points by episodes of intense humiliation and suffering, has been fully redeemed at the end by the success and universal esteem that he now enjoys. Reasoning on the basis of his own psychological premises, Dunstan supposes that Magnus must somehow be implicated in Staunton’s mysterious death, and that it is entirely to be expected that he should have wanted to revenge himself upon the man who was responsible for the misery into which he was born. But Magnus points out that it is precisely the anomalous manner of his birth that in the final analysis is responsible for his present success as a celebrated conjuror, and for a life that from almost every conceivable point of view has been more gratifying and fulfilling than would have been the case if he had remained imprisoned in Deptford. Far from harbouring a grievance, Magnus assures Dunstan, he has every reason to regard the person who so decisively altered the course of his life as a benefactor:

The means may have been a little rough, but the result is entirely to my taste. If he hadn't hit my mother on the head with that snowball ... I might now be what my father was.... I have had my ups and downs, and the downs were very far down indeed, but I am now a celebrity in a limited way, and I am a master of a craft, which is a better thing by far.... Who gave me my start? Boy Staunton! (810)

In this respect, Magnus might be compared with Monica Gall in *A Mixture of Frailties*, being like her a person of exceptional gifts who has been rescued from the stultification of small-town life by the saving intervention of malice. From the point of view of such a person, the leaven of malice bears a remarkable resemblance to the operations of grace, so that it is impossible in practice to distinguish the one from the other.

Magnus's interpretation of events is relatively uncomplicated, because however much emphasis he places on the affective life as well as on material success, he is in the final analysis evaluating his experiences chiefly in terms of the things of this world. Whereas *A Mixture of Frailties* is premised on the assumption that an education in art cannot be dissociated from an education in spirit, so that advancement in the one will necessarily imply progress in the other as well, no such assumption is evident in *World of Wonders*. But if Magnus's life cannot seriously be represented as a pilgrim's progress of the spirit—in the sense that he does not seem to have undergone any significant enlargement of his spiritual faculties, or been obliged to explore aspects of himself that were previously unsuspected<sup>7</sup>—the same is not true of other characters in *The Deptford Trilogy*. The patterns of other people's lives have also been shaped by the snowball-throwing incident that gave the former Paul Dempster what he calls his "start," and in their case the dividends have been reaped in quite different worlds from that in which Magnus cuts such a resplendent figure.

In the foreground, of course, we have the case of Dunstan himself, who as narrator of the first and final volumes of *The Deptford Trilogy* obviously has a privileged claim on the attention of the reader, although he effectively relinquishes this in favour of Magnus's autobiographical monologues in *World of Wonders*. Dunstan's lifelong passion is the study of saints, and of the role of the sacred in human affairs generally, subjects about which he becomes uncommonly erudite and which—far from being a bookish pursuit only—impel him to travel all over the world in search of fresh insights. This interest, an unlikely enough one by Deptford standards, evolves directly out of his own participation in the snowball-throwing incident. Because the fatal snowball was intended for himself, and because it was his

own instinctive agility in avoiding it that was responsible for the mishap that befell Mary Dempster, he feels partly to blame for the consequences of what happened. Ironically, however, if it is the sense of guilt quickened in him by the part he played in the episode that draws him into the orbit of Mary Dempster and her son, it is exposure to Mary's vision of life that persuades him of the existence of a sacred dimension to experience that will afterwards constitute the most elevated reality he knows. Thus it is that the sense of guilt at once delivers Dunstan from mindless subjugation to the moral standards of his milieu, embodied most immediately in the provincial outlook of his mother, and paves the way for the spiritual pilgrimage upon which he will subsequently embark.<sup>8</sup> In Dunstan's case as well good and evil, far from being diametrically opposed to one another, are inextricably intertwined, to the point that contact with one cannot be accomplished except through exposure to the other.

This interpenetration of good and evil, which on occasion renders it virtually impossible to distinguish the one from the other, and which in a paradoxical sense makes each necessary to the existence of the other, is even more apparent in the case of Mary herself. Once again matters are precipitated by the snowball-throwing incident, the consequences of which—both for Mary herself and for those immediately associated with her—cannot possibly be seen as anything but evil in the immediate view. In the aftermath of the trauma occasioned by the accident Mary, whose mental equilibrium has always been precarious, becomes progressively less able to cope with reality as other people apprehend it. She grows increasingly vague and desultory in her habits, thus alienating what little sympathy she formerly attracted among the Deptford inhabitants. When she disappears from her home one night, and is subsequently discovered in a sexual embrace with a vagrant in a gravel pit near the town, she arouses ridicule by representing this surrender of herself as a deed of charity on her part, explaining that she had consented to the act because the vagrant “wanted it so badly” (45). After this incident her husband's career as a pastor is ruined, and the entire family is relegated—socially no less than physically—to the outskirts of the town. Mary is physically confined to the premises of her house, and her son becomes an object of derision for all the boys of the town. Impelled by a sense of guilt, and hoping in some way to ameliorate the situation of the family whose ruin he feels he has contributed to bringing about, Dunstan makes clandestine visits to the house where the Dempsters now live. Here he discovers to his astonishment that the woman who has been stigmatized

by the people of the town as mentally and morally degenerate is in fact possessed of "a breadth of outlook and a clarity of vision that were strange and wonderful" (49). From the start, Dunstan recognizes that this attitude is one that does not partake of the world he knows:

It would be false to suggest that there was anything philosophical in her attitude. Rather, it was religious, and it was impossible to talk to her for long without being aware that she was wholly religious.... She lived by a light that arose from within.... It was as though she were an exile from a world that saw things her way, and though she was sorry Deptford did not understand her she was not resentful. (50)

Dunstan remembers afterwards that his own existence assumed another coloration in consequence of his exposure to Mary's reality, and that although there was undoubtedly an admixture of madness in Mary's mental constitution "the best side of her brought comfort and assurance into my life, which badly needed it" (50).

It is at this point that, at least in Dunstan's retrospective reconstruction of events, Mary begins to metamorphosize into a saint. Dunstan's brother Willie, afflicted by a mysterious ailment, appears to die while Dunstan is nursing him in the absence of their parents. Obeying an obscure impulse, Dunstan runs to summon Mary to his house, and under her ministrations Willie revives. Later Dunstan recalls that "for me, Willie's recall from death is, and always will be, Mrs. Dempster's second miracle" (59). What Mary's *first* miracle has been is revealed to Dunstan a number of years later, when he encounters a man named Joel Surgeoner who operates a mission for derelicts and has dedicated his entire life to the succour of those in distress. Dunstan recognizes this man instantly as the vagrant who was surprised with Mary in the gravel pit in Deptford. Surgeoner subsequently tells Dunstan that it was in fact his encounter with Mary that turned him to God (128), describing the experience as being "as if I had gone right down into Hell and through the worst of the fire, and come on a clear, pure pool where I could wash and be clean" (130). It is Surgeoner's belief that God "worked through that woman, and she is a blessed saint, for what she did for me ... was a miracle" (130), and Dunstan is not reluctant to endorse his view of things. Once again, then, the idea is not only that good manifests itself through apparent evil, but that good and evil are at times so intertwined with one another as to be practically indistinguishable.

The third miracle that Dunstan believes to be necessary in order to furnish an unequivocal demonstration of sainthood occurs during the First World War, when Dunstan is wounded at Passchendaele. He collapses near



the shell of a destroyed building, and by the light of a flare “saw there about ten or twelve feet above me on an opposite wall, in a niche, a statue of the Virgin and Child” (74):

I did not know it then but I know now that it was the assembly of elements that represent the Immaculate Conception, for the little Virgin was crowned, stood on a crescent moon, which in its turn rested on a globe, and in the hand that did not hold the Child she carried a sceptre from which lilies sprang. Not knowing what it was meant to be, I thought in a flash it must be the Crowned Woman in Revelation—she who had the moon beneath her feet and was menaced by the Red Dragon. But what hit me worse than the blow of the shrapnel was that the face was Mrs. Dempster’s face. (74)

This event signals Dunstan’s own rebirth, as the title of this section of the novel—“I am Born Again”—makes clear. Several years later he returns to Europe to seek the place near Passchendaele where he remembers having seen the Madonna wearing Mary’s face. Although he does not find the statue, his quest engenders in him an interest in religious iconography, and this in turn leads him to immerse himself in the study of hagiography which becomes the ruling passion of his life. Thus it is that the course of his entire existence is determined, no less than those of Mary and Paul, by the fateful snowball thrown by Staunton.

Having recognized the indispensable role that evil plays in the world, Dunstan’s principal task in life is to accommodate both good and evil within a single perspective, and he encounters a number of mentors on the road to wisdom who specifically exhort him to come to terms with the demonic principle within himself. His first lover, Diana, who offers him the possibility of a normal domestic life and is rejected, wryly confers upon him the name Dunstan in tribute to the scholarly saint who grappled with the Devil and prevailed (89). In fidelity to this pattern, Dunstan eventually encounters his own demon in the person of Liesl, and reenacts Saint Dunstan’s exploit by engaging in a bout of physical combat with her (215-16). Unlike the saint who is his namesake, however, he subsequently makes his peace with this particular demon—who, to give her her due, is a number of other things as well—and the two become occasional lovers. It is Liesl who tells him that he is not living his own life as fully as he might, and that in order to realize his own humanity he will have to establish contact with the devil within himself:

You should take a look at this side of your life you have not lived.... every man has a devil.... You must get to know your personal devil. You must even get to know his father, the Old Devil. (218)

Dunstan later recounts what has happened to a priest named Padre Blazon, and once again the confrontation between Saint Dunstan and the Devil is invoked as a precedent (239-40). Blazon's response to this confession is essentially to endorse Liesl's advice concerning the necessity of establishing contact with one's personal devil, pointing out that in the final analysis demonic wisdom issues from the same source as does the gnosis of religion:

The Devil knows corners of us all of which Christ Himself is ignorant. Indeed, I am sure Christ learned a great deal that was salutary about Himself when He met the Devil in the wilderness. Of course, that was a meeting of brothers; people forget too readily that Satan is Christ's elder brother and has certain advantages in argument that pertain to a senior. On the whole, we treat the Devil shamefully.... (240)

Blazon's judgement is that Dunstan is "fit to be the Devil's friend, without any fear of losing yourself to Him" (240). Evil cannot be exorcized, but it can be harnessed, as Dunstan points out in *World of Wonders* when he expatiates upon the significance of the dragon-killing motif in legend and art, which he says symbolizes the confrontation of the individual with the personal evil lurking within:

In the pictures we see St. George, and ... St. Catherine, triumphing over the horrid beast.... But I am strongly of the opinion that St. George and St. Catherine did not kill those dragons, for then they would have been wholly good, and inhuman, and useless and probably great sources of mischief, as one-sided people always are. No, they kept the dragons as pets. (652)<sup>9</sup>

This is essentially what Dunstan himself learns to do, not only in relation to Liesl, with whom he establishes a bizarre ménage that also includes Magnus, but also in his dealings with Staunton. For however much he condemns Staunton's cavalier business practices, which he believes betray the same cynical opportunism as appeared in the snowball-throwing incident, he himself battens without compunction on his friend's very considerable acumen in such matters. Since it is through investments made on Staunton's advice that he becomes sufficiently affluent as to be able to indulge his interest in hagiography and eventually retire to Liesl's estate in Switzerland, it would seem once again that Staunton's evil energy—if that is how we are to describe it—is not without its redeeming aspects.

What becomes apparent in the course of *Fifth Business*, and of *The Deptford Trilogy* as a whole, then, is that the act committed by Staunton, however vicious in itself, served as a kind of conduit through which the sacred irrupted into the temporal domain, and that his malice was therefore at the service of something suspiciously resembling providence.<sup>10</sup> "Evil"

though it undoubtedly is, both in the motive that prompted it and in the effects it most immediately produced, it is this act that makes it possible for Mary Dempster to metamorphose into a holy woman who brings good into innumerable lives, for Dunstan to embark on his lifelong quest for the grail of wisdom, and for Paul Dempster to achieve his apotheosis as an artist. The problem that inevitably presents itself at this point is how to distinguish that evil which serves as the instrument of a greater good, and that evil which is the autonomous work of a Devil who in the course of history has been accused of almost everything except want of industry. The events chronicled in *The Deptford Trilogy* as a whole would seem to substantiate Dunstan's own conviction, expressed at the conclusion of *World of Wonders*, that there is no easy solution to this enigma:

God wants to intervene in the world, and how is he to do it except through man? I think the Devil is in the same predicament.... It's the moment of decision—of will—when those Two nab us, and as they both speak so compellingly it's tricky work to know who's talking. Where there's a will, there are always two ways. (824-5)

To human ears, God and the Devil often seem to speak in accents so similar to one another, and with so much of the same authority, that it is impossible to distinguish the one from the other. For every will there are always two ways, but as to which of the opposed ways might be operating in any particular instance, there is, *The Deptford Trilogy* seems to imply, quite simply no way of knowing.

## NOTES

- 1 For analyses of such archetypes, and of the Jungian psychology that inspires them, see the discussions by Baltensperger, Brown and Bennett, Chapman, Radford ("The Great Mother and the Boy"), Roper, Bailey, Peterman (esp. chap. 6), and Monk (*The Smaller Infinity*).
- 2 The locus classicus is to be found in a hymn accompanying the blessing of the paschal candle known as the *Praeconium* or *Exultet*, the relevant passage being "O certe necessarium Adae peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!" Cited by Lovejoy 169-70.
- 3 I have examined a number of literary versions of this theme in my book *Beyond Innocence*.
- 4 In another novel by Davies, *What's Bred in the Bone*, the Fall of Man is referred to in slightly different terms when the Lesser Zadkiel and the Daimon Maimas discuss Francis Cornish's tribulations as a child. When he leaves home to commence kindergarten, "It was his second experience of the Fall of Man.... The first, of course, is birth, when he is thrust out of the paradise of his mother's body." But here too the notion of the fortunate

fall is implicit, for in answer to the charge of exulting in Francis's unhappiness, Maimas says that "I had a rough idea of the direction in which I was going to push him, and I always like to begin tempering my steel early. A happy childhood has spoiled many a promising life" (*The Cornish Trilogy* 385).

- 5 This is presumably the Dean's "ten cents' worth" which Davies, in response to Silver Donald Cameron's statement that the religious theme had been treated in primarily social terms in his Salterton novels, said had been expressed "in a way I hoped was of some significance" (Davis 81). Another character in the novel interprets the matter in terms that obliquely suggest that some metaphysical agency might be responsible for the fortunate turn that events have taken, asserting that "not only is the hand of Fate discernible in this affair" but that "Fate has been leaving finger-prints all around the place ever since Higgen got his bright idea" (474).
- 6 For a discussion of the manner in which *The Leaven of Malice* anticipates *The Deptford Trilogy* in its depiction of "the small action that widens out to affect the lives of many people," see Radford, "The Apprentice Sorcerer" 15.
- 7 I am aware that this is an assertion that might be debated. It is true that some suggestion is conveyed in *World of Wonders* that Magnus is a man who has confronted the darker aspect of his own personality and, as the name Eisengrim suggests, incorporated this "wolfishness" into his public persona. And it is true also, as Monk, for instance, points out ("Confessions"), that Magnus's life adheres in some of its phases to the mythic archetypes of quest and of death and rebirth that underlie certain crucial moments in the lives of Dunstan and David Staunton as well. It is my own view, however, that in this case the mythic analogy must be regarded as ironic in the final analysis, inasmuch as Magnus emerges from his "quest" not so much with a new or regenerated self as with what might be described as a kind of antipersonality. He himself points out that his being "born again" as a theatrical double had no spiritual implications (692), and that his real self consists in his being a "Phantasmata" or illusion (496). For a discussion of the inconsistencies in the portrayal of Magnus in these novels see Monaghan, esp. 51-55.
- 8 The relevance of Jung's observations concerning the role of guilt in initiating a process of psychic maturation is intermittently touched on by Bligh.
- 9 Dunstan makes a related point in *The Manticore*, when he recounts the anecdote of Saint Gall establishing a working relationship with the bear with which he shares a cave (513-14). The dragon image occurs elsewhere in *The Deptford Trilogy*, notably in Dunstan's interpretation of the statue he sees in Passchendaele as the Crowned Woman in Revelation "menaced by the Red Dragon" (74).
- 10 Terry Goldie suggests that the stone concealed in the snowball might be compared to the Philosopher's Stone of alchemical tradition inasmuch as "it seems a representation of diabolic power but with decisive positive applications" (29).

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