

## Poetry in the Dunghill: The Romance of the Ordinary in Robertson Davies' Fiction

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**R**OBERTSON Davies is known as a writer of comic, satiric novels which subject characters, institutions, and events to a delightedly, or sometimes indignantly, ironic gaze. His fiction, however, also reveals a strongly romantic strain, as Hugo McPherson recognizes in classifying the novels as satirical romance.<sup>1</sup> Davies describes himself as "immensely conscious of powers of which I can have only the dimmest apprehension, which operate by means that I cannot fathom."<sup>2</sup> His novels increasingly create a sense of an awesome world of marvels, of powerful forces for good and evil, of heroism, passion, and imagination; a world which lies beyond the prosaic world of everyday realities. Or rather, and this is important for Davies, he suggests a world of marvels which lies not beyond but within the everyday world. He is concerned with what is referred to in the last novel of the Deptford trilogy, *World of Wonders*, as "the revelation of the glory in the commonplace."<sup>3</sup> The romantic impulse in his work is concerned with revealing this glory in the commonplace, the satiric impulse with undercutting both a romanticism which ignores the commonplace, and a philistinism which ignores the glory.

This dual impulse toward romance and realism is presented most explicitly in the description of the "Magian World View" attributed to one of the characters in *World of Wonders*. About this outlook, which is presented positively in the novel, we are told:

It was a sense of the unfathomable wonder of the invisible world that existed side by side with a hard recognition of the roughness and cruelty and day-to-day demands of the tangible world. . . . It was poetry and wonder which might reveal themselves in the dunghill, and it was an understanding of the dunghill that lurks in poetry and wonder. (*World of Wonders*, p. 323)

Davies' novels play the invisible world and the tangible world, poetry and the dunghill against one another. The world of imagination, fantasy, and illusion is scrutinized against the common-sense standards and incontrovertible demands of everyday reality, while the limitations of a world of facts and reason are exposed within the context of a larger, spiritual world. Exempted from this satire, and posited as the alternative to both the illusory dreams and the insensitive rationalism Davies has undercut is an ultimately romantic vision of a real and marvellous world of the spirit.

*Don Quixote* is the classic model of this conflict of romance and realism, of idealism and pragmatism. It is the model, too, of a satire or parody of romance which itself eventually displays tendencies to romance, to a celebration of the transfiguring power of the imagination. Davies reveals his sympathies with the formulations of this novel in a lecture to students at the University of Windsor in which he insists, "you are a complex creature that combines in itself, among other elements, the delusions and aspirations of Don Quixote, and the common sense of Sancho Panza, who knew when he must eat and sleep, and who had to scratch when he itched."<sup>4</sup> Satire in his novels plays freely over those characters confined strictly to the world of Don Quixote, or more frequently, to the world of Sancho Panza. Ultimately, however, Davies' concern is not to eliminate romance but to suggest a more reliable romance. His own practice is summarized in the advice he provides for beginning writers:

If you write of Baghdad, let it be the Baghdad that lurks in the shade of the Hamilton Mountain. But do not play the old Canadian trick and reduce Baghdad to what you believe Hamilton to be: encourage the artist in yourself and you will see Hamilton in terms of Baghdad.<sup>5</sup>

Although generally not the protagonists, women characters provide one of Davies' major means of developing the satire, but more particularly the romance within his work.<sup>6</sup> Especially in the early novels where satire predominates, they reveal the world of illusory romance undercut by reality, to which characters of unexercised imagination and emotions are prey when they abandon their allegiance to reason. Women also serve, like some of the male characters, to suggest the limited world of purely external reality. In this role, they help exemplify what are defined in *A Mixture of Frailties* as the Thanatossers, those in permanent opposition to life.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, however, female figures are one of Davies' major means of representing the Baghdad concealed by Hamilton Mountain, the poetry to be revealed in the dunghill, the romance of the ordinary. Davies deliberately dismisses traditionally attractive female figures while revealing new value and romantic possibilities through ironically unlikely women characters. The love inspired by the witty, rich and pretty young woman, Griselda Webster, by the village beauty, Leola Cruikshank, or by a pretty girl in a bewitching setting, Judy Wolff, becomes an object of satire. On the other hand, a wider world of feeling and imagination is suggested through the passion inspired by such unusual and apparently inappropriate objects of romance as the deformed and masculine-looking gargoyle, Liselotte Vitzliputzli, the middle-aged madwoman, Mrs. Dempster, and the old fat eccentric, Nan Tresize. As the emphasis in Davies' novels shifts from a mainly satiric concern to a more romantic one, the emphasis in the presentation of his female characters changes also. The novels move from the satirizing in *Tempest-Tost* of Hector Macilwraith's infatuation with attractive young Griselda Webster (and the final ironic revelation that she is little more than a child) to the celebration in *World of Wonders* of young Eisengrim's passion for an aging, over-weight, and over-dressed actress, and the suggestion that this absurd love is his redemption. But whether women characters are used mainly to embody illusory Baghdads built in the air, or to satirize a blindness to

concealed Baghdads lurking on the ground, they are always used at least to hint at the existence of romance in the commonplace and unexpected.

*Tempest-Tost*, Davies' first novel, is his only novel whose structure is that of the parody-romance, rather than of the romance. In place of the lover heroically pursuing an erotic quest to final success, we are shown in Hector Macilwraith a lover whose ultimate failure, preceded by an ignominious and ludicrous suicide attempt, is presented instead as simply the necessary puncturing of an ill-conceived infatuation. In the other major element of action, the characters, involved in a Little Theatre production of *The Tempest*, suggest through their own personalities and actions an inversion of Shakespeare's romance. The Salterton males, Hector, Solly Bridgetower, and Roger Tasset, pursue an airy spirit, Griselda Webster, the Ariel of the play, and overlook the true heroine, Pearl Vambrace, who plays Miranda, and who is in fact presented as "worthy to be admired." The major impulse of the novel is satiric, concerned with the puncturing of pretension and illusion, rather than romantic or concerned with the portrayal of consummated desire. In this portrayal of a tempest in a teapot, our attention is persistently being drawn to the teapot and to the ironic perspective it suggests. Nevertheless, as we shall see, even this parody-romance contains within itself the germs of a romantic vision, an aspect represented by female figures.

Women characters in the novel are an important means of satire. A number are used to suggest the deficiencies of a world devoted exclusively to externals. Because Davies' early novels emphasize a world devoted to reason, facts, and externals, and to the occasional flights into delusory fantasy which occur as a reaction to this, and because they evoke a truly spiritual world largely by its absence, much of the satire is achieved through descriptions of these externals, of clothing, physical appearance, books, food, and furnishings. Nellie Forrester, for instance, is used to provide an ironic

commentary on this superficial world through the satirizing of her devotion to appearances. Her concern with style and disregard for more important human values is suggested in the mocking description of the signs of "Taste" in her apartment: the walls' note of delicate nausea, the modern spring-like chair avoided by the guests, the low table inconvenient but charming, the tasteful lamp lighting only the ceiling. The distorted values and absence of inner life which Nellie represents are clarified by the revelation of her secret passion of the heart. Her acknowledgement of the existence of something greater than herself focuses ironically on the local social deity (pointedly named Mrs. Conquergood), and on the unmerited honour accorded Shakespeare by the inclusion of Mrs. Conquergood's name on the theatre programme.

The novel creates an even more negative example of an obliviousness or hostility to the world of the spirit in Mrs. Bridgetower, whose interest in higher education for women is depicted as merely intensifying her fanaticism about the Yellow Peril and refining her sarcasm toward her rivals for her son's affection. Her function as what Davies calls a Thanatossor, one of those in permanent opposition to life, is suggested by the vampire image of the real Mrs. Bridgetower behind the intellectual facade, a woman "determined that she should not be [alone] so long as there was a man from whom she could draw vitality."<sup>8</sup> This is reinforced not only by references to her son Solly's thralldom, but also by descriptions of her books and her china as imprisoned behind lead and glass, and of liqueur as injected like a venom into the dessert she provides.

*Tempest-Tost* also satirizes the opposite extreme of this, the pursuit of a dream world which loses sight of tangible reality, and Griselda Webster most persistently represents this delusion. To Hector she becomes the focus of romantic dreams and protective chivalric impulses, the object of "a great, understanding, world-defying love" intended to draw her back

from the abyss of shame toward which he sees her headed. To Solly, Griselda as she lies asleep seems the sum of all the beauty and glory in the world. Fantasy even touches the reactions of Roger Tasset with his very mercenary interest in her. We are told, "Griselda had the manners and conversation of a well-bred girl who has read a great many books of the easier sort, and these qualities Roger mistook for worldly wisdom and unusual intelligence." The commonplace reality of the character is suggested in this passage and in the portrayal of Griselda as just a young girl, not much more than a child, with a "simple but ribald mind," who reads Trollope and eats chocolates in the bathtub, who throws fish sandwiches at her sister, and who is industriously chewing chow mein when Hector believes she is being vilely seduced into ruin.

In the midst of a novel inverting conventional romantic formulas, however, women characters are also used to provide a hint of values which, while rooted in the physical world, also transcend it. As in most of the novels, female figures, here Valentine Rich and Pearl Vambrace, are the main means of representing the imaginative and emotional splendour of life. Humphrey Cobbler with his artistic devotion to music and his delight in life is the isolated male representative of this world in *Tempest-Tost*.

Valentine Rich, director of the Salterton play, and the true Prospero figure, suggests mainly the *emotional* aspects of a "rich" spiritual reality, with her pity for Hector, and "the warm, cherishing, unquestioning feminine sympathy, which . . . drew him gently back from Death." Solly's description of her as embodying what all the first-rate poets are talking about, and as possessing "that wonderful, magical quality that real women have" broadens her significance as a representative of a spiritual world of marvels, a world exempted from the satire of the novel. (The preceding quotations, associating her sympathy and magical quality with her sex, also suggest that Davies sees his women characters as particularly appropriate and natural embodiments of this world.)

Pearl Vambrace is the novel's major means of revealing the romance concealed in the commonplace. Daughter of a father whose gritty scepticism is described as scouring the gloss from everything and a mother whose yearning for spiritual enlightenment is said to lead her increasingly further from physical reality, Pearl represents the reconciliation of these two worlds. In contrast with Griselda who reveals the ordinary reality beneath the conventionally romantic appearance of the beautiful, witty, rich, young woman, Pearl suggests a romance which can coincide with unprepossessing externals and which is evident only to the experienced. The inauspicious realities of Pearl's social ineptitude and of her appearance — her hair which needs a rinse, her uneven hems, and her beginnings of a moustache — are emphasized. They are reinforced in the elaborate and humorous description of her preparations for the ball, in which she creams her face with mosquito repellent and rings her eyes with dark green and gold eye-shadow. As her name implies, however, with its echoes of the pearl of great price and the pearl cast before swine, Pearl represents an unrecognized and unappreciated value. With her intelligent conversation, reliance on her own spiritual resources, and "the still, expectant look of one listening to an inner voice," Pearl displays a quality close to beauty and embodies spiritual possibilities extending considerably beyond the deceptively uninspiring physical reality. Compared to a sibyl gazing into the sacred smoke, when peering into her mirror, she is in fact the reader's guide to the existence of a more profound reality. The romance she represents becomes clearest when she undergoes a Cinderella-like transformation before the ball (with the skilful aid of *The Torso*, one of *Salterton's* more exuberant females) and reveals her true beauty. All but Valentine fail to see beyond Pearl's unfashionable exterior, and even at the ball, the exterior glamour of Griselda is shown to be more potent than the deep-seated possibilities Pearl represents.

*Salterton* remains relatively oblivious to the valid world of romance, of wider spiritual possibilities, suggested by Valentine and Pearl, preferring instead a stultifying material

existence or superficial illusion. The satirizing of these choices remains the main object of the novel. Nevertheless, women characters such as Pearl and Val (and even, on a more superficial level, precocious Freddy with her rare appreciation of old wines and old books) are used to suggest an unrealized but potential world of the spirit.

Davies' second novel too acts largely as a biting mockery of allegiance to inadequate values (and, incidentally, many of Davies' targets of satire here, sentimentalists and rationalists alike, share a common weakness for posturing and a petty self-importance). At the same time, *Leaven of Malice*, like all Davies' later novels, is structurally a romance, rather than an inverted romance. Here in an ironic intensification of the traditional romance plot, the final union of young lovers not only triumphs over, but actually results from, opposition to their union. Women characters are less prominent and less significant in the novel than in others by Davies, and the action has more importance in suggesting potent and intangible forces like malice with its far-reaching powers for good and evil. Nevertheless, female figures are used to hint briefly at the romance in the ordinary. Even a negative character like Mrs. Bridgetower functions to suggest unappreciated powers operating beyond immediately apprehended reality. Described as a demon in her ability to sense Solly's emotions, she is depicted as participating, through her silent, potent, and destructive exercise of will, in a war of death against life within him. In using this evidence of an unseen world to attack a reliance simply on what can be seen, the narrator comments ironically, "of course, sensible modern people . . . do not believe in any such communication in emotion as this which seemed to be at work between Solly and his mother in the darkness of their house. That is why such things are never mentioned by those who have experienced them."<sup>9</sup>

Pearl Vambrace, whose image strengthens Solly in his struggle with his mother, embodies positive spiritual forces in



this romantic battle of good and evil, life and death. Yet in contrast with Griselda who again embodies an illusory dream world and who is described by Solly as a goddess, Pearl is defined explicitly as a mortal woman. This side of the character is insisted upon in the introductory description of her consuming a dozen greasy doughnuts and sweating with fright, and in subsequent references to her rumpled, distracted, and awkward appearance. It is the repeated and unattractive image of Pearl's ugly sobbing after being struck by her father, rather than the beautiful picture of Griselda, which more and more becomes an obsession and source of revelation to Solly. Once again, as in *Tempest-Tost*, the fairy-tale formula of a princess in disguise underlies Pearl's characterization, and a transformation in her physical appearance symbolizes the revelation of a larger world of the spirit. When Solly, expecting to find her dark, dowdy, and withdrawn, meets her with her fashionable haircut, her smart clothes, and the bright eyes and erect posture created by her new anger and freedom, "it was as though a picture, previously much out of focus, had been made clear to him." The romantic device of their triumphant engagement, and Pearl's name change as well, serve as confirmation of the wider possibilities — never very explicitly defined in this novel — which Pearl represents. In images anticipating those used to define the Magian World View in *World of Wonders*, Cobbler predicts to Solly that in this marriage, "deep down under all the trash-heap of duty and respectability and routine you may . . . find a jewel of happiness."

Mrs. Fielding, a friend of the protagonist Ridley, is another representative of higher values of emotion and imagination present in everyday life. Reactions to women's appearances become symbolic, in Davies' novels, of depths of perception and of degrees of susceptibility to purely external values. It is Elspeth Fielding who perceives Pearl's potential beauty and who first alerts the reader to her hidden possibilities. Her sensitivity acts as a commentary on the other characters in the scene, who (with the exception of Cobbler) are misled by

superficial and unreliable indications, like Pearl's appearance of having been dragged backward through a hedge, and who offer Griselda as an example of real beauty. Mrs. Fielding's "love and womanly tenderness," too, in comforting Ridley, lightening his burden of guilt over his wife and helping remove his obsession with social recognition, illustrate wider dimensions of life. The source of these marvels in unlikely, everyday realities is suggested by the characterization of Mrs. Fielding as a happily married woman whom Ridley can love in part because she is therefore unthreatening and undemanding. The romance contained within this apparently unromantic situation is explicitly defended in the novel by the revelation of the power of her love, and by the comment that "such affairs are by no means uncommon nor, whatever the young may think, are they despicable." Mrs. Fielding's love (like the kindness of Molly Cobbler which warms Solly's heart) serves, in fact, to suggest by implication the nature of the value posited in Pearl but not clearly illustrated. In portraying the reality and power of emotional values and countering the examples of uninspired marriages in the novel — the Vambraces, Yarrows, Morpheus — these characters help confirm Solly's engagement to Pearl as a romantic triumph and not an ironic blunder.

*A Mixture of Frailties*, with its female protagonist, provides an exception to Davies' usual pattern. Monica Gall, the heroine, does not represent the desirable spiritual values which the hero discovers. Instead the novel is the romance of her own discovery of these values, of her education in imagination and feeling, of her metamorphosis, like that of the hero in the opera created by her lover Giles, from physical man into spiritual man. As a consequence, male characters (four of them artists, significantly) play an uncharacteristically large role here as representatives of transcendent realities.

The structure of *A Mixture of Frailties* is romantic, with its fairy-tale story of an unprepossessing heroine, "neither pretty

nor plain," socially awkward and emotionally naive, who is suddenly lifted from a spiritually impoverished home by an unexpected bequest, is transformed into an artist of international renown, and after being wooed by all three of her mentors is chosen as wife by the most prominent male in her world. (Monica in fact acts out on a larger scale the transformation heralded but never completely dramatized for Veronica [or Pearl], whose name she echoes and who dwindles into domesticity in this novel.) There are strong parallels with the romantic Pygmalion myth, as interpreted by George Bernard Shaw but without Shaw's deliberately anti-romantic ending. Like Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*, Monica begins knowing nothing and improves physically, socially, and emotionally, learns a pure new speech which she cannot undo and which bars her from her old world, suffers from the tyranny and apparent indifference of her teacher who refuses to change, and ultimately moves independently in the new world into which she has been thrust. (Even in minor details, like Monica's initial prudery over nakedness, her experimentation with the word "bloody," and the ambiguity over the ownership of her new wardrobe, Davies echoes Shaw. Eliza is first described as deliciously low, Monica as not knowing a damn thing; Eliza becomes essential in remembering appointments, Monica useful with the typewriter and account-books; Eliza looks ugly as the devil when she cries and Monica is said to be not a pretty weeper; Eliza receives hardly a word of admiration and Monica learns not to look for a good word; Eliza is warned that a woman fetching slippers is a disgusting sight and that no one cares for a slave, and Monica realizes it is not romantic to be fetching erasers and is advised to preserve her self-respect; Eliza refuses to be dirt under Higgins' feet and Monica to be a doormat; Eliza see herself as more capable of kindness than Higgins and Domdaniel hopes Monica will humanize Giles.) In contrast however with Shaw's down-to-earth and anti-romantic insistence that Galatea finds Pygmalion too godlike to be quite likeable and that Eliza's existence as heroine of a romance does not necessarily entail her marriage

to its hero if she is under no immediate pressure to marry, Davies allows the romantic tendency of the original myth full play. He creates an international conductor and British knight Sir Benedict Domdaniel to outshine Giles Revelstoke, the Henry Higgins of this story, and to woo the heroine, with apparent success in the romantic climax of the novel.

Within this romantic structure, of course, Davies challenges ungrounded romanticism, and insists on the everyday realities through which the romance is to be achieved. Monica's early naive fantasies of her future transformation are satirically presented: "The simple clerk at the Glue Works . . . would, after experiences which would deepen and ripen her emotional nature, change into the internationally-known diva." That this unchecked fantasy is in fact realized in the novel is a measure of the degree of romance in the book's presentation of Monica's career. The realization however is shown to come about through raw realities, like the seasickness of her voyage, the misery and loneliness of London, and the trauma of her complicity in Giles' death, which root this romance in the real. Monica's notion of a mistress as exciting and romantic is played against her actual experience of the hard work involved, her sudden Christmas Eve seduction against its incongruous beginnings with her in the bathroom, her mouth foaming with pink dentifrice. Her dream of herself as Monique Gallo drawn in triumph through the streets in her carriage is undercut first by her own realism — "Why a carriage?" — and later by her common-sense rejection of an impressive pseudonym when the actual opportunity occurs. Sir Benedict's age, his practicality, and his own unromantic disclaimers all qualify the romantic climax of the novel, as does the contrast of him with the knights of cheap magazines who give all to love (and who dwindle alarmingly in real life). Unembellished reality again intrudes in the explicit comparisons of Monica's actual reactions to her first sexual experience and to her discovery of Giles' body, with the more melodramatic literary and cinematic traditions regarding such events.

In spite of such ironic reminders of the dunghill underlying the poetry, however, Monica is used primarily to reveal the wider possibilities of romance. The novel's concern with her education as an artist focuses on her increasing perception of a spiritual world: her realization in her love for Giles of the overpowering force of the irrational; her new sense of awe at the tomb of St. Genevieve, opponent of Reason; Giles' nurturing of her imagination and of the spirit which "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;" and the caressing of the tender places of her spirit through his sexual tenderness. Davies has insisted on the significance of the Dean's sermon at the end of the novel.<sup>10</sup> The sermon is on modes of apprehending God which go beyond a reliance on what can be seen and heard, whether a dedicated learning which prepares for the perception of mysteries, or a natural openness to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The song ultimately associated with Monica, "Water Parted," expressing "a yearning toward all the vast, inexplicable, irrational treasury from which her life drew whatever meaning and worth it possessed," establishes her as an illustration of those open to this invisible world.

Two other women characters, Mrs. Bridgetower and Ma Gall, also serve in a deliberately incongruous fashion to suggest an invisible world of forces both good and evil which is irrevocably part of a very earthy reality. Mrs. Bridgetower is again portrayed as an enemy of life and the spirit, a Thanatosses devoted to thwarting and castrating. Cobbler, the artist, describes her as symbolic of all the forces standing on his neck, while her last will attempts to inhibit the sexuality of both Solly and Veronica. Yet ironically this philistine embodies and reveals an awesome supernatural reality touching yet transcending the natural world. In her case, the supernatural power is a negative one, that of her demonic and malign spirit, but, like revelations of a positive spiritual world, this is in keeping with the traditions of romance, which present marvellous worlds, both idyllic and demonic, and which focus on the struggle of extremes of good and evil. At

first tentatively, and then more insistently, *A Mixture of Frailties* presents the suggestion that, after her death, Mrs. Bridgetower's malignant spirit stalks the world of Solly and Veronica, taking possession of her house and her son, and wrestling violently with her daughter-in-law, so that Veronica is found unconscious amid overturned furniture. Solly's final conviction that it is his mother's spirit which has sought to prevent the live birth of his son is described as neither mad nor fanciful. The literal presence of Mrs. Bridgetower's spirit after her death as an agent in the novel is one of Davies' most dramatic representations of the presence in the ordinary world of unknown, awesome powers.

Monica's mother is a similarly unlikely representative of an invisible world of the spirit, here of more positive, though imperilled, forces of the imagination. Ma Gall's immersion in the world of the flesh is stressed and satirized by the exuberant insistence on the details of her physical existence, the loose liquid fat swaying and slithering beneath her skin, the false teeth causing her to suck air painfully, her earthy language and hysterical guffaws, the wheezing caused by her tight girdle, her gargantuan and saccharine dinner parties, her bouts of lethargy and violent activity. Yet the novel mocks Monica's early inability to understand how her mother might suggest anything beyond this world or be part of the experience which broadens and enriches the soul of the artist. Ultimately Ma Gall is revealed herself to be a frustrated artist who shares in a thwarted way Monica's yearning for a fulfillment not of this world, who is the source of Monica's imagination, who lives by the spirit as well as by the flesh, and whose spirit is described, like Mrs. Bridgetower's, as not departed but strongly present after her death. Characterized by emphatically physical and uninspiring realistic details and yet provided with inarticulate spiritual aspirations, she challenges, both philistinism and conventional romantic assumptions, and appropriately embodies a world of the spirit inextricably (and sometimes disastrously) linked to the world of the flesh.

In *A Mixture of Frailties*, Monica's transformation from awkward, ordinary, provincial girl to sensitive, international artist, and the revelation of an exceptionally pure, warm, and expressive voice concealed by the "trash" of her repertoire and muffled by her emotional stultification give the romance of the ordinary a new prominence. It is in the Deptford trilogy, though that romance hinted at more and more clearly in the Salterton trilogy receives greatest development, as is highlighted by the change from a title like *A Mixture of Frailties* with its satiric emphasis on uninspired human fallibility to titles like *The Manticore* and, most directly, *World of Wonders* with their signalling of the mythic and transcendent. In this trilogy, Davies returns to his usual practice of employing heroines as representatives of the marvellous and, as we shall see, becomes more explicit about the appropriateness of this practice.

*Fifth Business*, whose romantic structure is suggested by Elspeth Buitenhuis' reference to the Grail quest of the protagonist, Dunstan Ramsay,<sup>11</sup> is concerned even more overtly than the early novels with what Pere Blazon describes as "this life of marvels, cruel circumstances, obscenities, and commonplaces," and with the need "to declare the unity of the life of the flesh and the life of the spirit."<sup>12</sup> Women characters, although used again to satirize a world deluded by fantasy or empty of the spirit, are more prominent as the central representatives of a world of wonders based in the physical. They embody the answer to Ramsay's research into faith, wonders, magic and the irrational, and to his tentative speculation that the marvellous is an aspect of the real.

Leola Cruikshank, the village beauty, pretty, clean, and foolishly sentimental, initially pursued by both Boy Staunton and the youthful Ramsay, is used to embody conventional superficial dreams. Everyday realities — Ramsay's realization that he has never met such a stupid, nice woman, and the dismal waste of wealthy, frumpish domesticity in which she lives as Boy's wife — undermine such blind romanticism. The details of Leola's depiction — "I wish I did

not have to say howling, but Leola was not beautiful in her grief," for example — provide further opportunity to demonstrate the down-to-earth realities at odds with this romanticism. The beautiful Faustina (as she is persistently known), member of a magic show headed by Paul Dempster, is similarly, and more briefly, used to challenge illusory fantasies. Ramsay's middle-aged infatuation with her, evidence that his bottled-up feelings have shattered his intellectual controls, is mocked by the realities of his own provincial college environment which he attempts unsuccessfully to harmonize with the image of Faustina, and by his inability, as Liesl points out, to understand or relate to Faustina on her own — physical — terms. Such characters help mock imaginative and emotional flights uninfluenced by reality, illustrating Ramsay's contention that the irrational must have its say and that "where [faith] was not invited to fasten itself on things unseen, it invaded and raised bloody hell with things seen."

Other women characters like Boy's second wife, Denyse, and Ramsay's mother reveal the opposite side of the coin, the world of physical reality unenlivened by imagination. About Denyse, we are told explicitly, "she was a woman whose life and interests were entirely external. It was not that she was indifferent to the things of the spirit; she sensed their existence and declared herself their enemy." The contrast of her manipulative marriage and cold-blooded pursuit of social success with the emotional and imaginative wonders suggested, as we shall see, by such characters as Mrs. Dempster and Liesl underscores the inadequacy of her perspective. Her retarded daughter Lorene with obtrusive breasts, superfluous body hair, excessive perspiration, loud and drooling laugh, thick glasses, and poor physical co-ordination becomes the embodiment of and commentary on Denyse's soulless subjection to purely physical and external realities. Mrs. Ramsay, who has her "head screwed on tight," stands for no nonsense from her hair, is famous for her Scottish practicality, and stands in opposition to the wider horizons Ramsay perceives in reading, magic, and contact with Mrs.



Dempster, similarly represents the limitations of such empiricism. She illustrates unfavourably the insensitivity of the town of Deptford to aesthetic or other spiritual values. Nancy Bjerring points out, for example, that when Ramsay's dabbling with the occult leads to a quarrel with his mother over a missing egg, it is "the collision of two inclinations, the one towards the mystic, the other towards the solid and the real,"<sup>13</sup> and Ramsay deliberately pursues magic as a realm into which his mother cannot follow him.

The central women characters in *Fifth Business*, however, are not used to satirize either pure fantasy or pure rationalism. Instead they represent the ideal harmonizing of the glorious and the commonplace, the union, for example, of spirit and sensuality which Faustina symbolizes in her Gretchen-Venus transformation in the magic show and in her role as "the Eternal Feminine, radiating compassion while showing a satisfactory amount of leg." Even so inveterate a pragmatist as Ramsay's mother suggests, in her mysterious and insatiable fury at her son's imprudence, "a strange world that showed very little of itself on the surface." Here, as in the case of Mrs. Bridgetower, negative aspects of a powerful and real invisible world are evoked through a character who has failed to reconcile the two worlds. Generally, however, women characters — Mrs. Dempster, Diana, Liesl — embody the positive significance of a world of wonders rooted in the everyday.

That women are particularly appropriate and natural representatives of this intuitively sensed emotional and imaginative world is suggested by Ramsay's insistence on a difference between the sexes — his remark that women are not well served by education devised by men for men — and by the association of ideas and external, rational systems with men — in Liesl's scathing reference to "honour and decency and the other very masculine things" which make Ramsay incapable of understanding Faustina. This distinction is confirmed by Ramsay's comment about rationalist Denyse,

"she may even have guessed that I held women in high esteem for qualities she had chosen to discourage in herself." Denyse is an enemy of things of the spirit, Ramsay has concluded that "the only reality was of the spirit," and women here are characterized as naturally more attuned to the world of romance and marvels which feeds the hungry part of the spirit.

Early in the novel, Mrs. Dempster is used to establish the existence and value of this world and to demonstrate Ramsay's predisposition even as a child towards things of the spirit. Once again in representing such values, Davies deliberately avoids using a conventionally attractive heroine. Ramsay's infatuation with Leola is contrasted with his real, painful, and immediate love for Mrs. Dempster. With her simple-minded traipsing through the village distributing wilted greens, her socially unacceptable sexual surrender to a tramp who wants her, her confinement within her house by means of a horse-smelling rope and later within an insane asylum, the disorder and raggedness of her home and clothing, and her spells of irrationality and ultimately of deluded rage, Mrs. Dempster provides an insistently unromantic and down-to-earth source of inspiration. Yet this madwoman, unorthodox and disturbing, represents at the same time a world of the spirit which we are told enriches Ramsay and colours his life with beauty and goodness. She is characterized by an unusual breadth of outlook and clarity of vision, and described as living "by a light that arose from within . . . somewhat akin to the splendours [Ramsay] found in books." The unconventional, explicitly presented reality of the bare buttocks and four legs strangely opposed of the tramp and Mrs. Dempster in the pit (a reality which the rigid morality of the town declares obscene and which Ramsay's callow romanticism cannot assimilate) is revealed to be also a moment of transformation for the tramp, in which, he reveals years later, he is delivered from devils, and glory enters his life. (It is also a reality which places Mrs. Dempster, and the wonders she represents, firmly in the world of the flesh, in

defiance of the conventional, idealized, one-sided image of the saint which Blazon challenges.) Similarly, Ramsay describes as paradisaical his experience of the healing presence of a Madonna with Mrs. Dempster's face when he is critically injured and comatose. The miracles which Ramsay attributes to Mrs. Dempster, whatever their exact nature — the raising of his brother Willie from the dead, the transformation of the tramp, and the apparition of the Madonna — provide graphic illustrations of powerful positive forces existing beyond the visible world and acting through it. As an embodiment of this world, Mrs. Dempster, with her damaged reason, reflects Ramsay's discovery that the ultimate reality, beyond external things, lies not in the mind, a cruel joker and a mean master, but in the spirit. The facial expression "of mercy and love, tempered with perception and penetration" which she shares with the statue of the Madonna defines the characteristics, emotional and imaginative, of this world of the spirit. The reality both of her insight and of her madness, of her existence in a world of the spirit and of her existence as a shy, bewildered, and simple-minded middle-aged woman unremarkable-looking in a plain hand-made dress makes Mrs. Dempster an appropriate representative of the glory in the commonplace.

Diana Marfleet, a nurse with whom Ramsay falls in love while wounded, is more ambiguous in her representation of a world of wonders. Her prettiness — frequently an outward sign of superficiality in Davies' characters — her facile and conventional romanticism which restricts the significance of Ramsay's Madonna, and her attention to improvement in the externals of his manners and appearance suggest an insensitivity to the realities of the spirit. Certainly there is an incompleteness, an anticlimactic quality revealed by closer examination, even in Ramsay's praise of Diana, "I had also acquired from her an idea of a woman as a delightful creature that walked and talked and laughed and joked and thought and understood, which quite outsoared anything in Leola's modest repertoire of charms." The details of this description,

while highlighting Leola's inadequacy in meeting even such limited criteria, fail to suggest anything close to the spiritual wonders later embodied in Liesl.

Nevertheless, David Monaghan's insistence on the "destructive influence of Diana Marfleet, who teaches [Ramsay] to cultivate the outer man at the expense of the inner"<sup>14</sup> misconstrues crucial moments at which Diana is used to represent, however fleetingly, emotional and imaginative marvels lying beyond the tangible world. Diana is Ramsay's introduction to the theatre and adult sexuality, both described by Ramsay as "wonders, strange lands revealed to me in circumstances of great excitement." She is also the means by which he is born again, baptizing him with the name of a saint and of a particular saint, St. Dunstan, who has successfully encountered the devil. Thus she introduces the intangible, irrational world of good and evil to which Ramsay is pledged by this spiritual rebirth. A representative of this world which exists not beyond but through prosaic realities, Diana is portrayed as rooted too in the world of the dunghill. In pointed contrast with the romantic haze of sanctity surrounding Leola during her engagement (mocked by the reality of Leola's "mutual masturbation" with Boy which this sentimentalism attempts to ignore), Diana is shown immersed and at ease in what Leola's parents consider the coarse, vulgar world of bedpans and urinals and the washing of naked men.

Ugly and grotesque-looking Liselotte Vitzlipützli, whom Ramsay meets through her involvement with the magic show of Paul Dempster (now Magnus Eisengrim), is of course the central and much less ambiguous representative of an invisible world. Her revelation of the un-lived side of Ramsay's life, her suggestion that he confront his devil — the repressed emotional and imaginative impulses in his life which he fears — and her insistence that he do something irrational at the devil's bidding all help articulate the existence of this world of the spirit. Her confrontation with Ramsay represents the ultimate and crucial integration into his life of the world of wonders which he has tentatively approached earlier through

his study of saints and through Eisengrim's magic. (In anticipating the story of his love for Liesl, Ramsay compares its effect to a reviving drop from the cauldron of Ceridwen, a drop of the broth of inspiration.) Ramsay's physical struggle and subsequent lovemaking with Liesl are discussed by Ramsay and Blazon as a revelatory heroic encounter, on equal terms, with the Devil himself. At the same time, Liesl's physical and verbal aggressiveness, and in particular her grotesque appearance, establish her as an unconventional source of romance, as part of the real, unidealized world of the flesh. The emotional and spiritual wonders which she increasingly represents are played against the insistent references to the deformed ugliness of her face and her simian appearance, so that neither aspect is permitted to stand alone or dominate. This union persists even in the structure of individual sentences. Sometimes the world of the flesh is used to qualify hints of further values, in the description, for example, of Liesl "smiling as charmingly as her dreadfully enlarged jaw would permit." More frequently, spiritual values qualify and extend the purely physical, as in Ramsay's self-mocking but accurate description of her after her flattery as "a woman of captivating intellect and charm, cruelly imprisoned in a deformed body."

The culmination of this juxtaposition of the spirit and the flesh occurs in the scene of Liesl's night visit to Ramsay. There, her revelations about the importance of the irrational and the demonic, and her restorative love-making are linked with descriptions emphasizing her rubbery body, supple yet muscular, her terrible jaw, monkeylike mouth, enormous fists, and deep-set eyes. Her sexual aggressiveness, physical attack on a crippled man, and use of his own wooden leg as a weapon rudely defy the superficially romantic conventions of emotional and sexual involvement. Yet this incongruous battle provides for the crucial confrontation and struggle of the hero of romance with preternatural forces — here with the devil of Ramsay's repressed emotions of which Liesl is the embodiment. Ramsay's final comment on the outcome of the evening, the love-making with Liesl which is carefully set in

the context of this comic fight, inextricably links the two elements of her characterization, the dunghill of the physical world and the poetry of the spiritual: "With such a gargoyle! And yet never have I known such deep delight or such an aftermath of healing tenderness!"

*The Manticore*, with its romance motifs of a quest for a treasure and a revelatory descent into the underworld (dramatized here in psychological terms), again uses female figures to reveal the romance. Johanna von Haller and Liesl are David Staunton's major guides to psychological and spiritual marvels, particularly in the immediate rather than retrospective passages of the novel. Other women like Denyse, and David's old nurse, Nettie, help satirize rationalism, or like Myrrha Martindale and David's first love, Judy Wolff, embody an illusory romanticism. The novel, however, like all Davies' later novels concentrates on the women who reveal the true romance of life, rather than on those who obscure it.

Denyse, described by David as a great maker of images or facades, is used to mock a deceptive, sometimes disastrous, involvement with externals, through her deluded and comic pursuit of an invalid coat of arms, a state funeral, a death mask, an ostentatious tombstone, and an official biography. David's denunciations of her for transforming Boy's soul into a cabbage and reducing him to an unimaginative woman's creation, while they blindly deny Boy's own immersion in material realities, emphasize in Denyse the reductive rationalism which she shares with her husband. David's housekeeper, whose surname, Quelch, contains suggestive echoes of "quench" and "squelch," is characterized by a similar insensitivity to the spirit, with her mistrust of books, for example. She is described as representative of those whose creed is *esse in re*, who insist on an objective reality in which what they see is all there is to be seen. The inadequacy of this approach is highlighted by her failure to recognize Ramsay's saint, Mrs. Dempster. Ironically, her only reference to Mrs. Dempster is in her exemplary tale of a woman who was always "at it," who was discovered "at it" with a tramp, and who inevitably went stark mad. (Such superficial empiricists

may also, of course, be used, like Mrs. Bridgetower, to reveal transcendent realities to which they are hostile or indifferent. Nettie, for example, in the passionate devotion to Boy which drives her apparently to cause Leola's death is said to reveal the mythic patterns, identical to those in Greek drama, operating even in what is "supposedly the quintessence of everything that is emotionally dowdy and unaware," a twentieth-century Canadian family.)<sup>15</sup>

The reverse of such empiricism — a romanticism which ignores rather than transforming reality — is demonstrated through Myrrha Martindale, Judy Wolff, and Leola. Myrrha, a mistress of Boy assigned the task of David's sexual initiation, is shown to offer, with her second-rate verse and sentimental profundities, what are called tatty gallantries and candlelit frumpery in the guise of real poetry or a revelation of life's miraculous underside. The reality of the sexual initiation she provides — "The cheerful trumpet-and-drum of the act of kind. Simple music for simple souls" — is suggested by the persistent, detailed, and ultimately comical metaphor of musical tempo applied uncharitably to the stages of their sexual encounter. Similarly disenchanting are the physical realities of Myrrha's loose puckered skin, metallic hair, and rasping legs, and her unexpected sexual puffing, grunting, and roaring.

Judy Wolff, with whom David falls in love, is closer to Davies' usual representative of a dream world which distorts reality: a conventionally pretty, young, charming, but ordinary woman who, while not herself a romantic idealist, embodies the illusory fantasies of the hero. The introduction in this novel of the Jungian concept of the anima — the feminine part of a man's nature which in its positive aspect is projected onto women who are pretty or sing nicely or laugh at the right time, women whose reality cannot sustain the enchantment — makes explicit and provides a rationale for Davies' use of conventionally attractive women to represent superficial romanticism. Judy is defined in these terms by Jo von Haller, David's psychiatrist: "A pretty, modest girl,

whom you saw for the first time in enchanting circumstances, singing — an Anima, if ever I heard of one.'” Here the identification of the psychological process is considered sufficient in discounting this form of illusion, without the introduction of conflicting evidence from ordinary reality. Leola, whose Deptford life Boy views as “a fairy-tale arrangement where a princess has been confided to the care of simple cottage folk,” is similarly revealed to be Boy’s anima figure, and the portrayal of his disillusionment and consequent ill-treatment of her challenges such idealism.

At the opening of the novel, David is shown, through a dream of a gypsy woman, to be a man “who wants no conversation with incomprehensible women,” that is, with the forces within himself leading him away from his structured, enclosed, rational life and towards an exploration of his emotions, his unconscious, or the irrational in general. In the action of the novel, which centres on the stages of his confrontation with this inner reality, it is two women, Jo von Haller and Liesl, who are the external guides to the irrational and imaginative. Von Haller, the psychiatrist whose analysis provides the structure for the novel, articulates the novel’s revelations of the presence of myth deep in the human spirit, the necessity of feeling not merely of understanding, the power of repressed emotion, and the origins in fantasy rather than in common sense of all that makes man great. Her revelation of a marvellous and heroic world of romance is made in psychological terms, and includes her comparison of David’s struggle with his archetypes to a battle with trolls and of the inescapable dangers in the process of becoming oneself to lions whose teeth she cannot pull. The archetypes within David’s psyche which she identifies — the shadow, anima, magus, friend, and persona — and the mythological patterns these reveal, as in his dream of the manticore and the sibyl, suggest the reality of powerful forces operating beyond the realm of what can be seen and known. While articulating the novel’s denunciation of the rationalists who take their little provincial world as the complete reality, von Haller also dismisses faked fantasy and “the brandy of



Romance . . . the great drug of our world." The inner marvels she reveals are instead shown to be bound up with the details of David's ordinary life: in an anticipation of the definition of the Magian World View, von Haller, in fact, refers to the analysis as a "rummaging in the trash-heap of the past" not for its own sake, but for the illumination of the present and future.

Liesl, like von Haller, provides a discussion of the reality of an unknown labyrinth and the necessity for heroism in exploring it. She is also, however, the means of introducing in immediate, dramatic form the powerful emotions of fear and awe which reveal and confirm a hidden world of spiritual splendour. Insisting to David that the heroic world is all around, that he must learn to feel deeply, and that an overwhelming experience of awe would nourish his spirit, Liesl, herself both monstrous and fascinating, substantiates her claims by introducing him to the mystery of the caves. The rebirth, the "re-entry and return from the womb of mankind," the comprehension of oneself as fully human which von Haller offers through a continuation of analysis, Liesl provides in abbreviated, concrete form. She does this with the trip into the caves, the confrontation with man's bear-worshipping ancestors, and the climactic outward journey during which David is reduced to abject helplessness by terror and sustained by an appeal to his own ancestor. (Mary Dymock, his stalwart, socially disreputable, and long-dead great-grandmother, who provides him with the courage at this crisis, is also used here, like other apparently unprepossessing women characters, to dramatize the existence and irrational power of hidden forces.) David's rationalism in the cave thwarts his perception of a world of wonders, and it is only after his outward journey that he is said to attain some glimmering of it. Liesl, nevertheless, provides for the novel the demonstration of "the greatness and indomitability and spiritual splendour of man," which she uses some ordinary, old, brown bones to reveal, and which David is at first too emotionally stunted to perceive.

Like other positive heroines, Liesl offers not only insight into an imaginative spiritual reality, but also the emotional healing and tenderness which is for Davies the other important aspect of the marvellous world within the everyday. Her pledge of "the love that gives all and takes all and knows no bargains" is described by David as a great promise, and presented as equal in importance to the terror of the caves as a means of rebirth. Once again, valid rather than deceptive romance comes, not through the charming young Judy, but in the unconventional form of this ogress or monster, with her enlarged skull and cavernous eyes, who snorts with rude laughter at David's story of the death mask, and who glares in response to his apology over the caves, when, we are told, another woman might have smiled or taken his hand or kissed him.

This section of the novel sheds more light on the general function of women characters in the novel. David's defence in the cave of accepted moral codes in the face of Liesl's insistence on man's nobility rather than goodness echoes an earlier moment when his insistence on legalities evokes his sister's "terrible feminine scorn." Both reinforce the suggestion of *Fifth Business* that external conditions of honour and decency are masculine concerns and that the revelation of inner values has become the natural prerogative of women, a suggestion in keeping with the use of women characters within the novels.

Both *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore* then, which are largely concerned with the revelation of a world of wonders, use female characters as the principle means of exploring this world. *World of Wonders*, which is similarly more romantic than satiric, more involved with revealing real myths than with debunking illusions, and which is structured by the romance of the transformation of a "nobody," is an exception in the importance it gives to its hero in providing "the evidence of things not seen." Whereas earlier male characters like Cobbler, Domdaniel, Giles, Blazon, Eisengrim, or Ramsay are used less centrally to either demonstrate or defend the life of the spirit, Eisengrim here takes centre stage

— hero of his own romance as Liesl remarks of him in *The Manticore* — and functions as an important illustration of the Magian World View. Even more than *Leaven of Malice*, the novel is dominated by its male characters. Nevertheless this hero, who demonstrates a sense of phantasmagoria which co-exists with an undeluded observation of harsh realities, observes that “‘almost everything of great value I have learned in life has been taught me by women.’” His mentors, Zingara, Liesl, and Milady in particular, function to shed light on Eisengrim’s perspective and the splendours it reveals. (Happy Hannah, by contrast, with her collops of fat,<sup>16</sup> breasts like half-filled wallets of suet, forced wheezing laugh, strained biblical puns, and malicious hymn of hate, illustrates a reality which challenges facile concepts of a jolly Fat Woman and glamorous, mysterious carnival shows.)

Mrs. Constantinescu, or Zingara, the fortune-teller and Eisengrim’s first teacher suggests positive emotional possibilities beyond Eisengrim’s disillusioning experiences of home and of the travelling show. She does so through her insistence on people’s need for mystery and their search for something more in life, on the realities of a hypnotism which lulls and reassures as opposed to Willard’s external manipulation, on the importance of people, and on the revelations provided by a kind, careful examination of their exteriors and an attentiveness to them. (In this her behaviour corresponds to the novel’s later positive definition of romance as “a mode of feeling that puts enormous emphasis . . . on individual experience,” which puts humanity first.) Liesl is a less dominant representative of an invisible world in this novel than in previous ones. In both *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore*, she is the source of the hero’s climactic and mythic confrontation with powerful, hidden realities in his quest for psychological integration. Here, the novel emphasizes her own youthful apprenticeship to Eisengrim who embodies the ideal awareness of a marvellous world of gods and demons co-extensive with harsh everyday realities. At the same time, though, it is Liesl, as emphatically ape-like and monstrous in

her distinguished way as ever, who is used to articulate the Magian World View which the hero unconsciously illustrates. So too, through her adult existence in the present of the novel, she provides hints of spiritual realities by her insistence on the mystery of each person and on the subjectivity of perceptions, her gentle reminders to Ramsay of how she has enriched him, and her intuitive understanding and wise predictions of how other characters will behave.

Although Liesl is credited by Ramsay with having transformed Eisengrim from a tough little carnie into a cultivated conjuror, it is Milady, Nan Tresize, who is the important source of romance in his life and in the novel. The love which she inspires in Eisengrim is associated positively with the romantic theme of the Jekyll and Hyde play with its story of "a man redeemed and purged of evil by a woman's love." The transforming power of the new emotional world she introduces is made clear by Eisengrim's comment that " 'what I believed to be her spirit transfigured everything around me,' " and by the depiction of the new richness of feeling, integrity (a rejection of pocket-picking), and chivalry which one meeting with Milady inspires in this hardened character. Although, with Sir John, she is part of a larger, imaginative, romantic life, the realities she opens to Eisengrim are basically emotional ones. Except for Zingara, she is the first woman who has liked him or thought him of value, and she is characterized, like Mrs. Fielding earlier, for example, in terms of kindness and wisdom, as a woman of spirit and sensitivity, of charm, understanding, and gentleness.

Yet this rich, new, redeeming experience of love she makes possible, this introduction to a mysterious world which Eisengrim describes as a feeling of "being thrust toward something I did not know by something I could not see" (*World*, p. 210), is the product of unvarnished realities. Milady is emphatically neither slim, fresh, pretty, nor young. With her advanced age (she is sixty), thick ankles, emphatic make-up more appropriate for the theatre, eccentric clinging to youthful mannerisms, and the audible plop with which she

descends to the stage, she is recognized by Eisengrim in the midst of his love as odd, as "like nothing in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth." In her inaccessible position as a married woman, here a married woman old enough to be the hero's mother, she carries to an extreme Mrs. Fielding's position in *Leaven of Malice* as an apparently inappropriate source of romance. It is characteristic of Davies to use a woman character who is old, pathetic, and eccentric as the means to glory or "paradise," and as the possessor of a rare beauty of her own which makes merely pretty women seem lesser creatures. The creation through her of a romance which the youthful Liesl finds incongruously close to farce and of a passion which Eisengrim recognizes as objectively absurd serves to emphasize the origins of poetry in the dunghill.

In Davies' debunking of unimaginative empiricism and ungrounded fantasy, and particularly in his compensatory revelations of imaginative and emotional wonders, powerful forces for good and evil concealed in ordinary existence, women characters, then, have a significance greater than their position as secondary and frequently peripheral characters in the novels might suggest. This is the case whether they function, as in the early novels, to provide the few fleeting hints of emotional healing or undefined spiritual possibilities which these largely satiric novels contain or whether they embody the carefully documented world of spiritual marvels whose existence dominates the later novels. As Davies' writing continues, and the glories the novels reveal become more pronounced, the heroines become correspondingly more rooted in the unidealized everyday world, through the incongruous and unromantic qualities by which they are increasingly characterized. From introverts and unimpressive *naifs*, Davies moves to madwomen, grotesques, and eccentrics as ironic embodiments of an inner beauty and wonder hidden in unprepossessing externals.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Hugo McPherson, "The Mask of Satire: Character and Symbolic Pattern in Robertson Davies' Fiction," *Canadian Literature*, No. 4 (Spring 1960), p. 18.
- <sup>2</sup>Donald Cameron, "The Bizarre and Passionate Life of the Canadian People," in *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973), I, 41.
- <sup>3</sup>Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), p. 12.
- <sup>4</sup>Robertson Davies, "Every Man Needs Three Careers," *The Globe and Mail*, 28 October 1971, p. 7, cols. 3-4.
- <sup>5</sup>Robertson Davies, "Some Thoughts on the Present State of Canadian Literature," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Series 4, 9 (1971), 267.
- <sup>6</sup>Gail Bowen discusses the significance of Davies' women characters as, more particularly, a means to the hero's psychological salvation, in her article "Guides to the Treasure of the Self," *Waves*, 5 (Fall 1976), 64-76.
- <sup>7</sup>Robertson Davies, *A Mixture of Frailties* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1958), p. 108.
- <sup>8</sup>Robertson Davies, *Tempest-Tost* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Co., 1951), pp. 165-66.
- <sup>9</sup>Robertson Davies, *Leaven of Malice* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Co., 1954), p. 259.
- <sup>10</sup>Cameron, pp. 39-40.
- <sup>11</sup>Elsbeth Buitenhuis, *Robertson Davies* (Toronto: Forum House, 1972), p. 65.
- <sup>12</sup>Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970), p. 206.
- <sup>13</sup>Nancy E. Bjerring, "Deep in the Old Man's Puzzle," *Canadian Literature*, No. 62 (Autumn 1974), p. 53.
- <sup>14</sup>David M. Monaghan, "Metaphors and Confusions," *Canadian Literature*, No. 67 (Winter 1976), p. 67.
- <sup>15</sup>Robertson Davies, *The Manticore* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), p. 230.
- <sup>16</sup>The Canadian novel reveals an intriguing fascination with fat women. Examples include Davies' *Ma Gall* and *Happy Hannah*, Margaret Laurence's *Mrs. Fennick* and *Prin*, and the heroines of Marian Engel's *Honeyman Festival*, Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, and Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot*.