

**The Fact of Power:
Freedom and Determinism in the Works of Allan Massie**

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I declare that this thesis is my own work except where appropriate acknowledgement has been given.

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Abstract

This thesis will provide an assessment of the novels of Allan Massie in the light of his critical writing and the demonstration of his engagement with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Sir Walter Scott. Massie's political opinions and the much-noted influence of Evelyn Waugh on his work have led to the assumption that Massie's novels sit uncomfortably alongside the main currents of modern Scottish fiction. This thesis contends that the comparisons with Waugh have tended to obscure Massie's metafictional technique and his employment of overt and implicit intertextual discourses with the works of both Sartre and Scott. This facet of Massie's fictional oeuvre represents an engagement with European philosophy, political thought and literature from within a tradition of Scottish fiction which is part of an expansive post-modern European literary discourse.

The engagement with French existentialism places Massie within a strong contemporary field of Scottish fiction alongside such authors as Spark, Kelman and McIlvanney. This thesis reveals Massie's conviction that the cultural inheritance of Calvinist theology predisposes Scottish writers towards the discourse between free will and determinism which features so prominently within French existentialism. Massie's novels infer the shared philosophical and cultural ground between Sartre and Scott. Massie's engagement with Walter Scott elucidates his critical engagement with Sartre by revealing the role of the unconscious mind in the extent of freedom which the individual may possess, and exposing the propensity of Sartre's thought to solipsism.

The analysis of Massie's novels reveals an interrogation of Sartrean existentialism as it is presented in Sartre's philosophical, critical, dramatic and fictional works. Massie's early novels contain an overt discourse with Sartrean philosophical ideas which is enhanced by an implied intertextual discourse with Sartre's dramatic works. Massie's trilogy of novels which examines the milieu of the Second World War and its consequences further engages with Sartre's own narrative technique on the ground of both Sartrean existential philosophy and the traditional fictive historiography of Scott. Massie questions the possible responses to the end of Empire and global conflict which are present within Sartre's works. This thesis observes that Massie clearly admires Sartre's call for the writer to engage with the world in which he or she is situated but acknowledges his implication that the danger of solipsism within Sartrean existentialism may betray that intent by inadvertently advocating a flight into the abstract. For Massie, the fact of external reality demands an acknowledgement of the limits of action. This undermines the Sartrean aim of radical freedom.

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Abbreviations Used

Massie's Works

<i>C&D</i>	<i>Change and Decay in All Around I See</i>
<i>DoM</i>	<i>The Death of Men</i>
<i>ONIW</i>	<i>One Night in Winter</i>
<i>QoL</i>	<i>A Question of Loyalties</i>
<i>SoE</i>	<i>Shadows of Empire</i>
<i>TLP</i>	<i>The Last Peacock</i>
<i>TRL</i>	<i>The Ragged Lion</i>
<i>TEW</i>	<i>These Enchanted Woods</i>

Sartre's Works

<i>B&N</i>	<i>Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology</i>
<i>WL?</i>	<i>What is Literature?</i>

Introduction

Allan Massie is often perceived to be an anomaly amongst modern Scottish novelists. This perception has some validity, but should be treated with less credence than it is normally accorded. Scotland has, unusually, produced a modern literature 'in which working class experience is the centre, middle class the periphery.'¹ Massie does not choose to follow the majority of his contemporaries in portraying that working class experience: the characters he focuses on are often located either within the power base or immediately peripheral to it. Massie is pushed further towards the margins of contemporary Scottish literature by the public expression of his political views. He has been part of at least one Conservative party 'think tank'.² He expresses 'libertarian', Tory (he perceives Margaret Thatcher to have been a Gladstonian liberal rather than a Tory³) and Unionist opinions in several different publications on a weekly basis, which appear to set him at odds with the broadly socialist – and to a lesser extent culturally nationalist – opinions which could be considered the mainstream of Scottish literature in the last fifty years. As Douglas Dunn put it: 'There is an atmosphere of "political correctness" which encourages social narrowing in favour of a working-class, left-wing, vernacular authorship.'⁴ Massie's early novels, in particular, were partly responsible for the perception of his peripherality to Scottish literature: noting the echoes of 'Waugh, Firbank and Powell' in Massie's first novel, Douglas Gifford concluded at the time

¹ Craig, Cairns 'Going Down to Hell is Easy' *Cencrastus* Autumn, 1981.

² 'Allan Massie, the Scottish writer who was part of an exercise called "Taking Stock" launched by Mr Major...' *The Observer* 28/5/95.

³ Appendix 1: Personal Interview 20/4/98, p.317.

⁴ 'Divergent Scottishness: William Boyd, Allan Massie, Ronald Frame' in Wallace, Gavin and Stevenson, Randall (eds.) *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.150.

that 'Massie's talents obviously lie outside a Scottish tradition.'⁵ There are many ways, however, in which Massie has subsequently shown himself to be at the very heart of the historical tradition of Scottish literature, and indeed many ways in which he shares the philosophical and literary concerns of his contemporaries.

This chapter initially will examine the reception of some of Massie's work, particularly those novels which relate to modern Scotland, and contend that a common perception of Massie as being alienated by the majority of modern Scottish literature is based upon a fairly superficial reading of much of his published work – both journalistic and fictional. This is exacerbated by a lingering obsession amongst reviewers with the influence of Waugh, though there is no doubt as to the significance of that author for the inception of Massie's novelistic oeuvre. Such factors have led to a neglect of the extent to which Massie's novels are concerned with and influenced by other literary and philosophical predecessors such as Sir Walter Scott and Jean-Paul Sartre. This thesis will seek to break the relative silence on the subject of Massie's metafictional technique and the manner and purpose of his engagement with these 'other' texts and authors. An attempt will be made, in short, to offer a more useful perspective than those offered by much of the writing on Massie's work to date, and to analyse how Massie perceives and addresses his status as a Scottish/British/European novelist within the present historical context, by reference to both his novels and his considerable body of critical and journalistic work.

⁵ *Books in Scotland* (No. 2) Autumn, 1978.

The Critical Context

Massie had pointed out the relative futility of the preoccupation of reviewers with the political bias of novels before his first novel had been published, let alone reviewed: 'nothing is commoner than judging fiction by its political stance rather than its literary qualities. Being on the right side isn't necessarily enough.'⁶ Massie has subsequently received many reviews which are pre-occupied with the portrayal within his novels of certain social classes, characters (often the comparatively wealthy and powerful) and settings. Such reviews are often critical of any sympathy he expresses for such characters and frequently focus on the consciousness and influence of the past in his novels, portraying this as the unmitigated valorisation of earlier periods in history, and a facet of his political conservatism. Whilst Massie's implicit criticism of such politically biased reviews seems valid, it is hard to escape the idea that he has, to some extent, been hoisted with his own petard. Since he himself features political issues very prominently in his novels, it may be unreasonable to expect that readers should attempt to exclude any political bias shown there. The problem seems to lie in the fact that reviewers read a superimposition of his public political stance onto the discussion of political ideologies in general, and their effects on the individual within society, which the novels contain.

In a review of the third novel, *The Death of Men* (1981), John Orr wrote:

In the political novel, the climactic sequence of events should illuminate moments of universal significance for us all. Here politics is no longer the preserve of the corrupt, the professional or the revolutionary, it is something which deeply affects our everyday lives.

⁶ *London Magazine* November, 1977.

But he continued to suggest that in that book: ‘There is too much gossip and instant sociology, too many aphorisms from the press room’. Clearly finding Massie’s narratorial use of both the ‘corrupt’ and the ‘revolutionary’ to view the fate of the ‘professional’ an impediment to *The Death of Men*’s success as a political novel, Orr stated:

Despite Massie’s valiant attempt to portray as broad a spectrum as possible of Italian life we are left with the sense of being eaves-droppers on the outer circles of the Establishment; witnesses on the margins of power. And there is no real sense of the innocent becoming implicated and persecuted because of events beyond their control.⁷

For Orr, then, Massie’s presentation of a dramatic milieu in which the choice of action or inaction is foregrounded suggests that his characters are beyond the credence and knowledge of the majority of readers. Similarly, though much later, Alison Lumsden noted the discussion of the problems of Fascism within *Shadows of Empire* (1997), but still concluded that:

At times, however, it is in danger of reading, Evelyn Waugh-like, as a lament for the glittering classes and the values which they embody or as an analysis of the political and moral ennui into which they have been led. At times this may compromise the sympathy of some readers.⁸

The implication of the observations of John Orr and Alison Lumsden is that the power and wealth which is frequently inherited by characters in Massie’s novels has a mutually exclusive relationship with innocence. Massie’s characters may be seen to undermine this idea by challenging its premise: within the novels Massie’s characters discover that power cannot be absolute – even for a Roman emperor – and therefore the dichotomy of the powerful and the powerless is a simplification of a sliding scale.

⁷ *New Edinburgh Review* (No. 57) Spring, 1982.

This particular criticism of Massie suggests that the reviewers have not noted the underlying discourse with existential philosophy which implies a criticism of ‘ennui’ regardless of the status of the individual. The existential philosophy which, I will contend throughout this work, is a key constituent of Massie’s novels, often fails to span the gulf between the Massie’s texts and the reader. It is hardly surprising, then, that Massie should be misperceived as ‘alienated’ by the main current of ‘existentially engaged’ modern Scottish fiction.

In a review of *These Enchanted Woods* (1993), Judy Cooke took the ‘lament’ reading to its logical (Ossianic) extreme within a Scottish literary context and stated that Massie ‘vividly creates the melancholic beauty of mists and fallow deer’.⁹ Edward Platt perceived another kind of lament for the glittering classes within that novel:

Massie’s novel borrows its main storyline from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*: a self-made millionaire returns in his mid-40s to reclaim the woman he lost 20 years before. Massie has added a few refinements: the setting is Perthshire, the tycoon is the son of a refugee from Ukraine, and his lost love is the bored and restless wife of a drunken Scottish aristocrat. Massie writes sharp, distinctive dialogue and the hordes of oversexed politicians and boozy military types who crowd the fringes of the story make up a lively portrait of Scottish society.¹⁰

In yet another review of *These Enchanted Woods*, Douglas Gifford noted ‘the post-Evelyn Waugh mode of sceptical detachment’¹¹ though Gifford perceived this new novel as portraying ‘the world of Kennaway’s *Household Ghosts*,’ and therefore possessing a Scottish, as well as an English, literary influence. Of the colourful characters (highlighted by Edward Platt above) Gifford stated:

These are anachronisms, these tired shire voices; they are summed up cruelly and effectively in the portrait of their MP, Mansi [sic] Niven, himself in many ways the ultimate peacock, with his sartorial affectation, bon viveur swagger that verges on

⁸ *Books in Scotland* (No. 64) Winter, 1997.

⁹ *The Mail on Sunday*, as quoted in *The Times* 14/8/93.

¹⁰ *The Sunday Times* 11/12/96.

¹¹ *Books in Scotland* (No. 49) Spring, 1994.

rape, his ruthless exploitation of friends, and his general irrelevance to modern Scotland and Britain.

Massie has made no secret of his admiration of writers such Kennaway, Waugh and Fitzgerald. In a personal interview, Massie balanced the influence of Waugh with that of another Scottish author:

‘Waugh, I suppose, is an influence in the same way that Linklater is: neither of them believed in the novel as being – or *writing* as being – self-expression. Waugh always thought of novels as things that had been made, and I think that’s very true.’¹²

This suggests that more attention should be given to the use of such authors *within* Massie’s texts beyond their influence *upon* those texts, since ‘influence’ suggests a more passive process which neither justifies, nor interrogates, Massie’s belief in the novelist as artisan. Massie may borrow Waugh’s style of comedic absurdity for *Change and Decay in All Around I See*,¹³ but as later novels elucidate, this can also be read in terms of the absurdity of ‘real’ life which was observed by French existentialists. In *Shadows of Empire*¹⁴ the narrator is an old man of Waugh’s generation (declaring himself to be an old friend of ‘Tony Powell’ on the opening page) who is horrified and bemused by the events of the century. The narrator’s view of the world may seem to be a Waugh-esque lament but the age and society of the narrator suggests a much more self-conscious use of intertextuality by the author beyond any passive ‘influence’. These two aspects are markedly different yet are ‘filed’ under the same Waugh-esque reference point in different reviews. This has a reductive effect on the impression of Massie’s scope and ambition. Similarly, if there is a tendency to Ossianic lament amidst the mists in *These Enchanted Woods*, it may be an aspect of Massie’s criticism of the attitudes he is portraying, since he has

¹² Appendix 1, p.299.

¹³ Massie, Allan. *Change and Decay in All Around I See* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1978).

stated that Macpherson's work, 'with its melancholy, reeks of self-pity, always more attractive in literature than in life.'¹⁵ Self-pity is a trait shared by many characters in both *The Last Peacock*¹⁶ and *These Enchanted Woods*.¹⁷

Interestingly, in his book on Muriel Spark, Massie offered a similar statement on the artificiality of the novel to that quoted above:

Their [Waugh's, Firbank's] novels convince us not by challenging comparison with 'real life' but by offering us something which is as clearly part of real life as a piece of furniture; and may be said to stand in the same relation to it.¹⁸

The combination of these two statements (and the use of two authors whose influence Gifford had noted in the first novel) suggests a consciousness of the relationship between 'real life', and the novel within Massie's work, which is pertinent to the way in which history and society can and should be represented within a fictional text by such a novelist.

The above excerpts from reviews do demonstrate, as one might expect, that a review tells its reader as much about the reviewer as it does about the novel. However, the frequent recurrence of reference to the same author as an influence suggests that one aspect of the process of reviewing a sequence of works by the same author is the construction of a form of referential canon in relation to that author, with many of the well known problems which the construction of any canon can bring; most notably that of exclusion. In this case it is the exclusion of other writers who can be

¹⁴ Massie, Allan *Shadows of Empire* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997).

¹⁵ *The Sunday Times* 22/12/96.

¹⁶ Massie, Allan *The Last Peacock* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1980).

¹⁷ Massie, Allan *These Enchanted Woods: A Comedy of Morals* (London: Hutchinson, 1993).

¹⁸ Massie, Allan *Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1979), p. 9.

seen to have influenced Massie's writing and of the techniques which Massie applies to such 'influences' within the novels.

If all these aspects are present within *These Enchanted Woods* – and the 'oversexed politicians and boozy military types' seem to sit uncomfortably with the mists and fallow deer – then Brian Morton's observation on that work is particularly interesting. Though Douglas Gifford would later state: 'You couldn't cross into a more different world from Massie's than into that of Irvine Welsh's',¹⁹ Morton did indeed compare *These Enchanted Woods* with *Trainspotting* as part of the same phenomenon; 'the condition-of-Scotland novel.'²⁰ It is a curious fact that while one of Massie's 'anachronistic' characters may meet an ex-lover in an upmarket hotel in Edinburgh (as at the opening of *These Enchanted Woods*), only two months later Welsh's Renton can be retrieving his opium suppositories from a toilet in Leith, yet it is difficult to argue that either event is irrelevant within modern Scotland, or in a sense not *real*, albeit perhaps for radically different individuals. It may be true that you couldn't cross into a more different world than from Massie's to that portrayed by Welsh, but after all, the crossing could be done by taking a bus down Leith Walk.

Curiously, one can bring a defence of Welsh to bear on the discussion of 'Scottish literature's' supposed exclusion of Allan Massie. Kevin Williamson, who was among the first to publish Welsh's work, has publicly defended Welsh's critical portrayal of a relatively narrow aspect of Scottish life. Williamson stated that Welsh and others were attacking parochial views of Scottishness: 'If they aren't kicking

¹⁹ *Books in Scotland* (No. 49) Spring, 1994.

against something, why are they writing?²¹ Massie, too, has stated his belief that fiction is essentially an oppositional art form.²² The difficulty with this concept in relation to Massie's work is that because Scotland was politically out of step with England throughout the Eighties and much of the Nineties, the views which he expressed then were indeed minority opinions in Scotland (and continue to be), but were perceived to be those of the 'Establishment' in Great Britain as a whole. So, given that at least one reviewer had perceived in *These Enchanted Woods* one of the most historically conventional literary representations of Scotland, what was the target and function of such an 'oppositional art form' in Massie's work?

In his first editorial piece for the 'New Edinburgh Review' he announced the institution of a regular political column:

This seems to me unavoidable in a country like Scotland at this time. Not only do we live, as Orwell said, in a political age, but even apparently apolitical writing can hardly avoid taking up some sort of political attitude. No serious writer can wholly dodge politics, though it may fairly be held that the writer's critical function, and his most useful political one, at the time when the language of politics appears to be in decay, is the exposure of cant.

Cant represents the triumph of sentiment over reason, and it is therefore particularly prevalent whenever emotions are fiercely engaged. Questions of nationalism always provoke cant; cant leads to lies; lies engender damaging historical myths; adherence to such myths breeds intolerance.²³

Occasionally this criticism of cant is overt within Massie's novels. In *One Night in Winter* the manipulative Fraser attacks the 'wee sma' toon *Sunday Post* morality²⁴ of north-east Scotland and would replace it by a moral revolution. The older narrator critiques the thoughts of his younger self on the matter:

²⁰ *The Sunday Times* 29/8/93.

²¹ Seminar on Modern Scottish Writing within the University of Edinburgh, 25/4/97.

²² Massie, Allan *The Novelist's View of the Market Economy* (Edinburgh: The David Hume Institute, 1988), p. 2.

²³ *New Edinburgh Review* (No. 58) Summer, 1982.

Connection must exist between natural authority and standing at an angle to the law and to convention; again, cf Charlus; even more perhaps Redgauntlet himself, with his contempt for the comfortable, for the 'common cant of the day'. That's it, must be it: contempt for the common cant of the day.

Of course Dallas was young, easily impressed, without adequate basis for any judgement. He couldn't see who spoke the common cant of the day. And which day? They all have their cant—yesterday, today, tomorrow—which has this in common: that it substitutes for the discrimination of true feeling a surefire response. Anyone in tune brings out the jargon with the click-clack of a speak-your-weight machine. (52)

Cant, then, leads to an improper lack of thought when confronting any issue, blinding the individual to the complexity and depth which such an issue may involve. It can also operate as a smoke screen for those cynical enough to manipulate it for their own ends. Later Dallas listens to Fraser attacking the British class system, the Kirk, the Law and the Schools as an argument for a Scottish National revolution, but observes that he had made no attack on the concept of power itself. (*ONIW* 100)

Elsewhere, Massie exposes the intolerance which marginalisation and bitterness has generated within the landed and wealthier classes of Scotland and their consequent vulnerability to those who would manipulate this. In his second novel, *The Last Peacock* (to which *These Enchanted Woods* is a sequel), Massie ridicules a nascent insurgent Fascist movement within Perthshire county society. The Mosley-esque Gerald Morgan is ridiculed, as is the local Conservative MP, Mansie Niven, who is as Gifford stated also portrayed scathingly within that text and its sequel.²⁵ That individuals within such communities can be led to absurdity is clear within the novel, nevertheless Massie also implicitly argues that though they may seem an

²⁴ Massie, Allan *One Night in Winter* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1984), p. 43.

²⁵ Should there be any doubt as to Massie's propensity to attack the form of cant which could emanate from such a source, it should be noted that Mansie Niven appears to be in part a caricature of the late Sir Nicholas Fairbairn and one need only look at one of Massie's early political columns (*The Scotsman* 23/4/77) to find the ridicule with which Massie greeted a speech by Mr Fairbairn.

anachronism to some, even themselves, their existence should not be written out of modern Scottish literature. As Douglas Dunn noted, '[Massie] explores a minority whose power and prominence have waned to such an extent that its surviving representatives can see themselves as "white settlers" despite sharing the same nationality as the "natives".'²⁶ Massie himself has stated:

Around 1960, society changed. Birth and inherited privilege came to be felt as a disadvantage rather than an advantage. This might not be apparent to people who could never approach the Establishment, but the old confidence was vanishing.²⁷

The reason for this loss of confidence is considered by Massie to be a central question in *Shadows of Empire*.²⁸ This partly accounts for the (mis)perception of that novel as a lament, but in the portrayal of that experience there and in other novels, Massie is in part attacking the cant of a reductive view of Scottishness in literature which converts the idea of the *primacy* of working class experience within modern Scottish literature into the idea that portrayals of such experiences are the *only* valid expression for modern Scottish literature.

This field of interest does result in an apparently selective portrayal of life in Massie's Scottish novels, but such a concentrated focus which does not encompass the wider culture appears in the work of many Scottish novelists (though not generally with the same group in mind). As Massie stated of James Kelman's *How Late it Was, How Late*: 'What he has offered is a slice of Scottish culture, but it's by no means the whole thing.'²⁹ In addition, however, he has stated elsewhere that the

²⁶ 'Divergent Scottishness: William Boyd, Allan Massie, Ronald Frame' in Wallace, G. and Stevenson, R. *ibid.*, p.159.

²⁷ *The Scotsman* 6/6/2000.

²⁸ Personal conversation 22/8/2000.

²⁹ As quoted by Stuart Wavell in *The Sunday Times* 16/10/94.

book is 'one of the few assured artistic triumphs of the past 15 years'.³⁰ On winning the Booker prize in October of 1994, Kelman's novel was criticised on many fronts for the extremity of its portrayal of Scotland, but the portrayal of Scotland as a whole does not seem to have been part of its agenda. Many of Kelman's other supporters during the subsequent furore in the newspapers were also quick to point to the technical mastery which Kelman displayed. The validity of such slices, then, should not rely upon their approximation of the whole, but rather to the manner in which they are presented.

Far from being a *lament* for those glittering classes, then, Massie's novels of modern Scotland suggest the persistent existence of that class, but offer a critical depiction of their present condition. It could be argued that some of these characters are indeed 'innocents' who have become implicated in events beyond their control (often due to their cultural, financial or sociological inheritance) but because of the historical power of their class they appear to readers, and to Massie himself it seems, to have made a choice of inaction: part of what Jean-Paul Sartre labelled as 'bad faith'. Since, as stated above, the extent of the power possessed by Massie's characters may be misconstrued, it can be argued that they receive condemnation for their inaction and self-pity as human beings, rather than, primarily, as members of any particular class. Such condemnation is admittedly partially ameliorated by sympathy, but again it can be argued that this is sympathy for their humanity at least as much as their class.

³⁰ *The Sunday Times* 6/4/97.

Applying this philosophical perspective to Irvine Welsh's characters, for instance, it can be seen that they may face similar choices but because of their situation and the nature of their addictions their 'ennui' is not so blameworthy in many eyes, and in many ways not so offensive; the offensiveness which many have found in Welsh's novels being provided by the actions of the characters *within* their milieu, not their more general inaction towards changing such a milieu. It is, accordingly, not surprising to find that Massie has criticised the 'cynical indifference' which he perceives Welsh (as author) to display towards the fate of Welsh's characters.³¹ Elsewhere Massie has ridiculed any critical valorisation of the violent excesses exhibited by Welsh's characters: 'All Welsh's people, you see, have such a life force. Just like the SS, eh? They "refuse to be beaten into submission"; they prefer to beat others into submission.'³² Massie will not acknowledge a 'life force' as 'praiseworthy' when that life force gains its very vitality by brutally suppressing and denying it in others. This judgement is at the heart of many of Massie's fictions, as will become apparent.

The problem of inaccurate criticism generated by the superimposition of an oversimplified reading of Massie's journalistic (political) sympathies on his novels – thus seeing the novels as self-expression to an extent which Massie has denied – is exacerbated by Massie's own perception of a distinct difference between the

³¹ *The Scotsman* 21/12/96.

³² *The Scotsman* 25/2/98.

sympathies which should be at the heart of two of his major activities. In 1988,

Massie drew a distinction between the work of a novelist and that of a journalist:

Let me give a hypothetical example. The sacred cow of Scotland is Ravenscraig. Now it may be that the market economy will work in such a way that Ravenscraig becomes an insupportable burden, and that a decision would be taken to close it. Writing my column I could justify and probably support that decision. All businesses have a natural life, and when this is artificially prolonged, they can only be maintained at the expense of other enterprises. But writing a novel I would be on the side of the Steelworkers; I would be aware of the human suffering, of the despair men would feel who knew they might never work again, of families who saw their way of life to which they were attached by habit, cruelly uprooted.³³

Broadly speaking, Massie seems to follow this pattern, though he does appear to derive a degree of satisfaction from adopting self-consciously provocative stances in his journalism which are inconsistent with the relative objectivity which, he asserts, should be aspired to in such a genre. For instance, the implicit comparison which Massie drew between the Labour Party plan for a system to achieve gender parity in its candidate selection with the special interest chambers of ‘Mussolini’s fascist corporate state’³⁴ seems designed to inflame, as does the expression of his view that the creation of the Ravenscraig steelworks itself was a grandiose scheme out of step with Sixties liberalism, and that the economic liberalism of Margaret Thatcher which was blamed for its closure was the ‘natural corollary of the social liberalism of the Sixties.’³⁵ Reviewers of his novels appear to respond to this type of provocation, whilst ignoring other – fairly frequent – journalistic statements which show a Carlylean awareness of the suffering caused by unfettered capitalist ‘progress’:

Capitalism is callous, or at least careless. It views people not as men and women with families and obligations, but as employees, who may be as expendable as a machine superseded by a new model. Since we know that people are not, and should not be regarded as, expendable, it is tempting to turn against the system that treats them so.³⁶

³³ Massie, Allan. *The Novelist’s View of the Market Economy* *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

³⁴ *The Scotsman* 4/3/98.

³⁵ *The Scotsman* 30/10/96.

³⁶ *The Sunday Times* 11/10/98.

Massie, in fact, can be perceived, like Sir Walter Scott, as one of Lukács' honest Tories, 'who exonerate nothing in the development of capitalism'.³⁷

Massie-the-novelist creates fictions which are concerned with the effect of the movement of history, or of changing political and economic necessities, on the individual, but they are less about *justifying* that process – though of course it could be argued that its acknowledgement is a form of justification – and more about analysing the human condition of the individuals enduring such a process and examining their engagement with that condition.

That this can be seen as Massie's ambition may clearly be deduced from a statement he made regarding Sir Walter Scott and James Joyce:

[T]he greatest Scottish novelist and the greatest Irish one found themselves writing fiction in which one can see the historical process at work. Differences of treatment apart, Stephen Dedalus finds himself in a predicament quite similar to that of a Scott hero, caught in the clash of cultures, helpless prisoner of a current of history which he may come to understand but hardly control.³⁸

Massie has said that history is formed by the clash of ideas, and what comes to pass is different from any of those individual ideas.³⁹ In order to show how history operates in this manner, he must be able to portray more than one side of the argument, which is to say that those individuals who are acted upon must be shown in tandem with those people and forces which 'act'. In this way, Massie attempts to gain some kind of simulacrum of a more universal perspective on the effect of the historical process on individuals, and, to a lesser extent, the obverse. This has led

³⁷ Lukács, Georg *The Historical Novel* (Mitchell, Hannah and Stanley (trans.)) (London: Merlin Press, 1962; 1937), p. 32.

³⁸ *New Edinburgh Review* (No. 58) Summer, 1982.

him frequently to utilise those characters that are more acted upon than acting and locate them within a milieu where those historical, social and personal forces acting upon them are exposed and analysed. This technique, within the history of the Scottish novel, derives from Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*⁴⁰ and his later creations. Within Massie's novels, the technique is particularly prevalent in those dealing with the aftermath of the Second World War.⁴¹

Massie, whose body of fictional work mainly consists of historical novels of one period or another, makes frequent use of a structure of characters which has a proven effectiveness within a European literary context (as Lukács' praise of Scott suggests) and which implicates him within a Scottish literary tradition which is engaged with, and part of, a more expansive European tradition. This approach is not unique within modern Scottish literature, as Alan Taylor noted:

It is easy to forget that there are other strands to Scottish writing which stand outside the current mainstream. I am thinking here of writers who do not wear their Scottishness on their sleeves, who write usually in standard English, without an excess of expletives, often about the middle classes, with cold and witty clarity born of Calvinist Sundays spent in draughty drawing rooms reading Sir Walter Scott. This group includes Muriel Spark, Candia McWilliam, my colleague Allan Massie, Ronald Frame and William Boyd.

Their Scotland is so different from that of Banks and Welsh that it could be another country entirely. [. . .] It is still Scotland, but it is deemed these days to be a lesser Scotland. Writers who have not been born in a stair with a communal toilet, an unemployed father, half a dozen rickety brothers and sisters, and with an inherited sense of how to cook mince and tatties, seem somehow to be regarded as lesser Scots.⁴²

Muriel Spark can be seen to use similar settings and themes to Massie, both apparently in 'denial' of this 'newly conventional' literary Scottishness. She has,

³⁹ Edinburgh Book Festival 22/8/00.

⁴⁰ Scott, Sir Walter *Waverley; or 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; 1814).

⁴¹ In conversation with me (22/8/00) he cited Alec Allan of *Shadows of Empire* and Etienne de Balafre of *A Question of Loyalties* as his most obvious examples of this technique.

accordingly been viewed by some as outwith the canon of Scottish literature. Massie has attacked Maurice Lindsay's claim that after *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 'Muriel Spark's novels belong rather to English Literature' as showing 'a generosity to Eng Lit that we can ill afford.'⁴³ Some seventeen years later, yet in a similar vein, Massie criticised the 'propensity of some critics here to apply an arbitrary test of Scottishness to our novelists'.⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, this would seem to be a form of cant which he feels particularly worthy of attack. He stated in his study of Spark, and has repeated on numerous occasions, that such a view smacks of parochialism: 'it is only in a small country, conscious of a sense of inferiority, that the question can be asked. Not all small countries either; do the Irish feel a need to disown Beckett?'⁴⁵ He has stated, elsewhere: 'The real question which should be asked about any work of fiction is not: "what category should I fit this book into?"; but rather: "is this book true to life? Does it expand my own experience and understanding of life?"'⁴⁶ The insistent reply which has been posed to Massie by reviews of his novels is, however, whose life, and where?

Whilst praising the work of Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and William McIlvanney,⁴⁷ Massie has stated that the absence in their novels of characters who display any subjectivity-asserting praxis may be perceived by other literary cultures as evasive. He stated that in the portrayal of:

⁴² *The Scotsman* 2/10/96.

⁴³ *The London Magazine* October, 1979, p.96.

⁴⁴ *Scotland on Sunday* 28/1/96.

⁴⁵ Massie, Allan *Muriel Spark* *ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁶ *The Scotsman* 10/5/97.

⁴⁷ Massie has accorded both Spark and McIlvanney the accolade of greatest living Scottish novelist on separate occasions: *The Scotsman* 31/1/98, and *The Sunday Times* 13/8/2000, respectively.

[. . .] characters who are, in political terms, more acted upon than acting, the authors of such novels tend not to concern themselves with the problem of power except in the familial sphere. These novels do not deal with a world where men kill each other on account of what they believe. For this reason such novels can seem parochial and even escapist to writers and readers from other cultures in which politics remains a matter of life and death, rather than the distribution of perquisites and benefits.⁴⁸

Massie uses the social and historical settings he does because he is interested not only in the human reality of existence being acted upon within a society, but also in the human and historical agents of those actions. The above clearly demonstrates Massie's suspicion that those novelists who write about the 'reality' of modern Scotland which Massie may seem to evade in his novels (with the 'lament' reading and external settings) are themselves sometimes escaping from a wider reality. This is particularly retrogressive in Massie's view, given that we are now at a time when: 'To be modern is no longer to be modernist, but it is to be international.'⁴⁹

In many ways Muriel Spark can be considered as one of the most 'international' of modern Scottish novelists. Massie justified Spark's choice of characters by pointing out: 'the attraction that the very rich have for Muriel Spark in her later novels is not an expression of snobbery, but of the fascination of those who can wilfully mould their destinies, even create monsters for themselves.'⁵⁰ This is pertinent to the analysis of why Massie locates many of his characters on the fringes of power (often historically as much as socially) and the explanation which he provides of the implications which such a focus has for Spark may help further to explain John Orr's previously quoted observations on *The Death of Men*. Massie stated:

⁴⁸ Massie, Allan *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989* (London: Longman, 1990), p. 29.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Massie, Allan. *Muriel Spark* *ibid.*, p. 12.

[T]o achieve unity of vision [Spark] may present certain characters as they appear to other ones, not to themselves. This is, inevitably, to diminish them, to make them less than in "real life" a person seems to himself, or, in the religious dimension, to God. And this must reduce the significance of what they do or say, for this can only be what is perceived or experienced from without; while the reader will remain in ignorance of what is not done or is left unsaid, though this may, seen otherwise, have its own importance and validity.⁵¹

Clearly the portrayal of those whose actions need not be exclusively reactive towards their environment *does* have implications regarding the type of individuals who may be represented, or at least if certain classes or individuals are the focus then the extent to which others may be portrayed whilst maintaining a 'unity of vision' is reduced. It is true that in constructing such fictional milieus his focus is not upon the lived experience of the majority of the population of Scotland in verisimilitudinal terms, but this stance may be defended if a key object of the exercise is allowed to be the expansion of the reader's own experience and capacity to comprehend life, achieved through the analysis of the existential condition of the individual facing the decision to act or to abnegate their limited freedom and thus attempt to abdicate their personal responsibility.

Alison Lumsden noted the possible alienating effect of Massie's settings on his readership, but the central characters themselves experience alienation within the novels and indeed that feeling of alienation is fundamental to existential philosophy. The alienation which is communicated by Massie's novels, then, in fact places Massie closer to writers such as Kelman than many might expect.⁵² Of course, it must be observed that Kelman tends to represent the disempowered, fighting a losing battle against the faceless bureaucratic and economic system which lies largely

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 42.

beyond their control (as in *How Late it Was, How Late*⁵³). Massie's characters, on the other hand, tend to be the financially or socially 'privileged'. Whilst this may indeed tend to alienate most of his readers, it is necessary for a novelist who seeks to examine the possible scope of human action. Massie's characters frequently portray the collision of the will to power (of the self and others) with the impersonal process of history. Clearly, as individuals, the 'powerful' rather than the 'powerless' provide Massie with the more complex 'collisions' of this nature.⁵⁴

It would be inaccurate to suggest that the issue is purely one of thematic or structural intent, however. Massie's settings, just as much as his characters, are dictated by his experience in tandem with his territory of fictional and philosophical interest. Georg Lukács stated of Sir Walter Scott:

That he builds his novels round a 'middling', merely correct and never heroic 'hero' is the clearest proof of Scott's exceptional and revolutionary epic gifts, although from a psychological-biographical point of view, no doubt his own personal, petty aristocratic-conservative prejudices did play an important part in the choice of these heroes.⁵⁵

When Massie was challenged on not having written any novels of the sort which empathise with the Ravenscraig steelworkers, he replied that he could not find the voice to write such a novel.⁵⁶ When questioned during the same interview on the point of his novels being 'escapist' from the reality of modern Scotland, he stated:

'Well obviously since most of them are not set in late twentieth century Scotland, to some extent they represent an escape, but I wouldn't have thought there was any great need to escape. I mean the problem of late twentieth century Scotland

⁵² Cairns Craig has noted the existential influence of Camus on Kelman's work: 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman.' in Wallace, Gavin, and Stevenson, Randall (eds.) *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵³ Kelman, James *How Late it Was, How Late* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1994).

⁵⁴ 'Blair would do well to note what Harold Macmillan said was the most difficult thing about government: "Events, dear boy, events." Events unforeseen, often unforeseeable, essentially uncontrollable, throw every government off course.' *The Sunday Times* 20/4/97.

⁵⁵ Lukács, Georg *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵⁶ Appendix 1, p.308.

for my sort of novel is that, except in comedy – in *The Last Peacock* and *These Enchanted Woods* – it hasn't provided me with my sort of subjects. That is partly because late twentieth century Scotland is a very comfortable, easy place. (Obviously, for many, Scotland today is not all that comfortable or easy. So my observation is, and sounds, complacent. But it is easy and comfortable in comparison to most of the world—in comparison with Northern Ireland, for instance.) MacDiarmid once said that the trouble with Scotland is that there is nobody worth killing. I think that's rather a good thing, but if you want to write the sort of novels that I write – that I want to write and do write – Scotland doesn't provide much of a setting. If I'd lived a different life, somebody like McIlvanney or Kelman, it'd be different – or Welsh – but if I tried to venture into that territory I would be writing purely pastiche, probably.'

Massie's concerns are not unfounded, it would seem, since Douglas Dunn has stated that Massie's writing 'assumes its natural poise when separated from the necessity to reproduce Scots dialogue'.⁵⁷ Despite the above justification for Massie's decision not to set his novels amongst the contemporary working classes, he does not feel that personal experience should *necessarily* limit the author's choice of subject. In defence of the use of settings which are outwith the experiential knowledge of the author, Massie has observed:

[T]he author can defend his decision to set his story in a distant time or country by observing that nothing is so ephemeral as the purely contemporary, nothing so quickly out of date as the present; moreover by putting some distance between himself and his subject, the author can focus on what is enduringly true. Indeed the willingness to regard the past as proper territory for the novelist is in itself an act of faith in the value of fiction as a means of understanding human nature, and as a means of illuminating that understanding.⁵⁸

The apparent contradiction of Massie's statements on this matter can only be resolved if fictions are to be understood and justified by the act of reading, and Massie is quite aware of writing for a readership. For a reading public familiar with a particular social and temporal environment, the pastiche element within the text of an author writing about that environment who was himself unfamiliar with it would be evident and would undermine the suspension of disbelief and lead to suspicion

⁵⁷'Divergent Scottishness: William Boyd, Allan Massie, Ronald Frame' in Wallace, G. and Stevenson, R. (eds.) *ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵⁸Massie, Allan *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989* *ibid.* pp. 66-67.

over any 'human truths' which the novel implied. On the other hand in terms of Massie's historical fiction – fictions which deal with the process of both history and historiography – it is precisely that contemporary level of knowledge which the reader has which is exploited by the author. As readers, our necessarily limited knowledge of any given historical moment may enhance the suspension of disbelief if such knowledge is validated within the text. In practice this must be enacted by the use of historical events as they have been recorded since the facts of the matter are often in dispute, and the source of such recordings offers further territory for intertextual playfulness. Further, the position of the modern reader allows us to perceive not only the action of history upon the characters but also the way in which their 'future' has operated on our perceptions of the 'present reality' of the characters.

The self-consciousness of Massie's writing in this area is clear in *A Question of Loyalties*,⁵⁹ where the central character is himself reading the observations of his father at an earlier point in history. These observations often concern the father's understanding of history and his experience of what is now a historical moment as a 'present'. Etienne tries to understand his father's 'present' motivations and actions with an overt consciousness of the future of his father and of the erroneous nature of many of his father's assumptions. By implication then, one of the experiential human truths of history which the author portrays is that the present moment affects the way we view the past and the future, but that present moment will in turn become the past.

⁵⁹ Massie, Allan *A Question of Loyalties* (London: Hutchinson, 1989).

Such presents are, though, fundamental to the individuals concerned. Novelists are, as Massie has observed, products of their times and society,⁶⁰ but just as Scottish fiction should not be limited in its subject matter, so our experience of living in an increasingly international context should not be falsely excluded from the experience of living in a modern Scotland and thus from the range of influences operating upon modern 'Scottish novelists'. When asked, given the above belief, which societies he saw himself as being a product of, Massie stated:

I can't sum it up in a sentence, but – when I think about it: the North-East of Scotland is an important part of it. An inherited Presbyterianism; a *connection* with the Empire; an education which was British rather than Scottish; a feeling that I'm a European, but that is combined with a sharp dislike of the European union.⁶¹

Massie has written of 'the good sense of Aberdonians and north-east folk,'⁶² and more elaborately, his narrator Dallas refers to the 'sure-of-its-different-and-wholly-individual-self North-East where rhetoric withers in the east wind',⁶³ so an aspect of that influence is clearly the common sense attitude, against ideological rhetoric, which he often espouses in his journalism. Of course such an appeal to common sense is a strategy of the political right when masquerading as being 'outwith ideology'. This has further implications for Massie's paradoxical relationship with the self-referential irony and intertextuality deployed within postmodern literature as will be shown, but it is worth noting that part of Massie's praise for Walter Scott is that: 'His novels belong to the world of common sense, and transcend it.'⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Massie, Allan *The Novel Today* *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶¹ Appendix 1, p.298.

⁶² *The Sunday Times* 1/6/97.

⁶³ Massie, Allan *One Night in Winter* *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁴ *The Scotsman* 18/1/97.

Massie's 'connection' with the Empire relates to his birth in Singapore, as does his perspective on his Britishness and Scottishness. He has stated:

The war against Hitler, when the sense of Britishness was uppermost, is a long way in the past. So is the Empire. I once asked my father whether in Malaya in the Thirties he and his friends thought of themselves as Scots or British. He replied 'British, except on St Andrew's Night'.⁶⁵

How, then, does a British author who is simultaneously also self-consciously Scottish, European, Imperial and Calvinist by inheritance, create fictions after the end of Empire and within a secular (post)modern literary context? As has been shown, Massie's stylistic affiliations with English Literature are frequently commented upon, and he is of the Unionist camp politically. Given the apparently complex relationship between Massie and his Scottish literary peers, however, it seems appropriate at this stage to examine in a little more depth his relationship with the idea of the 'Scottish novel'. Massie views the category as unhelpful due the Procrustean manner in which it is often applied. The question is not, then, whether he is a Scottish novelist, but how he perceives and negotiates that status with his other 'affiliations'.

In a review of Francis Russell Hart's *The Scottish Novel*, Massie asks the question 'which nobody in Scotland has answered satisfactorily. How do you write about a second-hand society?'⁶⁶ The answer which Massie attempts to present in his novels is not – contrary to the stated belief of many of his critics – exclusively to valorise what has been lost. Massie presents characters existing within a milieu which was

⁶⁵ *The Daily Mail* 29/6/98.

⁶⁶ *London Magazine* October, 1979, p. 93.

formed by previous generations and external determinants such as economics and history. The characters are faced with the choice to live passively within that milieu or to take action to form it anew in the awareness that any such ‘radical’ redefining act runs the risk of destabilising the society which enables their own lives and the lives of those they love.

In his review of Hart’s work, Massie discussed the various solutions (or subsets) which have been presented within the dubious – for Massie – category of ‘the Scottish novel’ in the Twentieth century, each of which holds some relevance for Massie’s fictions:

Is there such a thing as the Scottish novel, or are there merely Scottish writers who happen to write novels?

[...]

Gunn was a novelist of rare charm and talent, who delineated the withering of a traditional society that was being replaced by nothing of value. His true successors [. . .] dislike the modern age. [George Mackay] Brown writes exclusively of Orkney and has retreated into a Catholicism much preoccupied with myth and ritual, while Crichton Smith’s most characteristic fiction treats of remote communities in the West [. . .] and far North.⁶⁷

In terms of Massie’s own oeuvre, Gunn’s successors present a delusory retreat into the counter-historical world represented by mythology, archaic ritual and folk-belief. *The Hanging Tree* and *The Ragged Lion* show the attraction of such self-delusion but locate it alongside an existential insistence on facing down reality with differing effects.

[Then, there is . . .] the other area where Scottish novelists have increasingly over the last 20 years worked with success: the industrial West. Curiously one finds something of the same feeling here. There is the same nostalgia for an older warmer denser communal life to be found in writers like Alan Sharp, William McIlvanney⁶⁸ and Alan Spence. The 19th-century urban community, which

⁶⁷ *London Magazine* October, 1979, pp. 93-94.

⁶⁸ That Massie’s mitigated criticism of authors such as McIlvanney, here and elsewhere (for not fully engaging with their ‘internationalised’ societies) should be understood, it is worth noting his stated opinion that *The Kiln* deals with how one may live with one’s social and cultural inheritance – part of

novelists couldn't tackle when it was forming and functional, now in its decline has become an ideal, something to be set against the bleak anonymity of the modern city. [. . .] The more [Glasgow or Greenock] are either threatened or just left behind by the modern age, the more they are seen as suitable settings for fiction. They have the necessary characteristic life of their own.⁶⁹

Massie identifies Clydeside as the 'Jacobite theme' of the Twentieth century. The valorisation of such communities, marginalised by the effect of progressive history, represents, by Massie's expressed judgement, another attractive, yet ultimately delusive refusal to accept 'reality'. It is this counter-historical 'Jacobite theme' with which Massie engages in *One Night in Winter* and *Shadows of Empire*.

It is when we come to middle-class urban or rural/urban Scotland that difficulties begin. How do you write about that? [. . . T]o expose the difficulties it's worth looking briefly at four writers whom I would take to be the most talented. They are Mackenzie, Linklater, Kennaway and Spark.

[...]

[B]y locating his Scottish nationalisms in the Celtic consciousness, [in *The Four Winds of Love*] Mackenzie like so many others evaded any treatment of Scotland as it is; it could remain a wholly Hegelian Scotland where the Scot *geist* worked antithetically against the Modern Age; attractive as a theory, ultimately unconvincing. There was then always something Jacobite in Mackenzie's approach; for him, the drunk man might never have looked at the thistle. Significant too, that Mackenzie's only substantial and very successful subsequent novel, *Thin Ice*, should have returned to a London setting; a British rather than Scottish book.

[. . .] Linklater wrote: 'Novelists may avoid Scottish themes; or deal with them in a parochial spirit that belittles what is already small enough; or confine themselves to some remote parcel of geography, to some distant fragment of life and find in that solitary corner a significance that is clearly lacking in the whole.' ... It is significant that [Linklater's novels] are informed by a brooding sense of the weight of history, of how consciousness of the past and one's heredity may deform the Present and eat away at the energy that should create the future; this was an authentic dramatic presentation of a central Scottish dilemma. Yet when Linklater stressed that he was 'a makar', a craftsman, one admiringly agrees and finds in that agreement a sad whisper saying, 'and only that'. In this one might contrast him with his friend Evelyn Waugh, far more despairing of the Modern Age, yet apparently remote from its manifestations, yet somehow expressing a central aspect of its consciousness in a way Linklater never quite achieves. And one can't help wondering whether this inescapable consciousness of himself as a 'Scottish novelist' rather than just a novelist, *tout court*, somehow got in the way of his talent.⁷⁰

the confrontation with the modern society Massie describes – but within Scotland. Massie believes it to be one of the finest novels by his generation of Scottish authors, as he stated during a personal interview. (Appendix 1, p.307).

⁶⁹ *London Magazine* *ibid.*, p. 94.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

Here Massie implies, as he does elsewhere, that the weight of Scottish history, which in the Twentieth century involved the participation in two world wars and the loss of an Empire, combined with a distinct cultural inheritance which may be perceived as isolationist and counter-historical, can crush the inclination of the individual to take (existential) action. The urge to retreat into the relative permanence which is apparently offered by the Scottish counter-historical is all the more extreme given the absurdity of the 'real', historical world which seemed – and indeed for Massie still seems – only to be present outside Scotland. Such a view of the absurdity of existence was a common factor in Waugh, Linklater and of course, the French existentialists.

The suggestion is reinforced by reading James Kennaway and Muriel Spark, both of whom refused to be held in the trap, though in *Household Ghosts* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* respectively they painted penetrating and illuminating pictures of Scotch society. But neither of them worked in Scottish settings as a rule, both preferring to see themselves as writers whose loyalty was to their age rather than to any geographical expression. So they turned to where the significant action was, wherever they found it. They have had their reward, which is rejection (though not by the catholic Professor Hart); so that, for instance, Maurice Lindsay can say in his *History of Scottish Literature*, that after Jean Brodie 'Muriel Spark's novels belong rather to English Literature.' Which, I should say, shows a generosity to Eng Lit that we can ill afford.

The logic of this is not that Scottish writers should avoid Scottish themes, or that George Mackay Brown should stop writing about Orkney and set his next novel in a revolutionary Islamic Republic; but it does suggest that they must seek a significance that is not parochial. And this means that the problem of dealing with contemporary Scotland remains just what it was when Muir and Linklater analysed it in the ' thirties: how do you write about a society that exists ever less and less in its own right, but instead becomes a mediocre copy of the Admass society that extends its plastic paw over the Western World.⁷¹

Clearly, for all the reasons outlined above (not least his declared influences), Massie's affiliation is with the group represented by Mackenzie, Linklater, Kennaway and Spark. Massie's question of how one represents a second-hand society is also a question of how to address an increasingly globalised society where

⁷¹ *The London Magazine* October, 1979, p. 96.

the problems of the individual may become ever more universally relevant as the same forces impinge on that individual's personal freedom in many different parts of the world.

The past which Massie sets against the anonymity of the modern day is often a past of brutal division, irrational ideologically inspired violence, a strong sense of a morality which is now viewed as untenable, and death. This is particularly demonstrated in his trilogy of novels which deal with the violent upheaval of the mid-Twentieth century and its repercussions. In these novels – *A Question of Loyalties*, *The Sins of the Father*⁷², and *Shadows of Empire* – the vitality of individuals in that past led to a great deal of existentially significant action, but also unleashed a largely unstoppable historical process which put intense pressure on the society which the individuals inhabited. For Massie, insofar as he is represented in that post-war trilogy, it seems that the legacy of the previous generation is not only 'nostalgia for an older warmer denser communal life' but the destruction of the lives of their children, or in the case of *Shadows of Empire*, an old man who, after experiencing the period at first hand, draws a conclusion that is utterly pessimistic. Within these novels, it is clear that the previous generation are perceived to have possessed a sense of belief, duty and commitment which has been lost to the narrators, but this is offset by the chaos and horror which was unknowingly unleashed by these factors.

⁷² Massie, Allan *The Sins of the Father* (London: Hutchinson, 1991).

Massie seeks to create fictions where the settings and characters engage with that society in a way which does not happen within the geographical and temporal boundaries of present day Scotland – or for that matter in much of the Western world. It is necessary then, to go where the action and interest is to be found, as Linklater, Spark and Kennaway did. Further, those societies may have a vitality that is lacking in modern day Scotland, but there is a price to be paid. Massie portrays those societies where this conflict is or was in existence, setting that, often implicitly, against the relative ‘stasis’ of modern Scotland. If this sounds like a bleak picture then it mirrors Massie’s narratorial viewpoints which despair between the stasis of bad faith and the consequences of existential action, only finding consolation in the human love and warmth which is so vulnerable to the forces of history and power. He has common ground with Scott (albeit using different terms and with less optimism) whom, Lukács suggested, attempted to navigate a middle way between the suffering occasioned by necessary progress and reactionary conservatism.

The Engagement with Scott

Massie has stated: ‘never a year passes in which I don’t read three or four of Scott’s [novels] again’.⁷³ His frequent references to the earlier writer in his journalism bear testimony to this. In his introduction to Edwin Muir’s *Scott and Scotland*, Massie stated:

In one sense the predicament of the Scottish writer is brought about by non-literary causes. It is how to treat of a country that has become a sham; it is how to work in an intensely philistine nation. These problems have appeared since Scott’s

⁷³ *The Scotsman* 18/1/97.

time. In another more narrowly literary sense, it is how to come to terms with Walter Scott, and how to make use of what he made.⁷⁴

In the same essay Massie stated: ‘Clydeside [. . .] is this century’s Jacobite theme; the problem for the writer is to place it as Scott placed Redgauntlet.’⁷⁵ These elements appear to coalesce in *Shadows of Empire*, involving the book in an intertextual discourse with two of Scott’s novels which is more subtle than the overt metafictional intertextuality of *The Ragged Lion*⁷⁶. An explanation of this technique may facilitate the understanding of how one aspect of Massie’s fictional method allows him to address his inheritance and his own historical context

In *Shadows of Empire*, the narrator’s father declares that every Scot is a Jacobite at heart. (82) The narrator’s great-grandfather, the ultimate source of the family power and wealth, had owned shipyards, and the narrator visits the site of the old docks accompanied by the granddaughter of one of the men who had worked there.

The taxi stopped before locked and rusty gates. Beyond them could be seen a wasteland of derelict buildings, willow herb, and scrub that tangled its way to the long-abandoned wharf. Two small boys, kicking a ball, looked round at us, and, indifferently, resumed their game.

‘They haven’t built a ship here in my lifetime,’ Kate said. ‘The council took over the land years ago. For development. There have been several different plans. But nothing bloody happens.’

‘It’s where it began for us,’ I said. ‘The *Christina Johnstone* was built here, launched from that dock. My great-grandfather’s first ship, the first of the Allan line. You wouldn’t think so.’

‘No,’ she said, ‘it’s like trying to imagine life at Skara Brae.’
(366-7)

The expression of bitterness at the council’s inaction or inability to develop the area is put into the mouth of one whose cultural inheritance is different to that of the narrator, but similar to authors such as McIlvanney and Spence. She is not, however,

⁷⁴ Massie, Allan. Introduction to Muir, Edwin. *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982; 1936), p. xxiv.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

⁷⁶ Massie, Allan *The Ragged Lion* (London: Hutchinson, 1994).

nostalgic about that inheritance, she cannot even imagine such a far removed world, but she is frustrated by the current stasis. The narrator, Alec Allan, on the other hand is an old man who has undergone the 'years of frost' (370) and who concludes with a view of the world as utterly desolate. *Shadows of Empire*, the text narrated by Alec Allan, may be read as a lengthy literary meditation on 'Jacobitism'.

All that is life is in the past for Alec. Childless, despairing, he is helpless in the face of the process of history; the process which has led to the erosion of his family's fortunes, as indeed it had led to the ruination of the old castle where he likes to sit. Massie does not subtitle the novel "'Tis Sixty Years Since' but the engagement with Scott's *Waverley* is clear: the deeds of the first half of the century may not all have been enshrined in a painting on the wall, but they are equally safely ensconced in the history books and the memories of an old man. The life of that earlier time has become the subject of the arts (drama, since the book is a reflection prompted by a young playwright's questions about Alec's brother) in contemporary Scotland. The needs of domestic vitality which will not be denied by history are expressed by Scott's narrator: 'Men must however eat'.⁷⁷ This is echoed by Alec and Kate going for a meal following this excerpt, but by then the bleakness of the narration of the even older Alec has been reasserted within the narrative of the text to show his current marginalisation from even this acknowledgement of residual vitality.

The plight of the site itself, and the blame for this, could of course be read as evidence of the intrusion of Massie's political views. A more complex

⁷⁷ Scott, Sir Walter *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* *ibid.*, p. 338.

interpretation, however, lies in the intertextual discourse which Massie appears to be constructing between the arrival at the site of the old docks with the arrival of Waverley's wedding party at Tully-Veolan. The gates are rusty, not restored. Any regeneration of the dockyard landscape is natural rather than man-made: the restored order of grubbed up tree roots and newly planted grass of Tully-Veolan contrasts sharply with the tangled scrub. The powerlessness of a modern council to enact regeneration – the stasis of endless planning in a world where global historical progress has led to the collapse of a once powerful industry – is contrasted with the vitality and domestic action of Scott's view of a progressive Britain. Blame is not necessarily being apportioned here, but the frustration of the dispossessed in a second-hand society has replaced the dignified if grudging praise of Baron Bradwardine for the 'current owners'.

Redgauntlet, Massie's favourite novel by Scott,⁷⁸ provides a further interesting intertextual reference for *Shadows of Empire*. The indifference of the small boys in the above excerpt operates in a similar way to the part played by General Campbell in Scott's novel. If *Redgauntlet* focuses '...on Scotland's emergence in the 1760s from an isolated, medieval society into a component state of a modern, commercial Britain,'⁷⁹ then *Shadows of Empire* might be said to focus on Britain's 'emergence' from a class-based society which was a global Imperial power to a bit-player in the 'global Admass society,' one whose class system has been, to an extent, decapitated; certainly its 'top tiers' have been emasculated by the movement of history. Just as in

⁷⁸ *The Scotsman* 18/1/97.

⁷⁹ Kathryn Sutherland's 'Introduction' to Scott, Sir Walter *Redgauntlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985; 1824), pp.viii-ix.

the intertextual discourse with *Waverley*, powerlessness within a global context has replaced national, 'domestic', power.

Massie's use of the historical novel, whether it be ancient history or closer to our own time, is obviously influenced by Scott. 'The Waverley novels,' Massie has stated, 'dramatize the historical process. Far from being escapist, Scott's decision to set his novels in the past reveals his understanding that only this sort of novel could properly account for the present.'⁸⁰ The importance of this is testified by Cairns Craig:

If we are not to live in the isolation of those who turn away from the national community or in the self-hatred of those who despair of it, we have to live with what we were and what we are; we have to accept the terms upon which the present is constructed.⁸¹

While much of the technique utilised by Scott remains effective, however, the condition of Scotland has altered radically since Scott's time, as, for many, has the perception of history as progress. For Massie that concept of progress is less easily perceptible in modern Scotland because though we are in the world, we are not truly of the world, in the sense that where 'historical' events may be occurring elsewhere they seem to be largely absent from modern Scottish life – with the possible exception of the new parliament which occurred well after most of Massie's texts were written. Further, as Cairns Craig has pointed out, and as Massie's comments on Mackenzie (above) suggest, the 'Imperial identity [. . .] reduced specifically

⁸⁰ Introduction to Muir, E. *ibid.*, p.xxi.

⁸¹ Craig, Cairns *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp. 13-14.

Scottish conditions to local colour.’⁸² Massie, accordingly, is prepared to look outwith modern Scotland, where necessary, both intellectually and for the settings of his novels.

Massie’s narrators cannot be taken to express the most objective, privileged opinion, since they are merely voices *within* the text, and are often portrayed as being isolated from the redemptive human warmth and love which they crave. Massie refuses to deny the importance of seeking a path to the future, since the denial of such a future results in a denial of personal responsibility. But how does one write novels which examine the possible forward trajectory of a society (indeed a society whose very existence is in question according to one of its former leaders) working its way out of conflict, when that conflict is now Imperial history, and the stability does not lead to obvious progress but to an apparent stasis? Events of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries have demonstrated that such stability may only be temporary, and indeed Massie does not agree with Francis Fukuyama’s idea that we inhabit the end of history – ‘since in the, let’s say perhaps in the twelve thousand years of states’ history, nothing has proved permanent, I can’t see why this should.’⁸³

In Massie’s novels, his characters are confronted with a predicament which sets the possibility of existential action against the lessons of history. Massie’s characters – particularly his narrators within the texts – understand the inevitability of change through the agency of other people, and are confronted with their own limited freedom, yet are paralysed by the knowledge of the destructive determinants which

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

the assertion of that freedom to act can unleash, and therefore wait despairingly in stasis for the anticipated ‘death’ of that stability. As a means of engaging with this problem more deeply, Massie has turned to a national culture which experienced the disintegration of its Empire prior to that of Britain and which sought a forward trajectory in the examination of the isolated individual confronting that paradoxical drive towards stasis. Massie has entered into an extended intertextual discourse with the ideas of French existentialism, and in particular, he interrogates – philosophically and historically – the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre.

The Engagement with Sartre

Some critics are aware of the influence of French existentialism – in the form of Albert Camus – on authors such as Kelman and McIlvanney,⁸⁴ but the influence of Sartre is less well documented.⁸⁵ The suggestion that Massie is similarly engaged with existentialism, and primarily with Sartre, is not so radical as it may seem, despite the fact that Sartre is a noted left-wing figure and Massie, within the Scottish

⁸³ Appendix 1, p.304.

⁸⁴ Beth Dickson noted that ‘McIlvanney has written of his debt to the European existentialist writers Søren Kierkegaard, Albert Camus and Miguel de Unamuno.’ (Dickson, Beth ‘Class and Being in the Novels of William McIlvanney’ in Wallace, Gavin, and Stevenson, Randall (eds.) *ibid.*, p.63.) In the same volume, Cairns Craig stated: ‘Kelman’s tormented characters become heroic because of their continuous and restless need to confront the fact of being absurdly and gratuitously thrown into an existence which makes no sense and has no place for them. It is this that justifies the connection of Kelman’s fiction [. . .] with the continental traditions of Kafka, Camus and Beckett.’ (Craig, Cairns ‘Resisting Arrest: James Kelman’ *ibid.*, pp.105-6.) Douglas Gifford, more recently has noted the echoes of Camus’ *L’Étranger* in Trocchi’s *Young Adam*, McIlvanney’s novels and Kelman’s *The Busconductor Hines*. (Gifford, Douglas et al. (eds.) *Scottish Literature in English and Scots* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2002), pp. 862, 865, 879.) Furthermore, one can trace both traditions back through inter-linked courses of development as Clarke Hutton implied in ‘Kierkegaard, Antinomianism, and James Hogg’s *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*’ in *Scottish Literary Journal* Volume 20, Number 1, May 1993. Gide, who contributed to the resurrection of Hogg’s masterpiece, was an elderly friend of Sartre’s. This thesis will not interrogate the extent and pervasion of French existential influence within Scottish literature as a whole, however, but one should note the fact of its existing influence as a means of contextualising the discussion of Massie’s works.

literary scene, prominently of the right. Massie believes that Sartre, as a Marxist – albeit something of a heretical Marxist as he has said – had a view of History which is part of the same continuum as Scott’s, since they both derive from the great Enlightenment historians such as Fergusson.⁸⁶ In Scott’s novels, the individual must act to suppress the periodic eruption of counter-historical forces such as irrational Jacobitism, in order that the progressive social stability may be maintained. In Sartre’s work, the individual is confronted with his or her own freedom and concomitant personal responsibility, while acknowledging that the Marxist ‘determinative’ forward trajectory of history can, in reality, only be brought about by the action of the individual. Hell, for Sartre, is a condition of being where the individual is denied the capacity for praxis to shape their being and therefore their environment.

There is, despite initial appearances, a considerable area of common interest between Sartre and Massie. In Sartre’s oeuvre the reader finds a discourse between external determinism and free will. Massie has cited Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* and Stevenson’s *The Ebb-Tide* as ruminations ‘on those peculiarly Scottish concerns, free will and predestination.’⁸⁷ This has clear common ground with Sartrean existentialism. Massie has recently praised Andrew Greig’s ‘existentialist novel of great power, intelligence and delicacy’⁸⁸ *That Summer*, which is, notably, a novel which deals with a romance set against the deterministic

⁸⁵ Due to this fact, a brief summary of Sartre’s emergence into English and Scottish literature and culture has been compiled as Appendix 2, p.321.

⁸⁶ Personal conversation 22/8/2000.

⁸⁷ *The Scotsman* 17/2/96.

⁸⁸ *The Scotsman* 9/9/2000.

backdrop of the Second World War. Massie quotes Nietzsche in his journalism⁸⁹ and, more importantly, his characters often quote and discuss Nietzsche.

On Sartre's death in April of 1980, Massie wrote the bulk of the obituary which appeared in *The Scotsman*.⁹⁰ He stated that Sartre's insistence that writers have a duty to concern themselves with public affairs was 'both noble and necessary'. He noted Sartre's equation of the freedom to write with the freedom of the citizen in *What is Literature?*, but declared that Sartre's central achievements were his plays and novels. Interestingly, in the light of his defence of Spark's limited focus on certain types of individuals quoted above, Massie praised the coherence and authority which Sartre's existentialism gave to his novels and plays, but was at pains to point out that the reader need not be familiar with, or in agreement with, Sartre's philosophy in order to appreciate the fictional works. He also, more predictably, criticised Sartre's late public posturing in the Maoist magazine 'Tout', his espousal of the French students of 1968 – a criticism implicit elsewhere in Massie's writing⁹¹ – and his work with the unofficial Russell war crimes tribunal on American involvement in Vietnam.

Massie has written that during the Fifties: 'We argued fiercely about Sartre and Camus, and Existentialism.'⁹² That argument, it seems, is not over, since as might be expected, Massie's 'discourse' with Sartre is not merely one of philosophical

⁸⁹ *The Scotsman* 16/1/96 is one of several examples.

⁹⁰ *The Scotsman* 16/4/80.

⁹¹ Massie has paraphrased Lampedusa in describing 'the brave silly days of '68 when the children of the Parisian bourgeoisie hurled stones at the police (sons of the working-class) in the name of Revolution.' *The Scotsman* 6/6/2000.

influence, but a lengthy piece of engaged criticism. The historical starting point for Massie's Roman novels is significant, since Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius were the first leaders of Rome to be deified. *Antony*⁹³ also conforms to this pattern since the novel tells of the contempt of his fellow Romans when he allows himself to be worshipped as a god in the East. Can gods, at least, enjoy radical freedom? It seems not. Caesar is of course murdered by those who feel he has too much power, and he is the only one of the four eponymous figures of Massie's Roman novels who is not directly involved as a principal narrator of his own story.⁹⁴ Massie denies Caesar the creative freedom of narration to reflect the ultimate denial of his absolute freedom by Caesar's assassins. There are, this narrative statement implies, other truths than Caesar's: 'You do not account for yourself in Caesar's world, but in God's.'⁹⁵ Augustus repeatedly deludes himself over the extent of his power and cannot bear the sight of the scarred veterans who return to him from the German forests after the absolute power of Rome has been denied by the tribes there.⁹⁶ *Antony*, of course, is in many ways a critique of Augustus' subjective view(s) of himself, but Antony's own view is filtered through that of his scribe, who clearly also has a subjective perception of Antony which may colour the text, all of which insists on the presence of others within the world who necessarily intrude upon the free will of the individuals concerned. Tiberius, on the other hand, is reluctant to take on the mantle of such power⁹⁷ and his story can therefore be read as an examination of the tensions between Sartrean 'bad faith' and 'radical freedom'. Massie questions the distinction

⁹² *The Daily Telegraph* 1/6/98.

⁹³ Massie, Allan *Antony* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997).

⁹⁴ Massie, Allan *Caesar* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

⁹⁵ Massie, Allan *Muriel Spark* *ibid.*, p.30.

⁹⁶ Massie, Allan *Augustus: The Memoirs of an Emperor* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1986).

between the two: even when Tiberius attempts to exert his power he falls prey to the machinations of others who have colonised the power vacuum in his self-imposed absence. The degeneration of the position of the 'deified' to the source of massive conflict is handled in *Nero's Heirs*,⁹⁸ with all the attendant constraints of free will which such conflicts bring to all individuals within a society. It is also possible to construct an existential interpretation of *King David*,⁹⁹ since Christ was of the line of David. Massie's character is, then, due to the nature of the Christian Trinity, prefiguring God, but simultaneously in His power.

In the obituary, Massie reserved particular praise for Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* trilogy for its 'interweaving of private and public themes, thus representing the tragicomedy of Europe.'¹⁰⁰ Massie has frequently publicly identified the interaction between the public and private spheres as being one of his own key areas of interest when writing fiction. Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* trilogy¹⁰¹ examines how the individual asserts their radical freedom when faced with the various massive constraints of the Second World War. Massie's three books – *A Question of Loyalties*, *The Sins of the Father*, and *Shadows of Empire* – can be read as an examination of whether the individual can assert such radical freedom in the *aftermath* of that conflict. In other words, Massie questions whether the absence of that particular milieu in the present life of the characters correlates with the absence

⁹⁷ Massie, Allan *Tiberius: The Memoirs of an Emperor* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990).

⁹⁸ Massie, Allan *Nero's Heirs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999).

⁹⁹ Massie, Allan *King David* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ *The Scotsman* 16/4/80.

¹⁰¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Age of Reason* (Sutton, Eric (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986; 1945); Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* (Sutton, Eric (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986; 1945); Sartre, Jean-Paul *Iron in the Soul* (Hopkins, Gerard (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985; 1949).

of its power over those lives. This implicitly questions the power of the individual to effectively negate the influence of history on the road to radical freedom. Massie's insistence on the effect which the passing of time has upon the perception of events and morality by both the self and others offers a clear statement on this.

The narrator of Sartre's trilogy seems to latch on to individual characters and stay with each for a while, watching and describing their experiences and thoughts, from intensely private moments to the intrusion of the major historical events on those lives. Sartre's narratorial location in time appears to be almost contemporaneous with the events described. This narratorial standpoint holds out the possibility of a future which is not predetermined by either author or God, that is, it imposes on the characters the freedom to act in order to determine their own future. In Massie's loose 'trilogy', however, the narration of the events of the Thirties and Forties is overtly retrospective, so that in all three of these novels the characters cannot exercise the radical freedom proposed by Sartre, since their fate is predetermined within the text. They do not tend to exercise their limited freedom at the appropriate moments when such praxis would allow them to achieve a measure of happiness. They become weighed down by the force of their history, regardless of whether they passively accept that destructive force, or seek to escape it after the fact. In Massie's novels, those who attempt to break free of their own personal histories, and from history itself, are shown to be misguided.

Nevertheless, Massie is sympathetic to Sartre's urging of active engagement with one's situation on the part of the individual. In much of his fiction (including *The*

Last Peacock and *These Enchanted Woods*), Massie implies that following the collapse of – or wilful separation from – the Empire, inertia and nostalgia have been endemic to large sections of British society. It is a society that has not inherited, and will not acknowledge, the energy and vitality which created the legacy of relative wealth and power in the first place. With Massie's fictional oeuvre, the vitality and will of certain figures in ancient Imperial Rome contrasts sharply with the stasis and self-pity of characters in modern Scotland. The division is not absolute, however, and both situations hold their dangers. Massie is not suggesting a future path which reverses the history of this century, but rather that individuals should exercise their limited current capability for action at the appropriate moments. In *The Last Peacock* the insurgent fascism of the ex-colonial soldier Morgan is ridiculed and defeated when his African servant reports the abuse he has suffered at Morgan's hands to the police. The question is, why did the chauffeur not simply leave Morgan's service before this? Similarly, the quasi-fascism of Fraser in *One Night in Winter* is brought to a close when his wife, a victim of his sexual and physical abuse, shoots him. The point is made, however, that she could have chosen to leave him before this happened, just as he, clearly, did not have to perform the repeated acts of cruelty which pushed his wife into such an act. It seems then, that an examination of what Massie suggests is the *imaginary* line between free will and the abdication of responsibility, or 'bad faith', is central to Massie's novels. This idea is underlined on many levels within *The Death of Men*.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Massie, Allan *The Death of Men* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1981).

Set in modern-day Italy, the book examines the nihilistic destruction which results from committing an 'essence-defining' act. Such an act, Massie posits again, far from being the pure expression of radical freedom, may in fact be the desperate consequence of the choice to negate one's own freedom. Existentialist writing is explicitly mentioned within the text: Albert Camus is dismissed by Tomaso as a 'Fascist, whatever he thought of himself.' (85) The novel also contains references to Sartre's *Crime Passionnel* which is highly relevant to the subject matter of the novel and indeed deals with many of the same themes.

The Death of Men, set in the heart of Italy, Classical civilisation, and of the Catholic Church, sees Massie utilising symbolism and direct reference to locate Sartre's *Crime Passionnel* and *The Flies (Les Mouches)* alongside The Book of Job, Dante's *Inferno* and Classical mythology. The author plays with predetermined patterns of behaviour as dictated by previous literature – itself heavily drawing on the literature and stories that preceded it – thus creating further tensions in the novel between free will and predestination at an intertextual level, but also as a means of mythologising recent history, thus exposing the universal aspects of the predicaments of his characters. Cairns Craig has suggested that for Massie, in common with other Scottish authors, the 'fundamental answer to the question of history rests on the mythic and, in particular, on the sense of the development of history that derives from Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.'¹⁰³ That situation is, however, further complicated by this self-conscious 'meta-mythical' aspect of Massie's texts, since the characters

are frequently aware of the mythical paradigms which they appear to be enacting, or which appear to be imposing themselves on the patterns of the characters' lives, implying that their radical freedom is undermined by their awareness of such paradigms. The freedom which Massie's characters can exercise is often, therefore, further limited to reacting against, or complying with, these paradigms.

The acknowledged basis of the story of *The Death of Men* in the actual events surrounding the death of Aldo Moro in Italy in 1978 creates a further discourse: between the events in the text and the events of 'actual' history. Historical events are shown to be the product of an interplay between previous history, ideological paradigms, and the choices which individuals make in the situations in which they find themselves, just as texts are the products of previous texts, mythological paradigms, and the imaginative choices of the author.

The metafictional intertextuality within Massie's novels also has a further dimension. Massie declared in Sartre's obituary that the French author was the authentic voice of Europe in the 1940s, just as Stendhal was to the post-Napoleonic period. Massie's characters, especially in *The Death of Men* and the post-World War II trilogy, are unable to free themselves from the consequences of the events of the Forties. Where the characters are engaging, either internally or historically, with the events and ideas of a period in history, the texts themselves are engaged in an intertextual discourse with the texts which Massie perceives to represent the authentic creative voice of that period, or as has been shown with reference to *The*

¹⁰³ Craig, Cairns *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh:

Death of Men, with the texts and stories which are central to the being of a particular cultural place.

This particular type of metafictional reference is part of a consistent pattern in Massie's work. Raimundo, for instance, who is declared in the first sentence of *The Death of Men* to be 'a dandy who can no longer be troubled to dress' states that he can no longer read Stendhal, an author whom he used to admire so much. A character who can no longer style himself according to a Nineteenth century archetype can no longer sympathise with the literary voice of that period. Jorge Luis Borges is quoted by characters for whom the narrative of history is about to reassert its control in the Argentina of *The Sins of the Father*. The narrator of *Shadows of Empire*, effectively perceiving himself as condemned to death, enjoys reading Camus, and in *The Last Peacock*, a character aware of absurdity and degeneration reads Waugh. Similarly, one of the characters in *The Hanging Tree*¹⁰⁴ is suggested as a possible source of some of the Thomas the Rhymer tales, and Virgil is a significant though peripheral figure in *Augustus*.

History, Philosophy and the Narrative Act

Clearly there is a strong element of 'playfulness' in Massie's work, in the sense that he deliberately manipulates intertextual discourses – some apparently more

Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 142.

¹⁰⁴ Massie, Allan *The Hanging Tree: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1990).

important than others due to their relative consistency throughout his work – and overt metafiction to produce a variety of effects. *The Ragged Lion*, for instance, is an overt discourse between Scott and the modern author: the intertextuality is plain, and the playfulness obvious in the false provenance of the manuscript. In another of his novels Massie has the eponymous Emperor Tiberius apparently quote Nietzsche, and explicitly brings the reader's attention to this particular textual anachronism in an 'Introduction: by way of disclaimer' where he methodically sets out a false provenance for the manuscript which he has 'translated' and points out many of the flaws which may lead the reader to question the source of the manuscript as the pen of Tiberius himself, which it purports to be. His other works of historical fiction also appear to sit comfortably with Linda Hutcheon's observations on 'postmodern historiographic metafiction':

Historical statements, be they in historiography or realist fiction, tend to suppress grammatical reference to the discursive situation of the utterance (producer, receiver, context, intent) in their attempt to narrate past events in such a way that the events seem to narrate themselves. In the postmodern writing of history – and fiction (*Midnight's Children*, *The White Hotel*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*) – there is a deliberate contamination of the historical with the didactic and situational discursive elements, thereby challenging the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation.¹⁰⁵

Hutcheon attributes this approach, partially, to the idea, expressed by Umberto Eco, that since the Modernists discovered that the destruction of the past leads to silence, the postmodernist reply must be to revisit that past, 'but with irony, not innocently.'¹⁰⁶ Massie clearly utilises this irony, and is conscious, as his comments on the influence of Waugh and Linklater have shown, of the status of his novels as artificial texts which self-consciously construct a version of the historical narrative

¹⁰⁵ Hutcheon, Linda *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 91-92.

as the narrative of the characters' lives is related. Strangely, Sartre, for whom the situation of the writer was so significant (in *What is Literature?*) suppresses the evidence of that 'reality' within *The Roads to Freedom*. In *A Question of Loyalties* Massie implicitly criticises Sartre's narrative technique in that trilogy for its apparent denial of this 'reality'.

For Massie, in common with other writers noted by Hutcheon, the act of writing fiction also involves the creation of a totality: a world which reflects the internal totalization of the author. Where a narrator/editor figure is used within the text – 'situated' within the reality reflected by the text – that process is overt. According to Massie, Ortega y Gasset's image of man's life as a novel reflects this idea. Narrator-characters can only perceive others within their milieu from the outside:

One of the most difficult of the novelist's tasks is to make those characters whom he has called into being with a few strokes of his pen achieve a semblance of autonomous life; and it is [Anthony] Powell's peculiar and double triumph to have brought this off, while at the same time suggesting to us that we all take on alternative lives in the minds of others, and that indeed the whole of experience may be a dream dreamed by some Great Unknown. The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset asked whether 'human life in its most human dimension was not a work of fiction. Is man a sort of novelist of himself?' This is an experience of Powell's characters, or rather perhaps it is the experience we have when reading of them. He contrives to make them more real than people we know – more real because they are presented with an authority we do not encounter in 'real' life – while reminding us they are only so because he has imagined them. [...] Yet he never sacrifices common sense. His myth is always an alternative interpretation, not forced on the reader.¹⁰⁷

The freedom of the narrator-character to create their text – to write – is impinged upon by the same forces that operate on the individual in a 'real' milieu – not least the impossibility of 'knowing' the other. This is reflected in the overt (and necessarily imperfect) act of 'totalization' which occurs within the texts of the post-

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁰⁷ Massie, Allan *The Novel Today* *ibid.*, p. 10.

war trilogy and, for Massie, is one of the truths that the novel can reflect which he praises in the work of Spark and Powell (above).

The act of creating a 'philosophy' such as 'Sartrean existentialism' is in itself a totalizing act on behalf of the individual – the philosopher. The problem with this is that philosophy, unlike the novel, in assuming a level of universality, suppresses the evidence of its own act of totalization. Existentialism, with its insistence on the fundamental importance of the individual and the individual's perception of the world in which they are located, is peculiarly vulnerable to the criticism of 'over-specificity', as Philip Thody has noted:

It is a matter of empirical fact that few people do experience their own existence as nauseating or are overwhelmed with horror at the thought of so many unnecessary beings. The main argument against Existentialist philosophy, whether in the Christian tradition of Pascal or Kierkegaard or the atheism of Sartre, is that it often rests on a highly specialized personal experience. [. . .] If Sartre—for reasons which are at the moment impossible to ascertain—did not at one period of his life experience existence as physically nauseating, his early philosophy would likewise have been much closer to the conclusions of common-sense.¹⁰⁸

Philosophy, and existential philosophy in particular, involves an act of totalization based on personal experience, and it would appear that in the case of Sartre, unlike the author Powell, 'common sense' has indeed been sacrificed. This is clearly a problem for the overt pragmatism which Massie displays in his novels. For Sartre, the characters which he generates within fictions and dramas should reflect his philosophical views, and any 'philosophy', inevitably, is concerned with showing 'right conduct' as well as assisting the individual to understand 'reality' as it is experienced. Hence, as Sartre himself observed, his characters make their decisions to act 'suddenly and in crises', thus reflecting the tenets of their author's philosophy

rather than the experienced 'reality' of their author.¹⁰⁹ Philip Thody has pointed out that Sartre's characters 'are all being used in order to exemplify his ideas, and none of them is 'free' in the sense in which Sartre uses the word.'¹¹⁰ It is the concomitant corruption of 'reality' within Sartre's novels which this ideological determinism generates which explains why Massie states that the novel 'is not a form suited to the ideologically committed.'¹¹¹

Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* trilogy, as a textual space, pretends an isolation from history and, largely, the pre-existing textual space. The act of writing, for Sartre, is an assertion of freedom:

[W]hether he is an essayist, or a pamphleteer, a satirist, or a novelist, whether he speaks only of individual passions or whether he attacks the social order, the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject—freedom.¹¹²

But clearly his characters do not enjoy that freedom since within the narrative they must make decisions in line with his philosophy. For Massie, however, the novel should enhance the reader's understanding of 'reality' and of human nature (an 'essential' idea which Sartre rejects). Massie's characters, where they are also narrators or editors as in the post-war 'trilogy' where history is so pervasive in its effects, are therefore overtly shown to construct their own 'totalizations' and teleological historical narratives within the text of the novels themselves. Furthermore, as Massie shows in the post-war trilogy, Sartre's narration in *The*

¹⁰⁸ Thody, Philip *Jean-Paul Sartre: A Literary and Political Study* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960), p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* (Clephan, Irene (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd. in association with Hamish Hamilton, 1967; 1963), p. 148.

¹¹⁰ Thody, Philip *Jean-Paul Sartre: A Literary and Political Study* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960), p. 65.

¹¹¹ Massie, Allan *The Novel Today* *ibid.*, p. 71.



Roads to Freedom implicitly denies the ‘situatedness’ of Sartre’s narrative act. Sartre’s narrator is located within the historical situation of the characters and shows how they make decisions in that situation with only a limited awareness of the historical events which will affect the outcome of those decisions. By narrating simultaneous ‘presents’ across a wide geographical area – as he does in *The Reprieve* – but never offering proleptic comments within the narrative, Sartre sought to show the transcendent importance of the present moment, yet the narrative stance implicitly denies its own privileged historical status over the characters.¹¹³

The moments within history which Sartre’s ‘narrator’ presents masquerade as being isolated from the overall narrative of history and indeed appear to be largely isolated within the textual space – there is little or no mention of other texts or authors. His characters, such as Mathieu, deny any overarching historical narrative of progressive change, since each disruption to that narrative, each major conflict, ‘exposes’ the artificiality of stability and ‘progress’. Mathieu – ‘in 1938’ – views the impending outbreak of the war as a split with the past, and the future:

Time, peace – they were the same. And now that future lies at my feet, dead. It was a spurious future, an imposture. He searched those twenty years, like an expanse of sunlit sea, and he now saw them as they had been: a finite number of days compressed between two high, hopeless walls, a period duly catalogued, with a prelude and an end, which would figure in the history manuals under the heading: Between the two Wars. Twenty years: 1918-38. Only twenty years! Yesterday it had seemed both a shorter and a longer period: and indeed no one would have thought to estimate it, since it had not ended. A spurious future. [. . .] And now the war is there, my life is dead: *that* was my life: everything must be started afresh.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Sartre, Jean-Paul *What is Literature?* (Frechtman, Bernard (trans.)) (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1967; 1948), p. 46.

¹¹³ That historically privileged narrative stance is only offered, curiously, in the drama *Crime Passionnel*. In that play Sartre sought to portray a deterministic view of history (Marxism) as it is realised through the actions of the individual which are retrospectively ‘rewritten’ by those with historiographic authority working to fulfil that deterministic ideology.

¹¹⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* *ibid.*, p. 75.

Sartre's Mathieu views history as periods of stable stasis punctuated by great events such as the Second World War. Massie's post-war trilogy acknowledges an experience of historical change in the 'real' world during the lives of his character-narrators (despite their own feelings of comparative personal stasis) which reverses Mathieu's assertion by showing the conflict of the Second World War as a counter-historical disruption within an overall forward trajectory facilitated by social stability. This, along with the insistence on 'common-sense', is a 'bourgeois' view which echoes that presented by Walter Scott – another of the authors whose texts are incorporated within Massie's own.

Just as, for Massie, a novel itself occupies a physical space in the 'real' historical world as an artificial object, so Massie's characters occupy a textual space which is already inhabited by the narrative acts and texts of others – including those of Sartre. For Massie, the act of narration, or indeed authorial creation, can only take place within a historical context by which (and here he differs from Sartre) the text will inevitably be influenced. He therefore 'knowingly' includes a wide variety of Other texts and authors within the textual space of his own novels.

Nevertheless, Massie appears to have misgivings over the ease with which such irony can degenerate into facile intellectual playfulness. He has stated that he would remove the introduction to *Tiberius* if the Roman novels were to be republished because he felt such overt self-consciousness was becoming tiresome.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹⁵ Appendix 1, p.315.

intertextual discourses, however, show little sign of diminishing in his more recent work. If Massie's thoughts on Eco can be taken as symbolic of a wider relationship with fiction of the sort which Hutcheon refers to, then Massie's unease with the techniques employed within much contemporary fiction becomes clear. In his review of Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, Massie stated if Eco's book represented the trend of modern European literature:

[. . .]it is depressing because it represents, like Spielberg's films, an abdication; the artist becomes merely a decorative doodler on the margin of experience, incapable of saying anything interesting or serious about our condition, incapable of representing either emotion or ideas or personality. His artistry represents a retreat, for his only function is to tease and amuse. The result is art for the jaded consumers, books and films and other art-forms in which nothing matters except the gratification of the instant. This is decadence, and *Foucault's Pendulum* is an example of it.¹¹⁶

Such art, then, is complicit in the process of creating second-hand societies, subservient to the global economic forces. More heinously, it subordinates the human condition to a level of importance beneath the medium itself. It is interesting to note how closely Massie's condemnation of Eco's book echoes Nietzsche's analysis of the 'senescent phase of Hellenism. The pleasure of the moment, wit, whimsy and caprice were its supreme deities.'¹¹⁷

An additional ambiguity within Massie's view of himself as a writer in such a context may be elucidated by reference to Umberto Eco's statement:

Many people have remarked that in our times, philosophy has deserted the field, so that the strongest philosophical speculation comes in the form of fiction, of story-telling. British philosophy, for example, adopted a subservient stance to science, so great statements about the world are made in different forms, by Joyce, Mann, or Proust. The result is that those who occupy themselves with literature have to deal with matters which were once the domain of philosophy.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ *The Scotsman* 14/10/89.

¹¹⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Birth of Tragedy* (Whiteside, Shaun (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1993; 1872), Chap. 11, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ *The Scotsman* 7/10/95.

Massie's texts take on this responsibility to become heavily engaged with the philosophical, and indeed the three authors Eco mentions by name are part of the intertextual melange which makes up Massie's fictional oeuvre to date. Massie's criticism of *Foucault's Pendulum* may be just if he considered, as he implies, that Eco is not dealing with the human condition. Yet Massie is clearly adopting a philosophical and moral stance towards Eco's book whilst deliberately ignoring the philosophical discourse contained within it: anxiety over the human condition in a world which may only be perceived or represented as a surfeit of unanchored signifiers. Massie, it seems, is entirely prepared to be complicit with 'postmodern playfulness' concerning the creation of texts – as *The Ragged Lion's* fake provenance demonstrates¹¹⁹ – but cannot admit its validity when portraying the human emotions of characters within those texts.

Massie's ambiguity on this point appears to stem from an anxiety that his serious intent of examining the human condition as he perceives it is in constant danger of being subsumed by the textual playfulness with which he consciously engages. This would seem to be a curious position for him to adopt, though, given that his first two novels, *Change and Decay in All Around I See* (1978) and *The Last Peacock* (1980), are self-consciously comedic, as, clearly, is the later *These Enchanted Woods: A Comedy of Morals* (1993).

¹¹⁹ He revelled in, and connived with, a similar device concerning John Buchan when reviewing J.D.F.Jones' *The Buchan Papers*: '...many will mean-spiritedly query the authenticity of this splendid discovery, we who delight in Buchan can only be grateful to Mr Jones for the new light he has shed on our hero.' *The Scotsman* 27/7/96.

In reviewing the early work of Andrew Greig, Massie criticised Greig for appearing to be concerned that he should not be seen to be 'serious'. Massie continued: 'That fear of course becomes excusable as soon as one remembers the absurdity of so much that deliberately, solemnly, proclaims itself to be of the utmost seriousness.'¹²⁰ A similar criticism is repeated in relation to *John Grierson's Scotland*: 'It's as if Grierson was afraid of seeming intelligent; a mark of the 20th century Scot; that particular fear never troubled our ancestors.'¹²¹ So, in Massie's first novel *Change and Decay in All Around I See*, absurdities abound, but the opening line is a direct reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Similarly, in the second novel *The Last Peacock*, the engagement with Sartrean existentialism becomes overt when a central character relates an anecdote about attempting to explain existentialism to an old man in a Parisian café whom he subsequently accidentally discovers to have been a Monsieur Sartre. (132) It may be that since the prevalence of 'boozy military types' did blind many reviewers to the 'seriousness' behind these novels, Massie has become more cautious as to the dilution of such seriousness by self-conscious literary irony.

Such inconsistency in relation to heavily metafictional technique, however, may also be the result of Massie's suspicion of the denial of any external certainties, be they ethical, or the 'solidity' of the existence of others. Massie has stated that Toby Macrae in *Shadows of Empire* (a character whom he intended to be the moral centre

¹²⁰ *New Edinburgh Review* Winter, 1978, p. 36.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Winter, 1979, p. 35.

of the novel) is imbued with the message: ‘To hell with ideology, I believe in ethics.’¹²² What is considered moral behaviour in any age may depend upon the governing ideology yet there can be an ethical core to the individual in any time: a fact which is acknowledged by the juxtaposition of Lucien’s personal ethics and his participation within the collaborative Vichy regime in *A Question of Loyalties*.

Massie has stated, following both Chesterton and Spark, ‘when people cease to believe in God, they do not come to believe in nothing, which might make sense of a sort; instead they believe in anything.’¹²³ Sartrean existentialism is one of the ideologies that colonise such a vacuum, and the fundamental problem which Massie perceives to be inherent within it may be deduced from an observation on Muriel Spark’s work. He stated: ‘The heresy she particularly concerns herself with is solipsism – a particularly twentieth-century deviation.’¹²⁴ A prominent contemporaneous criticism of Sartrean theorising – that of Georg Lukács – was based upon the exposure of the existentialist to the danger of solipsism:

[Lukács] pointed out that the individual, making a decision, always enjoyed a ‘certain degree’ of freedom. To Sartre, however, the individual’s choice was absolute and devoid of all social and historical context. This absolute freedom, resting on the Cartesian *cogito*, bordered, asserted Lukács, on solipsism and nihilism. Above all, it discouraged the individual from shaping and influencing others through social involvements, existentialism’s solipsistic psychology being merely the politics of adolescence. According to Lukács, Western man is indeed *vis-a-vis de rien*, he desires nothing but freedom, yet freedom is an empty ideal – what Lukács ignored, however, was that Sartre assigned primary importance to the individual lest he be swallowed up in any historical scheme or calculation.

[...] Lukács stated categorically that Sartre denied ‘the real relations that unite the individual to society.’

The second ground on which Lukács sought to discredit Sartre’s philosophy of freedom was in regard to its originality.¹²⁵

¹²² Appendix 1, p.306.

¹²³ *The Scotsman* 31/1/98.

¹²⁴ Massie, Allan *Muriel Spark* *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹²⁵ Kadarkay, Arpad *Georg Lukács: Life, Thought and Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), p. 397.

One of Massie's characters in *One Night in Winter* disparagingly points out that all Sartrean existentialist thought is in Dostoevsky,¹²⁶ nevertheless Sartre's tenets are examined at length within that novel. It would seem that for Massie, the greatest significance and greatest problem of Sartrean existentialism is the relations of the individual with their 'context'; including the presence of other sentient individuals capable of making choices in just the same way as the subject, and whose choices will affect the scope for choice of the subject. For postmodern intertextual playfulness, on the other hand, the literary and historical context has subsumed the relation of the text itself with the 'real' world, a relationship of which, as has been shown, Massie is acutely aware. If individuals allow themselves to be caught up in the philosophical, literary or linguistic space in which radical freedom or 'radical free play' may be exercised, they are implicitly eliminating any pre-existing absolutes in terms of a direct relationship with 'reality', and in the case of existentialism, history. The denial of the existence of others becomes pervasive and insidious within such systems. In this light Eco's anxiety over the sea of signifiers can also be seen to be founded upon solipsism and must be resisted and condemned.

As Merleau-Ponty wrote: 'Existential philosophy, it is said, is the expression of a dislocated world.'¹²⁷ Massie is well aware of such dislocation in a post-Imperial Britain/Scotland, and indeed within his journalism is a champion of freedom of the individual, with a deep suspicion of mass communitarian movements such as Communism and Fascism, but this is mitigated by his insistence on the importance

¹²⁶ Massie, A. *One Night in Winter* *ibid.*, p. 59.

of recognising the significance of the surrounding socio-historical 'reality' for the individual. That Massie should thus occupy similar ground to the Marxist critic Lukács may be further evidence of the paradoxes into which the position leads Massie. Nevertheless, it is clear that for Massie, both Eco-esque postmodernism and Sartrean existentialism, however significant they may be, are flawed in that such analysis of the human condition as they offer is falsely predicated on the atomised individual whose life is lived within a vacuum where other individuals and grand narratives such as history and mythology can only doodle on the margins of that individual's consciousness. The reality of human warmth and indeed love must be alien.

Sartre himself stated that 'ideologies are freedom when they make themselves and oppression when they are made.'¹²⁸ It seems that Massie's propensity to attack cant, or at least his suspicion of prevalent ideologies, is also significant in terms of his engagement with intertextual playfulness, metafiction and existentialism. The problem is exacerbated, however, by Massie's awareness that the forms of self-reflexivity as deployed in metafiction, like the ideas of existentialism, are not in themselves original, having been deployed by some of the most famous and influential writers in the history of European literature; writers such as the playwrights of Greek Tragedy, Shakespeare and Dante, who were deeply concerned with the human condition.

¹²⁷ Kadarkay, Arpad *ibid.*, p. 395.

¹²⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul *What is Literature?* *ibid.*, p. 117.

Massie's novels are, then, deeply interested with the importance of human sympathy for the individual within the mêlée of history, and with the aftershock which historical conflict can continue to impose on individuals when that history has reached a temporary hiatus. In 1978, the year when his first novel was published, Massie wrote an editorial manifesto in the first edition of the short-lived 'Nevis Quarterly'. He stated:

The trend towards a Corporatism, with its concomitant debasement of the individual is not encouraging; but we must not react simply towards a re-assertion of untrammelled individual freedom. Disaster can lie that way too, for it encourages the selfish Will, the dominance of the naked autonomous Ego, which can easily result in Nihilism. The Polish poet, Zbigniew Herbert, born 1924 and so educated under foreign Nazi and Communist domination, writes:
[. . .] 'During the war I saw the fire of a library. The same fire was devouring wise and stupid books, good and bad. Then I understood that it is nihilism which menaces culture the most. Nihilism of fire, stupidity and hatred.'¹²⁹

Existential action, such as that urged by Nietzsche and Sartre, is a clear contingency of the objectifying pressures which surround any individual, and may indeed be necessary and praiseworthy in certain circumstances, but it contains its own dangers. For Massie, the individual is caught between the need to create their own subjectivity – which, if unchecked, may result in nihilistic destruction – and the objectifying pressures of history, society, and the subjectivity of others.

Massie's concerns as an author of fiction are clearly aligned with many of his contemporaries within Scottish literature in terms of the engagement with existentialism thought which appears to offer a means of comprehending the devastation of history and society. Massie ultimately counters Sartre's eternal negativity by providing a bourgeois affirmation of the importance of stability within

¹²⁹ *The Nevis Quarterly* (No. 1) October, 1978.

society as a means of best facilitating the existence of the human sympathy which is so fundamental to the lives of his characters. Massie does not provide an ideological answer to the problem of ideology and the individual, rather he portrays those moments where key factors such as history, society, ideology and the will of the individual collide, to show the infinitesimally small nature of the personal constrained individual choices which create irreversible commitments and thus, in some cases (usually outwith modern Britain), history.

Chapter 1: The Primary Engagement with Sartre

Allan Massie's critical engagement with the philosophy, novels and dramatic works of Jean-Paul Sartre takes several forms. Most overtly, there is an explicit engagement with Sartre as an existentialist philosopher by the characters within Massie's novels. These explicit references to Sartre point the reader towards the philosophical discussion which is present in Massie's texts. There is also, however, a less obtrusive implicit engagement at an intertextual level whereby the characters, situations and narrative structure within Massie's novels may be seen to echo those utilised by Sartre. Because of the extent of these similarities it is reasonable to treat certain key differences between the texts of Massie and Sartre as a means of analysing Massie's engagement with that author.

Both the implicit intertextual engagement and the explicit discussion generate a form of critical discourse with Sartre's thought and works: attacking and exploiting the inconsistencies, yet acknowledging the validity of much of the French author's thought. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge at this stage that Massie's engagement with Sartre is by no means purely oppositional. Politically, Massie is of course far removed from Sartre (from the later Maoist Sartre in particular) but Massie plainly shares a deep interest with that author in many issues: what it means to be an individual in the world, for instance, or in any given historical milieu; what it means to be a writer; the responsibility which the individual must take for their actions; and even the possible extent of freedom. Primarily, Massie's disagreement with Sartre is on this last point. Sartre urged that following on the 'death of God', the individual should strive towards the assertion of radical freedom – which is to

say that the individual should attempt to resist any curtailment of his or her ability to make free choices. To this end, Sartre advocated the assertion of the individual will, despite his acknowledgement that such radical freedom was an impossibility for the individual within any form of society. Massie focuses upon the impossibility of ever attaining such freedom. He suggests that factors such as history, heredity, political power and economic power all impinge on that freedom. Furthermore, Massie suggests that each choice made by the individual curtails the scope of contingency in his or her future. For Massie, then, any assertion of absolute freedom through action would inherently inhibit the future scope of that absolute freedom for the individual. In addition, Massie asserts that the road to freedom proposed by Sartre necessitates the sacrifice of all human society, and therefore the possibility of love and affection for and from others. Where Sartre is oppressed by the gaze of the Other, Massie suggests that the Other also offers the only real possibility of personal fulfilment.

In this chapter I will justify my claim of the importance of Jean-Paul Sartre to Massie's work by the volume and significance of his engagement with that writer. To this end, I will illustrate both the explicit and implicit critical engagement with Sartre's works which is to be found within the fictional oeuvre of Allan Massie, and analyse the nature of Massie's criticisms of, and support for, the ideas of Sartrean existentialism.

Massie's Explicit Engagement with Sartre

Massie's second novel *The Last Peacock* (1980) and its declared sequel *These Enchanted Woods* (1993) are set amidst the county society of modern Scotland.

Due to the recurring presence of the fictional character Mansie Niven in both these works and his fourth novel *One Night in Winter* (1984) and the peripheral appearance in *These Enchanted Woods* of the narrator of *One Night in Winter* – Dallas Graham – these three novels may be thought to form a ‘trilogy’ of modern Scotland. Some common themes are explored, and the settings of the novels are very similar in their highly specific and limited portrayal of Scottish life. A major thematic connection is provided by the explicit introduction and persistence of Sartre in the texts of these novels. These three works, therefore, provide a good starting point for the present discussion.

***The Last Peacock* (1980)**

In *The Last Peacock* a family gathers around the deathbed of the matriarch, Grace. In both *The Last Peacock* and *These Enchanted Woods* Grace’s grandchildren – particularly Colin and Fiona – reassess their lives and their cultural and material inheritance as a result of that death. Within the context of this discussion, Grace’s death may be perceived to represent the death of God’s Grace, thus propelling the characters into a situation where they confront the scope of freedom granted to the human individual after the removal of God. In this sense, despite the comedic nature of the works, the characters may be seen to wrestle with the existential abyss. It is with this backdrop in *The Last Peacock* that the first explicit reference to Jean-Paul Sartre appears:

Colin started by holding court. He told them of an expedition to Paris years ago when he had found himself, under the influence of many Pernods, explaining the principles of Existentialism to a shabby old Frenchman.

‘He surprised me by having a goodish grip of them, which is something no lecturer ever asks for from his audience, so I pitched it a bit strong, getting more and more abstruse, and was just thinking I was on the point of baffling him, when

the waiter came up and said, "*Telephone, Monsieur Sartre, c'est une jeune fille qui parle. . .*"
(132)

The joke is more penetrating than the obvious humour of Colin explaining the principles of existentialism to one of its key protagonists. Massie is placing Sartre on the receiving end of one of the key problems faced by Sartrean existentialism: the presence and equally active subjectivity of the Other, which if fully asserted necessarily tends to impinge upon the capacity of the individual to express his or her own absolute subjectivity. Sartre was aware of this problem and sought to deal with it extensively in his philosophical treatise *Being and Nothingness (B&N)*:¹

Of course our human reality must of necessity be simultaneously for-itself and for-others, but our present investigation does not aim at constituting an anthropology. It would perhaps not be possible to conceive of a For-itself which would be wholly free from all For-others and which would exist without even suspecting the possibility of being an object. But this For-itself simply would not be a "man."
(*B&N* 282)

To the extent that I deny that I am the Other, and as the Other is first manifested, he can be manifested only as the Other; that is, as a subject beyond my limit, as the one who limits me. In fact, nothing can limit me except the Other.
(*B&N* 287)

Throughout his fictional oeuvre, Massie, as will be shown, examines the scope and nature of the various factors which can limit the subjectivity of the individual: the presence of the Other is central to this. An awareness of the extent and variety of the problem posed by the existence of the Other is expressed, explicitly, by many of Massie's characters in different novels. In *Change and Decay in All Around I See*, Atwater has 'a permanent reservation about other people, which was simply that they were indeed other people'; (*C&D* 35) Fiona, in *These Enchanted Woods*, cannot follow her own desires because of the duty she feels to 'other people'; (*TEW* 193)

and in *A Question of Loyalties*, Etienne states that ‘the problem must be the existence of other people.’ (*QoL* 138) The preceding is by no means an exhaustive list.

The presence of the Other, however, is not the *only* limiting factor on the subjectivity of the individual in Massie’s novels (although of course this assertion depends upon an appropriate definition of the ‘Other’ which confines itself to human individuals) since history, heredity, mythological archetypes of behaviour, political and economic power are all liable to impinge on personal freedom. Colin, for instance, declares that all of life is to be found in *The Golden Bough*. (*TLP* 179) The above-quoted dismissal by Sartre of a major problem with his philosophy is therefore exposed as a rather glib defence. As Corrado Dusa states in Massie’s third novel, *The Death of Men*: ‘The limit of action, you can come up against that more abruptly than most people think.’ (*DoM* 41)

Massie utilises Sartre’s thought at least as extensively as he criticises it. Consequently, in *The Last Peacock*, Colin may be seen to conform closely with Sartre’s analysis of how the individual Being-for-itself reacts when internally confronted with Being-for-others. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre states: ‘The objectification of the Other, [. . .] is a defence on the part of my being which, precisely by conferring on the Other a being for-me, frees me from my being-for the Other.’ (*B&N* 268) In the above incident, Colin is attempting to deny his own static

¹Sartre, Jean-Paul *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (Barnes, Hazel (trans.)) (London: Routledge, 1998; 1943).

objectification within the gaze of the Other – part of the joke, of course, is that Sartre himself is the particular Other in question. To do this effectively, Colin must fix Sartre within Colin's own gaze; he feels the need to objectify Sartre in line with Sartre's own theories. Moreover, Colin is not discoursing with Sartre, he characterises himself as a 'lecturer'. As Sartre states:

[I]f we happen to appear "in public" to act in a play or to give a lecture, we never lose sight of the fact that we are looked at, and we execute the ensemble of acts that we have come to perform in the presence of the look; better yet we attempt to constitute a being and an ensemble of objects for this look. While we are speaking, attentive only to the ideas which we wish to develop, the Other's presence remains undifferentiated.
(*B&N* 281)

Colin, in presenting himself as delivering a lecture, is denying the individuality of the gaze of the Other in line, fairly specifically, with Sartre's own ideas. When that Other begins to assert his own understanding, that is to say asserts his own individual subjectivity – his differentiation – and attempts to disturb the 'ensemble of objects' which Colin has chosen to present to him, Colin's reaction is to attempt to confuse him; to deny the listener any power over what is flowing towards him. It is clear from this analysis that Colin wishes to present himself as the empowered, educated individual who has knowledge which surpasses the understanding of the Other. When this is threatened, Colin reacts to reassert it. Colin is playing with his role as lecturer just as, according to Sartre, '[t]he good speaker is the one who *plays* at speaking because he cannot *be* speaking.' (*B&N* 60) Of course Sartre's most celebrated example of this is the café waiter who plays at being a café waiter (*B&N* 59) and appears in the anecdote related by Colin above. Massie thus reduces Sartre to the status of objectified Other within his own theory of assertive subjectivity.

Ultimately, here, Sartre has become frozen in stasis within an old anecdote in a novel published in the year of Sartre's death.

An indication of the significance which Massie attaches to the anecdote quoted above is provided by its repetition in *These Enchanted Woods*:

'Existentialism and bull-terriers, that's my creed. Ever tell you about my encounter with Sartre, Gerry?'

'Yes Colin, more than once.'

'Very strange. There I was in the Dome, or was it the Deux Magots, explaining the whole biznai to this whisky-drinking frog dwarf in a regulation beret, and making rather a good shot at it, considering the number of Pernods I'd had. Had the impression he was getting a grasp of the argument when the waiter approached him and said "Telephone, Monsieur Sartre. . ."'

'Don't follow,' Arthur said.

'Never mind.'

'Existentialism and bull-terriers.'

(TEW 46-7)

Here Colin's self-conscious presentation of his power over knowledge is illustrated by his deliberately 'abstruse': 'Existentialism and bull-terriers'. In ignoring the response to his question as to whether his listener(s) had heard the anecdote before, Colin is echoing his own behaviour in the more comprehensive version of the anecdote recounted in the previous novel. He is demonstrating the same need to retain power over the 'ensemble of objects' which he intends to present.

In the second version of the anecdote, Sartre's objectification within the gaze of the Other has been underlined by his reduction to grotesque caricature: 'whisky-drinking frog dwarf' (As the narrator of a later novel observes: 'Grotesquerie banished sympathy'. (ONIW 61)) The reader's/listener's ability to see Sartre as a human individual is thus eroded by such a portrayal. That individuality is further

undermined by the stereotypical 'regulation beret'. Again, this may well be an exploitative play on Sartre's own statement:

The Other-as-object is certain as an appearance correlative with the recovery of my subjectivity, but it is never certain that the Other *is* that object. Similarly, the fundamental fact, my being-as-object for a subject, is accompanied by evidence of the same type as reflective evidence, but the case is not the same for the fact that at this precise moment and for a particular Other, I am detached as "*this*" on the ground of the world, rather than remaining drowned in the indistinction of the ground. It is indubitable that at present I exist as an object for some German or other. But do I exist as a Frenchman, as a Parisian in the indifferentiation of these collectivities or in my capacity as *this* Parisian around whom the Parisian population and the French collectivity are suddenly organised to serve for him as ground? On this point I shall never obtain anything but bits of probable knowledge although they can be infinitely probable.
(*B&N* 280)

Massie/Colin provides a fictional piece of 'probable knowledge' in response to Sartre's question: Sartre exists, undifferentiated, as a 'shabby old Frenchman' or a 'whisky drinking frog dwarf' and only attains the 'ground' of a French collectivity as '*this*' individual when his name is mentioned – as a waiter and a young girl seek to contact him by name; a name that Colin knows well from his education. Sartre's differentiated individuality beneath the gaze of the Other is only acknowledged because of his former actions as a philosopher and author: it is not an inevitable contingency of the present moment itself.

In this second version Colin's 'making a good shot at it' may be a further engagement with Sartre's ideas on the reaction to the Other. Should the Other possess a weapon, Sartre suggests that his own capacity for action then depends upon that Other:

This inclination to run away, which dominates me and carries me along and which I *am*—this I read in the Other's watchful look and in the other look—the gun pointed at me. The Other apprehends this inclination in me in so far as he has anticipated it and is already prepared for it. He apprehends it in me in so far as he surpasses it and disarms it. But I do not grasp the actual surpassing; I grasp

simply the death of my possibility. A subtle death: for my possibility of hiding still remains *my* possibility; inasmuch as I *am* it, it still lives; and the dark corner does not cease to signal me, to refer its potentiality to me. But if instrumentality is defined as the fact of “being able to be surpassed towards —,” then my very possibility becomes an instrumentality. My possibility of hiding in the corner becomes the fact that the Other can surpass it toward his possibility of pulling me out of concealment, of identifying me, of arresting me. *For the Other* my possibility is at once an obstacle and a means as all instruments are. It is an obstacle, for it will compel him to certain new acts (to advance toward me, to turn on his flashlight). It is a means, for once I am discovered in this cul-de-sac, I “am caught.” In other words every act performed against the Other can on principle be for the Other an instrument which will serve him against me.
(*B&N* 264)

Colin’s ‘making a good shot at it’ metonymically implies that he is pointing the ‘gun’ of Sartre’s own philosophy at Sartre and, in his compulsion to perform acts/make statements of deliberately increasing abstruseness, Colin is repeatedly facing Sartre with the death of Sartre’s own possibility.

Colin himself, of course, is both ‘torturer’ and ‘victim’, since it is his acute awareness of the gaze of the Other that leads him to behave in this manner. His resistance to his own objectification in the above example is consistent with his protean use of language throughout *The Last Peacock*, mixing quotation with Latin, Italian, French, German and idiomatic English words and phrases. In discussing his former brother-in-law Oswald, for instance, Colin interrupts Belinda’s statement that Oswald ‘has a certain. . .’: ‘*Je ne sais quoi*—I shouldn’t say so; me, I know exactly *quoi* the sod is worth. *E niente.*’ (*TLP* 82) Indeed, such is Colin’s resistance to being fixed within the gaze of the Other, that towards the end of the novel Colin is reported to have stated ‘Which of us wouldn’t cut his throat rather than be really understood?’ (*TLP* 179)

As in Sartre's hypothetical situation above, Colin is tortured by the death of his own possibility: 'Do you know what we are, we're dinosaurs.' (*TLP* 110) Again, the need to control the presentation of the self by Colin is shown by a question which is in reality a statement. There is no question mark to invite the response of the Other; no admission that any other 'possibility' may be alive when Colin's is dead. At the end of *The Last Peacock* Colin seeks finally to hide from the gaze of the Other but is simultaneously acknowledging that he has been 'caught' by that gaze. Massie represents this by having Colin immure himself alone within the house he has inherited. This interpretation of that action by Colin is suggested symbolically by the fate of the eponymous 'last peacock', which, in death, is stuffed and placed in a glass case by Colin. The symbol of the peacock, like Colin, is innately aware of the gaze of the Other as its display of plumage suggests, but at the same time turns the myriad of shapes in its tail feathers – which were traditionally thought to represent eyes – towards any onlooker. This echoes Colin's protean borrowing and utilisation of the words of others to defend himself against the gaze of the Other. In fact, he has, symbolically and literally, located himself forever as hiding from, and 'caught' by, the gaze of the Other.

This particular theme is picked up by Massie's novelistic recreation of the Emperor Tiberius immuring himself on Capri. The connection is made explicit by Colin's thoughts and words in response to an Other, Oswald:

'I've got to get on, but . . .'

'Then why don't you?'

Colin raised his head as he said this. Catching sight of it in the glass, pushed back on his shoulders, he saw it as a failed Roman Emperor's head. Tiberius gazing at the Fariglioni blackly splitting the deep blue ocean from the deep blue sky, and unable in the profound heat of a Capri afternoon to contemplate exertion,

even for the sort of orgy with which the ignorant peasantry and ignorant and malicious senators in thievish scandal-mongering Rome a world away idly credited him; . . .

'Why don't you,' he said, head still thrown back, 'simply bugger off?'
(*TLP* 97)

Both the heat in connection with an inability for praxis, and the Being-for-others signified by the reflection in the 'glass', provide clear echoes of the torment suffered by the characters in Sartre's *No Exit*.² The desire for isolation, the self-pity, the torpor and the fear of action is all consistent between Colin and Massie's version of the Emperor, as is the external perception of dissolution. Tiberius, in choosing to locate himself on Capri, is hiding from the view of the Other – that is, the other men of power in ancient Rome – but by choosing this course of action he is ceding power over his representation to them. The portrayal of Colin in the later novel *These Enchanted Woods* is, accordingly, largely from an external perspective. The parallel with Tiberius is suggested again in the final pages of that book, where an action by Colin is described as 'imperious'. (*TEW* 204)

Sartre's *No Exit*, with its theme of being constantly tortured by the gaze of the Other within a prison of one's own making, is a dramatisation of the issues presented philosophically in the Being-for-others section of *Being and Nothingness*. It is, accordingly, a play which Massie strongly implicates as a significant (Other) text within *The Last Peacock*. Alongside the references to heat and Sartre himself, Belinda's view of Colin's psychological state is described by the narrator: 'it is a narrowing alley he travels down and she can see no exit for him.' (*TLP* 107) In *The Last Peacock* Colin is progressively delimiting his own capacity for praxis, travelling

down a 'narrowing alley' to a Sartrean hell. Colin has been located, therefore, firmly and fairly specifically within Sartre's identification of Being-for-others. In this, *The Last Peacock* is the first explicit example of Massie's discourse with this concept and its relationship to the totality of Sartrean existentialism which is continued and developed in Massie's later novels.

If Being-for-others is bad faith, however, the solipsistic denial of others is, for Massie, a greater 'sin'. In Massie's novels, solipsism is one of the key dangers inherent in Sartrean existentialism. Sartre was aware of the problem, however. In her discussion of *No Exit* Dorothy McCall states:

It is with this added dimension of death—death after life and death in life—that Garcin's final discovery reaches its full significance. "Hell is—other people" is the central truth of *No Exit*. Within the play, it serves as a summing up of what has been dramatically revealed to us by the interaction of its three characters. It is important to remember, however, that within Sartre's philosophy that formula has a limited and specific meaning. Sartre has emphasised this point: "The only valid relationship is with other people. That can go even to hell. In order for it not to be hell, *praxis* must exist. The characters of *No Exit* are in a passive, changeless situation in which each of them is inevitably fixed in his essence by the others." Hell, then, is other people when they brand us with an image we cannot bear to accept as our own, and when we have no possibility to act so as to change that image.³

Sartre's thinking presents a paradox: he concedes the necessity of accepting the reality of other people and devotes a section of *Being and Nothingness* to the dangers posed by the 'Reef of Solipsism', but nevertheless proceeds abstractly to develop his argument towards the statement: 'does not our certainty of the Other's existence take on a purely hypothetical character?' (*B&N* 275)

² Sartre, Jean-Paul *In Camera and Other Plays* (Black, Kitty and Gilbert, Stuart (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990).

³ McCall, Dorothy *The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre* (London: Columbia University Press, 1971), p.124.

The hell presented in *No Exit*, is clearly the *realisation* by the individual that they have been caught in the cul-de-sac Sartre describes in the passage from *Being and Nothingness* quoted above. Colin's 'existential' hell is composed of other people either inside or outside his head: he has ceded his capacity for praxis to the bottle. Colin's drunkenness is explicitly connected to his tendency to deny the reality of the external world and other people within *The Last Peacock*:

Colin was in a condition of drunkenness she recognised as perfect, though it was not one she ever achieved herself. He was in control, would do nothing untoward, yet contrived to be wholly detached from ordinary rules of existence. Everything he did or said would be arbitrary, making sense only within the logic of his turning wheel.

'Always,' said Colin, 'returning from such evenings I find myself insistently asking the question "are such people in any sense real?" Can they be said "truly to exist". One doubts it. Yet, of course, there are the alarming alternatives: a) yes they do exist and what's more I appear to them as they to me; b) they don't exist any more than the voices that chatter on the third and fourth day of abstinence, only these ones are doing it now, all the time. You must admit it's worrying, ducky.'

(48)

It is only when abstracted from the 'ordinary rules of existence' that such considerations can be valid. Case 'a' is a statement of Being in the world, necessitating the merciless look of the Other; case 'b' on the other hand, is the refuge of solipsism, which is akin to madness here, as elsewhere in Massie's oeuvre. Sartre's own awareness of the paradoxical problem within his philosophy does not prevent Massie from exposing it.

It is clear that in many respects the figure of Colin in *The Last Peacock* may be considered as a lengthy meditation on Sartre's 'third ekstasis' of the For-itself: Being-for-others. In a Sartrean sense, Colin's 'bad faith' is further clarified by his blame of external factors for his situation. Similarly, the inertia which prevents him

from taking action to rectify his situation allows him to be condemned within the Sartrean philosophy. As Sartre stated:

What is truly unthinkable is passive existence: that is, existence which perpetuates itself without having the force either to produce itself or to preserve itself. From this point of view there is nothing more incomprehensible than the principle of inertia.
(*B&N* xxxii)

In *The Last Peacock* Colin is deeply unhappy yet does not seriously consider taking action to resolve the situation. Just prior to his apparent capitulation to the gaze of the Other, Colin declares 'Les jeux sont faits'(138) the title of Sartre's work where the dead surround us, which due to the idiomatic use of the phrase in French casinos, may be translated as the die is cast, or the gambling is over. The gambler, of course, is a 'positive' image in existentialism.

In the later *These Enchanted Woods*, however, Colin's ultimate resolution of his struggle between the For-itself and the For-others is given a slightly different aspect. His conversion/reversion to Episcopalianism suggests an acceptance of the gaze of the ultimate 'Other': God. As McCall has stated of Sartre's Daniel in *The Reprieve*: 'Through his religious conversion he finds the absolute spectator he has been seeking.'⁴ That Colin achieves a measure of happiness in his condition within *These Enchanted Woods* is a significant factor in Massie's engagement with Sartre. Colin has turned to religious faith as a means of dealing with – of filling – the abyss, and in a sense has embraced his objectification. This effectively eliminates the danger of a solipsistic negation of the world and allows him the possibility of human love, which is duly provided for him within the text. He has accepted the criticism of Sartre's

⁴ McCall *ibid.*, p. 113.

ideas which is expressed by Etienne in *A Question of Loyalties*: hell may be other people, but so is human life. (*QoL* 255) Like Etienne, but unlike Sartre's Daniel, it is not shame that Colin craves but human love and therefore, in Massie's oeuvre, life. Again, it should be noted that this is not so much a direct attack on Sartre as an elucidation of the problematic paradoxes which Sartre himself knew to exist within his philosophy.

These Enchanted Woods (1993)

Colin's sister Fiona, who had herself been fairly peripheral within *The Last Peacock* becomes the focus of the sequel, and as will be shown, the conduit by which Massie explores another aspect of Being-for-others. In the earlier novel, Colin is seen to pass ready judgement on Fiona despite his own unhappiness:

Colin despised Fiona because she worried from the wrong side of the fence. All her emotions, her moral attitudes, her enthusiasms, were ignorant. His own were different; he was after all tired of being Colin, even if he wasn't going to do anything about it; Fiona had never considered the question of being Fiona.
(*TLP* 141)

If Colin is a personification of many of the problems caused by Being-for-others, he perceives his sister Fiona as someone who merely *is*; someone who has not faced up to the dilemmas, choices and the look of Others of which he is so acutely conscious. During most of *The Last Peacock*, Fiona has not yet realised that: 'What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the *being* of "human reality"?' (*B&N* 25) In this sense, Fiona can be perceived – as she clearly is by Colin – as exemplifying a form of Being-in-itself. At the end of *The Last Peacock*, however, at Grace's funeral, Fiona had denied propriety by taking a lover – ostensibly to spite her mother. It is the awareness of death that prompts her assertion of self. It is this sense of

negation – of the nothingness which is opposed to the replete Being – which Sartre claims is the predicate which shakes the Being out of Being-in-itself: ‘Nothingness cannot be produced by Being-in-itself; the notion of Being as full positivity does not contain nothingness as one of its structures.’ (*B&N* 22) This shift in Fiona’s self-awareness is cemented when she goes away overnight with her former lover Tony, considering whether to abscond with him or to remain with her family. The narrator describes a scene which employs both the viscous fluid imagery connected with a sense of Being in *Nausea*⁵ and the above-noted sense of the negative to underline her confrontation with her Being and the necessity of choice:

He picked something up and threw it out to sea. Solomon launched himself in pursuit, swimming heavily towards an invisible and unattainable target. It was a long time before he gave up. Negatives hung damp and chill as the encircling mist. (*TEW* 137)

Fiona is thus symbolically shown to have become conscious of a problem with Sartre’s concept of necessary choice. For Sartre, freedom is a fact of the human condition, yet we must strive towards asserting that freedom, whilst acknowledging (as Sartre does) that absolute freedom is an impossible goal for a human individual in society. The ‘road’ to radical freedom is thus transfigured into an obedient dog swimming towards an unattainable object. This image presents Sartre’s goal of radical freedom as another form of blind faith; yet another replacement for an absent God. Fiona had begun to move heavily through the viscous world surrounding her Being towards an unattainable freedom. She is ultimately to reject that freedom because of others, but this is the course dictated by the sense of duty which is generated by familial love, rather than the course of action dictated by the oppressive gaze of the Other. Fiona’s sense of Being is so inextricably linked with

⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Nausea* (Baldrick, Robert (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965; 1938).

her role as mother (and to an extent, wife) that the sense of the negative which shakes her into a sense of that Being also demands that she negate the choice of the For-itself.

Clearly then, Massie's portrayal of Fiona can be closely analysed in terms of Sartre's philosophical ideas. Such an analysis may be considered as evidence of a deliberate engagement with Sartre on Massie's part because Massie again employs an implicit intertextual discourse with *No Exit* as a means of developing his argument. In Massie's novels we must choose either passively to inhabit the world as we find it or attempt to take what limited action we can within it. Either way, there is a price to be paid; the individual will have to bear responsibility. In a sense, Fiona sees the open cell door but does not walk through it. This is not cowardice, or a choice to remain in hell, however, as it is in Sartre's play. It is rather a choice to remain in partial stasis within a hell mitigated by love or walk out into a heaven of action and desire where love is corrupted by the very act of seeking its fulfilment.

Fiona can be perceived as an updated version of Sartre's Estelle, whose Being – in the Second Empire room – is dependent upon the gaze of the masculine Other. To the extent that Fiona may be identified so closely with Estelle, Fiona's deviations from Estelle's course of action become highly significant. It is Estelle's act of murdering her own child that shakes her out of her 'unshakeable' certainties and leads her to the hell of Being-for-others without praxis which she occupies throughout the play. Fiona has the capacity for praxis – she is alive – but her refusal

to act to assert her freedom exposes Estelle's terrible action in life as following one aspect of Sartrean doctrine, rather than denying it.

Fiona's situation is a very clear echo of the triangle of damned individuals in *No Exit*. Fiona's husband – whom she married, like Estelle,⁶ for position and privilege (*TEW* 24) – has retreated into solipsistic alcoholism. In this way Gavin is not capable of providing the gaze of the masculine Other that she craves. Fiona is faced with a reconsideration of her life which is prompted by the presence of Tony Lubbock, an old lover. Tony presents himself as an epitome of masculine vitality. The situation is further complicated by the presence in her house of her sister-in-law, Caro, who makes lesbian advances towards her. Fiona is Estelle to Caro's Inez and Tony's Garcin.

In the earlier *The Last Peacock*, Fiona, like Estelle, is acutely conscious of the need for society, conventions, and the need to present an 'appearance'. This is, it seems, not necessarily Being-for-others but rather, as Massie implies, a form of Being-in-itself where the Being is replete with unshakeable positives and certainties. The power-base which dictates the necessity of social formalities is not located in the undifferentiated gaze of the Other, but has in fact become internalised within the Being itself. At the end of *The Last Peacock* Fiona's sudden awareness of the nothingness of death is answered by a life affirming act (lovemaking), whereas Estelle's realisation is the contingency of the act of denying life (infanticide). In the presentation of Fiona in the condition of Being-for-others in *These Enchanted*

Woods, Massie deliberately complicates the absolutism of Sartre's presentation of hell as the gaze of the Other in the praxis-denying condition of death. Massie locates Fiona, in life, with a limited capacity to act, but simultaneously in Sartre's hell of an eternal triangular torment.

Massie shows that the sense of responsibility to the Other which Sartre felt to be so oppressive, need not be felt towards a more powerful Other as in the case of Estelle, but may be connected with the love between parent and child. The blonde attractiveness is held in common by both Fiona and Estelle, as is their awareness of it. Fiona stares at herself in the mirror (24) whilst being acutely aware of her vulnerability. Estelle needs the constant presence of a 'glass,' since she needs to be constantly monitoring the appearance – the ensemble of objects – which she presents. Fiona, on returning home to her family, thinks: 'They mustn't see that she had been crying. She had repaired her face, but no one must see.' (10) Estelle attempts to repair her make up: 'Luckily . . . no one's seen me.'⁷ In Sartre's play, 'no one' is Garcin.

Additional aspects of the 'act' – this presentation of an ensemble of objects to the Other – which Massie's character re-presents are Estelle's platitudes of forbearance: 'We've got to take what comes to us';⁸ 'Oh, well, the great thing is to keep as cheerful as we can, don't you agree?'⁹ Fiona echoes these sentiments and their manner: 'she had a text or motto which she kept close to her heart: "There are no

⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul *In Camera and Other Plays* *ibid.*, p. 193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Rights and plenty Duties”.’ (136) These are badges of respectability and responsibility, consciously worn, yet clearly at odds with the wearers. Early in Massie’s text, Fiona bursts into tears stating: ‘It’s not fair.’ (9)¹⁰ The identical line is used by Estelle.¹¹ Fiona’s furious reaction to her children on returning home from the first re-encounter with Tony (*TEW* 10) is significant for such a reading since Estelle is in Sartre’s hell for infanticide.

The echoes from Sartre’s play of the other characters and relationships are also striking. Caro is in ‘PR’. (69) She is, therefore, expert at making others see things as she wishes them to; making others see through her eyes, just like Inez. Caro constantly tells Fiona of the bad aspects of Tony’s character, but to no avail. She is tortured by Fiona’s refusal to reciprocate her love; by Fiona’s refusal to acknowledge her, and by her failure to make Fiona see Tony through her eyes:

‘There’s some deal that’s got stuck and he’s been putting pressure on Andrew. Andrew said “pressure”, that was his word, but it sounds like blackmail to me. There’s something fishy about his company, Andrew says. He thinks the Fraud Squad are interested. The Serious Fraud Squad, I think it’s called.’

Fiona gave no sign that she had heard, but continued to work.

‘Andrew says he’s a crook, whatever the Fraud Squad decides, and a bully.’

She started to cry. Fiona still paid no attention.

(140)

Tony’s self-representation irritates Caro.¹²(87) That particular type of self-representation echoes that of Sartre’s character Garcin: both men posture as being

⁸ Ibid., p. 188.

⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁰ At this point Fiona has found a parking ticket: ‘She never got parking tickets, never.’ (8) This implies that there has been a mistake on the part of those in authority, just as Estelle presumes her introduction to hell is merely a clerical error.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 204.

¹² The antagonism between Tony and Caro is reciprocal: Tony accuses Caro of being Fiona’s ‘bodyguard,’ and thinks ‘this girl was worth fighting.’ (69) This echoes Garcin’s words to Inez when she physically seeks to prevent him from making love to Estelle: ‘Take care. I’m no gentleman and I’d have no compunction about striking a woman.’ (*In Camera and Other Plays* *ibid.*, p.213) Tony is

replete with masculine will to power and vitality. During the two literary works, however, both these male characters fall victim to external forces beyond their control, at which point they seek to abscond from the life they have supposedly created for themselves. Tony seeks to escape from the collapse of his business by wandering the streets of London, Garcin tries to avoid participating in a war by crossing a national border.

Of course the point of Sartre's hell is that the three characters can never escape each other, so that the relationships which might operate successfully in isolation (between Estelle and Garcin, or Inez and Estelle) are constantly disrupted by the presence of a third 'witness'. Massie's trio are allowed to discourse privately in pairs but the third character is almost always mentioned in those dialogues (e.g. Caro and Fiona, (15, 36, 55, 122) Tony and Caro, (69, 87) Tony and Fiona. (95)) Since the pair involved in the discourse are aware of the third individual; that third individual is therefore 'present' in a sense. This is not the case at the initial meeting of Tony and Fiona before their relationship has been reinvigorated, but thereafter the condition persists until the meeting of Fiona and Tony in chapter Twelve, the conclusion of which is quoted above, with the dog abandoning its pursuit of the unreachable object (with the wisdom of 'Solomon'.) Fiona later tells Tony that at that point she had decided 'it wouldn't have worked. (194) At this point in the text, therefore, there is not the same need for shame and so the gaze of the third Other is neither significant nor necessary.

'amazed' to see Fiona lead the ladies out of the room after dinner since 'He didn't know such things still happened.' (76) Garcin urges Estelle: 'Why trouble about politeness, and decorum and the rest of

Just as, four years before *These Enchanted Woods*, Massie's Etienne had pointed out that life was also other people (in *A Question of Loyalties*), so Fiona's insistence on 'the otherness of other people' (*TEW* 122) is not just the 'hell' of their gaze, it is the duty to others which accompanies love. As Etienne's case had shown, it is hard to long for the obliteration of the past when that past has led to a loved and loving child. Fiona accordingly rejects the option of a life with Tony which would negate her past and her responsibilities, though she is aware that, like Estelle, she needed the 'look' of the masculine Other to validate her self.

I thought I was worthless. You've changed that. But I can't come with you. There are too many other people who will be hurt if I do. Gavin's put up with a lot from me, over the years, I see that, and I owe him something. It's a debt I don't want to have to pay, but must. Please understand. And if I was to abandon him and the children and duty [. . .] I would feel so guilty and that would corrupt everything we might have.
(193)

Here, then, the Other is not that which oppresses by means of concepts of 'decorum', but the singular Other of a loving relationship. The stifling effect of Being-for-others on the For-itself is not necessarily entirely negative as Sartre appears to suggest. Any praxis enacted to assert the For-itself in such cases involves the negation of that which is good in one's past and the present one shares with Others, as well as that which is bad.

Massie does not suggest that such choices are easily made, or that there is an absolute freedom from compulsion as Sartre implies may be the case, but he does

it?' (*Ibid.*, p.201.)

support Sartre's point of view to the extent that he portrays such moments as occasions where a choice must be made. The narrator states of Fiona:

She wept when she got home from that last meeting with Tony. It needn't be the last, she told herself, but she couldn't pretend that she hadn't rejected him. She accused herself of cowardice, and was only saved when she remembered the way he had accepted it, recognizing the force of what compelled her not to do what she most wanted to do.
(200)

In accepting – and even choosing – her existence within her established family unit, with all its 'tottering inherited structure', (*TEW* 18) Fiona is accepting the weight and influence of her past and resigning herself to life within the sphere of influence of a powerful heredity. The particular way of life she leads there is one dictated by previous generations, so her capacity for praxis is strictly limited. Like Etienne in the earlier novel, she is disempowered not by being dead, but by the knowledge that her life has been severely affected by the capacity for praxis previously exercised by the dead. Those dead forebears cannot now act to alter what they created.

In Fiona's choice in *These Enchanted Woods* there are clear echoes of the choice made by her brother Colin at the end of *The Last Peacock*. Indeed, when her decision has been made, she explicitly notes the presence of Colin's stuffed peacock and recalls the day of Grace's death when she became aware of the absence which is death; the awareness that precipitated her actions in *These Enchanted Woods*. (198-9) Her reflections at this point offer an expansion on the attitude towards others which is investigated throughout the novel:

That afternoon when Tony came on her in the North British Hotel, and she had fled, in a flood of tears, denying him, she had been an entirely hollow person. If she had been the kind of girl who had breakdowns, if she didn't despise that sort of thing . . . but that was nonsense. You didn't avoid breakdowns by despising them. It was Tony who saved her. By valuing her, he taught her to value herself.

And now she had turned him away. It was like Sikes and Charlie, beyond control.
She saw herself dragged by necessity.
(199-200)

Here, finally, the reader is given a possible explanation of Colin's gnomic 'Existentialism and bull-terriers' with which this section began: life is the need to make choices and assert control when possible, but also, through the allusion to Sikes the bull-terrier, the need to understand and accept that fulfilment lies in love of the Other which cannot be controlled entirely. For Fiona, as for Colin, and Etienne in *A Question of Loyalties*, other people may offer the hell of their gaze, but they also offer the only possibility for happiness and a meaningful life.

***One Night in Winter* (1984)**

As has been noted, Massie's fourth novel *One Night in Winter* may be considered as the middle text of a loose trilogy of modern Scotland along with *The Last Peacock* and *These Enchanted Woods*. In *One Night in Winter* the discussion of Sartrean existentialism is still more explicit than in either the earlier or later texts of the 'trilogy'. This is due, in part, to the nature of the novel which is concerned not so much with the existential void after the death of God, as with an essence-defining act (a murder) and the guilt – which is to say the culpable extent of free will – of the actors in that drama. The victim of the murder is Fraser but he is, the book implies, partly responsible for his own death since he has remorselessly subjected those around him to his will. The perpetrator is his abused wife Lorna, whose friend Candy implicates herself by disposing of the body and attempting to cover up the crime. The significance of such a scenario for Massie is clear:

Because murder happens at that point when the demands of the individual Will, the Ego, clash with the duties ordained by society, a study of murders and murderers may help to illuminate our nature in both its social and its secret aspects.¹³

Sartre is introduced to the text by one of Fraser's sidekicks Jimmy Cullas during a discussion with the narrator figure Dallas Graham. Jimmy (an interpretation of Sartre's 'pervert figure' Daniel) states of his university career:

'Mind you, it was the philosophers I didn't have to study who made most sense. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre. I got a lot out of Sartre. I think I'm really an Existentialist.'

'Aren't we all?' Dallas said. 'It's all in Dostoevsky of course. But his prose style was shocking.'

'What you feel, is.' Jimmy said. 'I like that. You've read Camus, I suppose. I really go for Camus.'

'Grand stuff,' Dallas said. 'You're a very good cook too.'

(59)

Sartre himself knew of Dostoevsky's writings. In his published lecture *Existentialism and Humanism* Sartre stated: 'Dostoievsky [sic] once wrote "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted"; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point.'¹⁴ As will become apparent in further chapters, it may be that in Massie's novels reports of God's death have been exaggerated, or at least that His death does not entirely limit His power as exercised through the enduring effect of religious faith on a culture. Nevertheless, it is clear that here, again, what appears to be a dismissal of Sartre is in fact an exploitation of Sartre's own writings. In Sartre's *Crime Passionnel* the key protagonist has a code name – 'Raskolnikoff': 'a chap in a book' ('Raskolnikov' in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*) who 'killed someone'¹⁵ Dallas is responding to Jimmy's enthusiastic (though as it turns out, ill-informed) acclamation of Sartrean existentialism by pointing out its lack of

¹³ Massie, Allan *Ill Met by Gaslight: Five Edinburgh Murders* (London: Futura Publications, 1987), p.2.

¹⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Existentialism and Humanism* (Maigret, Philip (trans.)) (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1989; 1946), p. 33.

originality, and therefore the influence of 'the past' on Sartrean existentialism – an influence which that philosophy largely sought to deny.

Here, however, Dallas is also engaged in an acknowledgement of the pleasure of the senses, since the taste of the food Dallas is eating at the time of the above quotation is being appreciated. This heightened sensory awareness is a continuation of Dallas's condition just prior to the above excerpt:

Dallas woke, in his clothes, sun slanting through a tear in the curtain. Body shifted on sofa across room, got to feet; door closed, steps moved down corridor into silence. Dallas lay, not thinking, not remembering, clouds shrouding inquest on time past. Head stabbed. Eased self on belly, out of sunshaft. Dozed.
Pressure on shoulder. Hand, fingers pressing.
'Brought you a cup of coffee.'
Dallas groaned. Hand didn't leave shoulder. Squeezed.
With a shudder Dallas rolled over, to remove it, groaned, heaved half-upright.
Jimmy was sitting on bedside.
(55)

The lack of awareness of the past leads him to be conscious only of the sense impressions of the 'self'. Later, Candy – another self-declared existentialist – states 'I live now. There's nothing to be gained by harking back.' This prompts Dallas to reflect:

She might be right. A coal hissed in the grate. Car horns sounded from the street. The outer door slammed and I could hear steps going up the stair. That was what living in the present meant, a random accumulation of sense-impressions. Only that; and all around them, darkness without echo.
(153)

Clearly these two moments, separated by twenty years within the chronology of *One Night in Winter*, are very similar. Both present an intense focus on the sensory impressions and the consequent recession of the 'Other' into silence and, in the second example, darkness. In the first the effect is achieved through a lack of pronouns and articles – the normal narrative voice only beginning to reassert itself

¹⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, p.18.

when Dallas wakes up enough to identify Jimmy. In the second the sensations are described with that narrative voice and their import reflected upon. The 'Only that', of the second example underlines the implication of the first, that such a solipsistic existence is a state beneath full consciousness. Dallas's wife Ann's reductive insistence on the value of the present and her own sensations is similarly connected with her self-absorbed disregard for others in the novel: 'I'm not interested in the complications or in the past. None of that concerns me. It's the here and now I deal in.' (23) "I want, I don't want." She reduces life to those terms.' (155)

The explicit engagement with Sartre within the narrative makes clear that the pursuit of such evanescent pleasure is a contingency of Sartre's existential thought – a point which Massie reiterates in *Shadows of Empire*. Fraser, the wilful charismatic figure whose murder haunts Dallas and partly precipitates the narrative, is discussed by Jimmy:

'Some folks might say Fraser treats life like a game too. All that fooling around and drinking and whoring and shouting his mouth off and the rest of it. It looks like play, but it's no' really. Underneath, you see, he's in dead earnest. And maybe cold despair. I can never believe he hopes for anything more than the fun he's having that minute. Maybe I sound confused.'

'Maybe you've been reading too much Monsieur Sartre, a joker of course, but not the jokiest of jokers.'

'Maybe.'

'Laugh-a-week Sartre they call him, not laugh a *deuxieme* Pernod Jean-Paul.'

A half-drunk glass, lined by foam turned to scum, interrupted the spell that the Spectre of the Left Bank had cast upon them.

(66)

Here, then, it is suggested that from Jimmy's 'Existential' point of view, Fraser's hedonism is a reaction to his despair: his consciousness of the abyss. Sartre explicitly denies the charge made by 'Communists' that existentialism is 'an

invitation for people to dwell in quietism of despair¹⁶ and indeed argues that existentialism urges action on the individual. The implication is that the individual must act in order to stave off that despair as was noted in my Introduction. Fraser's behaviour and death therefore illustrate a problem with Sartre's ideas, and indeed existentialism in general. Despite Sartre's insistence on the responsibility for the Other which each act of choice confers upon the subject,¹⁷ his concept of the courses of action which are contingencies of the assertion of the self within a society is far removed from that of the most basic unspoken 'social contracts' which allow any society to exist.

The radical act which defines the essence of the existential hero – whether it be Mersault in Camus' *L'Étranger*,¹⁸ or Mathieu in Sartre's *Iron in the Soul* – consists of the death, the ultimate objectification, of the Other. Fraser's vitality in *One Night in Winter* is entirely dependent upon his ability to exercise his subjectivity at the expense of others. Massie, of course, does not explicitly state that Fraser is an existential hero, or that he is acting in bad faith, but the invocation of Sartre does suggest that Fraser's denial of the equivalent reality of others' lives to his own exposes the problem of solipsism at the heart of Sartrean existentialism. Fraser's actions and the violent reaction they precipitate, exemplify the strain which the radical act places upon ordinary social relationships.

¹⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Existentialism and Humanism* *ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁸ Camus, Albert *The Stranger* (Ward, M. (trans.)) (New York: Vintage International, 1989; 1942).

French post-war existentialism can be viewed as both an acknowledgement of, and an attempt to liberate the individual from, the weight of a traumatic period in history. Sartre advocates that the individual should strive to eliminate the power of external factors which limit their subjectivity. One of these aspects is of course the power of the past to influence the present. In *One Night in Winter* Massie implies that existentialism itself, ironically, may serve to underline that power which it seeks to deny; that French existentialism, and particularly that of Sartre, is popularised by a society which is seeking to escape from its own past. For Massie, the denial of the influence of the past which was popularised within Sartre's philosophy was in fact determined by that past, thereby confirming the power of history to shape the present. The older version of Candy who appears in the novel, whose life has been utterly altered as a result of her own actions in the past, has embraced the ideas of existentialism and states that she is happy to keep her past 'at a distance.' She declares: 'Memoirs don't interest me.' Dallas replies: 'it's perhaps because you have a distinct past.' (*ONIW* 153) This implies both the ability to separate herself from that past, and the necessity of doing so because of a significant event or events which occurred in that past.

Candy's story demonstrates to the reader that keeping the past at a distance may not necessarily be equivalent to diminishing its effects. In Massie's novels this is true for both the power of history – 'the inexorable force history exerts on the living' (112) – and for the earlier actions of the individual. Candy's action after the murder is therefore described as 'unquenchable' and she is 'faced with having to live out its consequences'. (24) Similarly, when Jimmy (the 'Existentialist') seeks to evade the

consequences of his previous actions by running to London, he says he feels 'free'. Dallas replies: 'But you're not out of it, are you? You're not free, not that I can see.' (146) Because of his purely academic doctrinal learning of existentialism Jimmy misconstrues the act necessary to assert his freedom as the simple changing of his geographical location.

Jimmy's declaration that he is an 'Existentialist' is made prior to his committing any form of act which asserts his radical subjectivity, and since within the theory he espouses the individual must define himself by his actions, his understanding of existentialism is called into question. Jimmy claimed to 'really go for Camus' yet Camus himself stated:

Living with one's passions also means living with one's sufferings—which form a counter-weight, a corrective, a means of balancing and paying for them. When a man has learned—and not on paper—to remain alone in the intimacy of his suffering, to overcome his desire to run away, the illusion that other people can 'share', then he has little left to learn.¹⁹

Jimmy's flight to London to evade the consequences of his homosexuality is thus further thrown into relief. In fact, as the above quotations make clear, Jimmy's Existentialism is really an alternative faith, rather than a philosophy arrived at by experience as Sartre urges. He is held in thrall by a Holy Ghost: the 'Spectre of the Left Bank' that is Jean-Paul Sartre.

In *One Night in Winter* Dallas is faced with several different personified aspects of existentialism. He confronts his own existential struggle to come to terms with the past and its effects on his capability for action in the resulting present. He

encounters Fraser who is a latter-day solipsistic *ubermensch* whose portrayal has as much to do with Nietzsche as with Sartre. The conversations Dallas has with Jimmy expose Jimmy's understanding of existentialism as purely academic. Candy's existentialism, on the other hand, is more meaningful, since it is gained by experience; by her involvement with a radical act.

In the initial time period of the novel, preceding the murder, Candy is described as holding a position which places her in direct opposition to the ideas of Sartre:

She was, rather naively, an essentialist. People had natures for her. She even divided them simply into good and bad. Lorna was, as she had said to Dallas, a good person, Fraser a bad one. She never wavered from that view. What you did, couldn't by itself determine for Candy what you were. She went arrow-straight to a person's essence. Nature was more than the sum of one's actions, even though usually expressed through them.

(132)

Sartre felt that 'humanity' is predicated on the ability to define one's own essence by one's actions: for the human individual, necessarily free to act between the twin determinants of birth and death, existence precedes essence.²⁰ Candy, as the above quotation makes clear, initially believes that essence precedes existence. It is following her experience of prison – which 'brings an end to free and choosing life' (22) – an experience caused by her performance of an act which changes her perception of her 'essence', and Lorna's, that Candy asserts a mode of thought which, she states, 'I have to call "existential".'

¹⁹ Camus, Albert *Carnets 1942-1951* (Thody, Philip (trans.)) (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1966), p. 26.

²⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Existentialism and Humanism* *ibid.*, p. 28. Massie specifically draws attention to this statement in the later *Shadows of Empire* (1997): 'Existence, Sartre says, precedes essence . . . ' (SoE 323).

Max Charlesworth noted:

[F]or all the Existentialists it is the individual human being who is of central importance and it is the 'lived experience' of the individual that is the touchstone of knowledge. This means the rejection of all 'systematic' thought—of the abstract and the necessary and the universal—for the sake of the particular and singular and unique experience of the individual.²¹

Candy has changed her way of thinking because: 'You can only know by experience. Only what happens can really teach.' (53) Candy is therefore a far more powerful voice of existentialism in the novel than Jimmy since her personal philosophy is generated by experience and is not merely the fashionable avowal of a set of pre-existing doctrines.

Massie implicitly exposes the abstract nature of Sartre's existentialism and the irony that a mode of thought based upon 'lived experience' can propose an ideological goal – radical freedom – which is utterly impossible to reach within the realm of that 'lived experience'. He highlights the gap between Sartre's ambition in the abstract and its possibility in the 'outside' world. Candy has gained her ideas by lived experience (in accordance, as Charlesworth noted, with most existential thinkers, including Sartre) but as an existentialist she diverges from Sartre on a key point of doctrine: the idea that the free will of the individual human being is a necessary predicate for that individuality and humanity. Sartre declared that in his existential philosophy he sought 'to remind people of freedom as the very definition of man.'²² Candy states: 'The mistake lies in thinking there's a clear cleavage between free will and—what's the opposite? Determinism, predestination, fate? It's not like that.'

²¹ Charlesworth, Max *The Existentialists and Jean-Paul Sartre* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1975), p. 9.

²² As quoted in Charlesworth, Max *ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

(212) This conclusion is supported by her experience, since – as Dallas states early in the novel – her sinful ‘act of will’ was based on her ‘limited choice’. (24)

Massie’s Intertextual Engagement with Sartre

The references to Sartre in *The Last Peacock* and *These Enchanted Woods* elucidate the philosophical problems facing the characters in those texts, such as the possible extent of freedom in a world where God’s Grace is absent, the responsibility of the ‘free’ individual to others, and indeed the importance of the Other to the individual. In these texts Massie points the reader to his repeated questioning of Sartre’s philosophical statements and conclusions by having Sartre and his philosophy mentioned in the texts and setting up scenarios which reflect the areas of Sartre’s philosophical interest. In *One Night in Winter* the references to Sartre are still more explicit in that the characters discuss and debate Sartre himself and the ideas of French existentialism. Again Massie uses these discussions to question not only the ideas of Sartre and existentialism as a whole, but also the motivations of individuals who seek out existential philosophy as a means of understanding their lives.

Such overt discussions of Sartre and his ideas belie the full extent of the engagement with Sartre’s thought. That is implied by Massie’s use of key phrases and situations which echo Sartre’s creative writings – in the manner of the oblique references to Sartre’s *No Exit* in both *The Last Peacock* and *These Enchanted Woods* – rather than in overt acknowledgements of Sartre or the titles of his works. In addition to the overt philosophical discussions, *One Night in Winter* conducts an intertextual discourse with Sartre’s play *Crime Passionnel* (also known as *Les Mains Sales*: ‘The

Dirty Hands’); a play which Massie had also exploited in the preceding novel *The Death of Men*. By implicitly echoing Sartre’s literary works Massie portrays and describes different courses of action or indeed different individual reactions to situations which imply and develop an extensive discussion of those presented by Sartre.

For Massie the novel and its characterisations should reflect some aspect of reality and real, observed behaviours. For Sartre, despite his assertion of the importance of experience, fictional characters need not behave in line with observed experience, but should reflect an aspect of his own philosophical views on ‘right conduct’. Sartre utilised both fiction and drama to clarify and ‘reveal’ his philosophical views. It is in works of these genres that the reader/audience can be made aware of the contingencies implied by Sartre’s philosophical ideas.

Lived experience (‘le vécu’, as Sartre calls it) is the only valid criterion of truth and I must always ask: ‘What does this mean to me, this individual human existent’. [. . .]

It is because of this that the Existentialists see the right method of philosophizing as descriptive, or revelatory. The philosopher is not so much concerned to explain or to systematize as to evoke, to show, to reveal.²³

Massie takes issue with the covert systematisation which may be observed in Sartre’s novels and plays.

Clearly, if a modern writer wishes to engage with Sartre’s ideas then that engagement is most appropriately presented within the field of fiction and drama. These genres allow the complexities, ambiguities and paradoxes of Sartre’s ideas to be ‘re-presented’ and interrogated on the ground which Sartre himself most

frequently utilised. The 'ensemble of objects' presented by Sartre-the-novelist are effectively disturbed by such an engagement. To avoid subverting its own existential subject (and indeed, some would argue, to avoid alienating a wider readership) such an interrogation must go far beyond the kind of discursive 'novel of ideas' approach which the overt discussion of Sartre's ideas by characters within *One Night in Winter* might seem to indicate.²⁴

Massie's own attitude to fiction as a genre reflects the existential view noted by Charlesworth (above) in the sense that fiction can describe and reveal elements of 'reality'. Massie has stated that the important question which the reader should ask about a work of fiction is: 'Does it expand my own experience and understanding of life?'²⁵ In Massie's view it seems the reader should reflect upon their own experience of the novel, the 'lived experiences' of the characters within it, and the relation of those experiences to the reader's own, in effect asking: 'Which truth of reality has been evoked, shown, and revealed to me – this individual human existent?' This implies a responsibility on the part of any author of fiction – not least Massie himself – to provide material within the novel for such reflection, but that material – behaviours, characterisations, emotions – should not be philosophically speculative, as is the case with Sartre's fictions and dramas.

Massie 'reveals' individuals caught between the potentially destructive assertion of subjectivity and the objectifying deterministic pressures of other subjectivities,

²³ Charlesworth, Max *ibid.*, p. 9.

history, society and economics. For the portrayal of versions of reality such as these, the strategy of engaging Sartre within works of fiction has been particularly effective. Examining Sartre's legacy within the context of a milieu of characters, Massie is able to expose the problems of isolation, solipsism and destruction which he suggests may arise when Sartre's ideals are enacted by the individual in an attempt to assert his or her subjectivity. Massie consistently implies that because of Sartre's philosophical agenda, the French writer portrays similar situations and actions with an air of abstract 'heroism' which tends to romanticise such behaviour.

In the editorial from the 'The Nevis Quarterly' Massie stated: 'We think of ourselves as free agents; but it may be more truly said that free will is another illusion which we aspire to make a reality. In fact we are the products of heredity, environment and experience.'²⁶ His views – contrary to those of Sartre – on the importance of the past of an individual or a society to the limited freedom (available in the present) to individuals within that society persist throughout his oeuvre. He stated that a contempt for history, for instance, is a particularly dangerous foolishness in a country such as Scotland, 'a country in so many ways at odds with its history.'²⁷ Considering these comments within the present context it is clear that, in 1978, the year in which his first novel was published, Massie fundamentally disagreed with Sartre's idea that existence precedes essence, and with the concomitant implication that the individual can assert radical freedom. Crucially,

²⁴ As Massie indicated during our interview (see Appendix 1, p. 305) he himself has disclaimed the 'novel of ideas' yet has been occasionally thought to produce such novels.

²⁵ 'The templars of doom' (*The Scotsman* 10/5/97).

²⁶ *The Nevis Quarterly* (No. 1) October 1978, p. 5.

²⁷ *The Nevis Quarterly* *ibid.*, p. 1.

the use of intertextual discourses within the novels allows Massie to generate a metaphor which attacks this fundamental Sartrean idea in a highly effective manner.

In *What is Literature?* Sartre declares that writing is an expression of individual freedom. Massie's exploitation of the technique of intertextual discourse to engage with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre in itself operates as an attack on Sartre's idea that the existence of the individual precedes their essence. Pre-existing texts affect the absolute originality and freedom of the modern author, just as pre-existing entities affect the absolute ability of the individual to control the creation of their own essence. In his novels of modern Scotland, as with his other novels, Massie locates his characters within a fictional space which is haunted by the ghosts of past writers; constantly invaded by previous fictional creations. In addition to the references to Sartre, *The Last Peacock* is strewn with references to Peter Pan and the Never Land. (TLP 62, 129, 142) *One Night in Winter* exploits Scott's *Redgauntlet* extensively and also includes explicit references to Dante (ONIW 103) and others. This 'context' (in the full sense of the word) established by the creative actions of generations of authors is shown to intrude on the creativity of Allan Massie the modern writer in a way which echoes the intrusion of history and the actions of previously existing individuals on the lives of the characters themselves within those novels. This in turn metaphorically implies the significant influence of history (he is, after all a Scottish writer) and other external factors on the *extent* of praxis available to individuals in the 'real' world.

Change and Decay in All Around I See (1978)

The first novel, *Change and Decay in All Around I See* contains no obvious mention or intertextual engagement with Sartre. It is Massie's second novel *The Last Peacock* which contains the first explicit reference to Sartre, confronts central issues in Sartre's philosophical ideas, and implies an intertextual engagement with Sartre's *No Exit*. Nevertheless, in retrospect it is clear that the first novel portrays situations in a manner which reflects Massie's interest in existentialism.

The author-figure who appears in the text (and seems to be writing the story itself) is described as having a cast in his eye (*C&D* 21) as Jean-Paul Sartre did. Atwater, the central character, is concerned with the concept of the Other, (*C&D* 35) and his release from prison at the start of the book causes him to question the burden and extent of free will:

The feeling returned to Atwater that he was in the grip of events moving in a rhythm he couldn't influence. He thought: I have committed myself to action and am foolish enough to have embarked. I am at the mercy of the waves. He fully realised the daring isolation of men who are not in prison.

(36)

In the light of the discussion of Candy's existentialism following her own internment in the later *One Night in Winter*, the above reference to prison can be read as a serious attempt to make an existential point. In 1978, on the publication of Massie's first novel, however, the reviews show that it was perceived, with some justification, as deriving from Pennyfeather's experiences in Waugh's *Decline and Fall* (1928).

Compare the above with Paul Pennyfeather's feelings about prison:

The next four weeks of solitary confinement were among the happiest of Paul's life. [. . .] It was so exhilarating, he found, never to have to make any decision on any subject, to be wholly relieved from the smallest consideration of time,

meals, or clothes, to have no anxiety ever about what kind of impression he was making; in fact, to be free.²⁸

However, in this short excerpt from Waugh's novel (which predates any published work by Sartre) the reader who is familiar with Sartre's writings can perceive ideas such as the oppressive gaze of the Other and the necessity of constant choice by the individual 'condemned to be free'. (B&N 553) In fact, *Decline and Fall* deals with many issues which could be considered as 'existential' and so the influence of Waugh which was so prevalently noted by early critics of Massie's work, need not necessarily be thought of as a counter argument to the assertion of Massie's engagement with Sartrean existentialism which is currently under discussion.²⁹ This serves as a further illustration that Sartre's ideas themselves were not an entirely original way of looking at the world occasioned by a 'unique' present which bore no relation to any previous historical circumstance.

In isolation from Massie's later works, however, the above points do not allow the reader to draw the conclusion that Massie was engaging with Sartre's works in his first novel. The essentialism implied by the portrayal of the 'Boy and the girl' observed by Beazley in Brighton (C&D 97) may echo the young lovers observed by Roquentin in the restaurant in *Nausea*³⁰ (in both cases the sight of the unknown

²⁸ Waugh, Evelyn *Decline and Fall* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965; 1928), p. 170.

²⁹ The central character of *Change and Decay*, Anthony Atwater, could be perceived to derive from Waugh's Arthur Atwater in *Work Suspended*. (Waugh, Evelyn *Work Suspended and Other Stories* (London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1982; 1943).) One could equally claim, however, that Massie's Atwater is the antithesis of Stevenson's Attwater: the psychological grotesque of *The Ebb-Tide*. (Stevenson, Robert Louis *Tales of the South Seas: Island Landfalls, The Ebb-Tide, The Wrecker* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1996).) Since Massie has written that *The Ebb-Tide* is 'a rumination on those peculiarly Scottish concerns, free will and predestination' (*The Scotsman* 17/2/96) this conclusion would seem to be equally appropriate and equally in tune with the philosophical underpinning of Massie's first novel.

³⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul *ibid.*, p. 155.

young lovers intensifies the feelings of alienation of the viewer) but this too is inconclusive, since the scene also contains elements of the crucifixion and strong echoes of Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*³¹ (such as the upper case 'B' of 'the Boy', the location of the scene, and the Boy's subsequent brutality to the girl.) Other existential aspects of *Change and Decay in All Around I See* appear to point the reader more towards the writings of Nietzsche.³² In fact, in Allan Massie's first published novel the evidence of a sophisticated and sustained intertextual engagement with Sartre is not in itself conclusive. All that may be said is that the author demonstrates an interest in many of the concerns that find an expression in his engagement with Sartre in the next three novels: *The Last Peacock*, *The Death of Men*, and *One Night in Winter*.

***One Night in Winter* (1984)**

One Night in Winter contains explicit discussions of Sartrean existentialism, but the novel also conducts an intertextual discourse with Sartre's play *Crime Passionnel*. At a basic level, *Crime Passionnel* and *One Night in Winter* are structurally connected by a pivotal crime of murder. In the novel the Crown's case against Lorna, Fraser's wife, is apparently that she murdered her husband due to sexual jealousy. Candy's role in the affair is publicly perceived as having been motivated by her lesbian love for Lorna as the shouted accusations outside the courthouse make clear. (21) The case is presented and perceived as a crime of passion. As the events presented within Massie's text show, however, the motivation for the crime is more complex

³¹ Greene, Graham *Brighton Rock* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970; 1938), p. 52.

and ambiguous than this. This refusal by Massie to provide resolution of the motive within the text itself echoes Sartre's refusal to clarify Hugo's motivation in murdering Hoederer within *Crime Passionnel*.

In *Crime Passionnel*, the revelation of the past is prompted by a face to face meeting between an observer who had been present during both periods (Olga) and the perpetrator of the murder (Hugo), who has just emerged from prison. The meeting takes place in Olga's home. In *One Night in Winter* Candy has served her prison sentence for her part in the murder of Fraser and encounters Dallas in his home.³³ In both cases these relationships provide the ostensible motivation for the literary re-enactment of events. Accordingly, the chronological structure of *One Night in Winter* is very similar to that employed by Sartre in *Crime Passionnel*.

Both works begin in the 'present' with a central character who narrates events which took place in the 'past'. In the case of Sartre's play, such narration is notional since the 'narrator' acts as a character within the earlier dramatic events with nothing to delineate him – in terms of his authority – from other characters in the milieu. This is obviously partly dictated by the dramatic form itself. Massie, however, follows this device in his novel to produce an idiosyncratic narratorial situation in which the older narrator presents his younger self in the third person. For Massie's narrator-character Dallas, this is an attempt to treat himself as Other.

³² Horridge, for instance, tends to spout Nietzschean invective such as: 'Existential man knows that the barriers he erects are not prescribed by any morality other than that he has made for himself.' (*C&D* 125).

³³ The relationship between the two pairs of characters has further similarities: Olga had had a crush on Hugo, (*Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, sc. 1, p. 14) Dallas had asked Candy to marry him at one stage. (153)

In *One Night in Winter*, Candy states of the period in their earlier lives when they had encountered one another and had become implicated in a radical act: 'I try to think of it as another life, but you never really shake off foolishness. That's what I tell my clients, what they've got to face up to.' (54) The narratorial standpoint implies that, like Candy, Dallas is trying to think of the period as 'another life' but the fact that he feels the need to recall it at length suggests that he, too, cannot 'shake it off' and must 'face up to it'. Massie clearly implies that history will necessarily resist any individual's attempt to free him or herself from the past by an act which asserts his or her individuality.

Dallas states that he has been motivated to narrate the story, in part, because: 'To fictionalize the past is an act of liberation.' (18) It is clear, however, that such an act becomes necessary because of a desperate awareness of the weight and power of such a past. In this particular case Sartre himself 'haunts' the novel as the 'Spectre of the Left Bank', the characters are not 'free' to choose to engage with his ideas. Similarly, Dallas appears to be compelled repeatedly to face that past rather than demonstrating the ability to free himself from it. The 'act of liberation' then, is denied at both a textual and personal level. Neither Candy nor Dallas can sufficiently answer Hoederer's question to Hugo: 'Why do you cart your past around if you want to bury it?'³⁴

³⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, sc. 2, p. 50.

Sartre's play appears to be an attempt to reconcile his political leanings with his philosophy. *Crime Passionnel* demonstrates where the role of the individual will intersect with the determinism of the orders of the Communist Party. Hugo believes that it was not the will of the (Communist) Proletarian Party alone which caused him to commit his essence-defining act, but the orders of 'the Party' certainly contributed to the chain of contingencies which led to the murder of Hoederer.

HUGO. (*Imitating* OLGA.) 'I'll carry out their orders.' You've some surprises coming to you. With the best will in the world, what you do is never what the Party orders. 'Go to Hoederer and fire three shots into his stomach.' That's clear enough, isn't it? I went to Hoederer, and I fired three shots into his stomach. But it was all quite different. Orders—there were no orders. Up to a point, it's easy, then there are no more orders. The orders were left behind. I had to go on alone, I killed alone and . . . and I don't even know why any more.³⁵

This speech by Hugo expresses a resistance to the idea that the orders of 'the Party' are utterly deterministic: it is an assertion of the importance of free will in situations where one is supposedly following orders; such determinism is only valid 'up to a point'. For Sartre, it seems, the individual is ultimately responsible for the decision to perpetrate any action – even one motivated by external 'determinants'.

This idea is interrogated in *One Night in Winter*. Candy states:

'You can ignore what happened—up to a point . . . that was always a favourite expression of yours, wasn't it?—but you can't pretend it didn't happen. Or that it wasn't your own doing. We do make our lives.'
(54)

Whilst acknowledging the significance of free will, Candy's statement reverses the argument suggested by Sartre's Hugo (above) in that here in Massie's work, free will may only be asserted 'up to a point' in the face of external (to the present moment of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, sc. 1, pp. 11-12.

the individual) determinants. In this case it is the determinism brought about by one's previous actions, rather than external agency. Candy states:

'You can easily go along with the course of events. Without volition. Just as if I dropped a piece of bread in this river, it would be carried downstream. And somewhere down there there's a weir. And if you've just gone with the stream then you may get swept over. If you do nothing to save yourself there comes a moment where you're quite powerless. At that moment you really have no choice. But earlier you could have got out, couldn't you?'

[...]

'Of course,' she said, 'you can suffer a nervous collapse of the will. That doesn't mean you don't have a will. And fatalism can take another form, a sort of weak optimism. [...] The point is that we got through yesterday, so it's easy to fool ourselves about today. That's why people put up with things. Because they survived yesterday. It can result in a passive heroism. It was that spirit that led the Jews into the Death Camps. Heroic in a way, but acquiescent and weakly optimistic. It's a small step from there to abandoning your right to choose, and then to denying that a choice even exists. So you start seeing yourself as a victim. The thread that attaches you to the future snaps. You have no responsibility for what's going to happen. And that was Lorna's position, but she could have got out, she could have got out.'

(212-3)

In Massie's novels, individuals' past choices (the moments of their personal history where they exercised their *limited* freedom, frequently without knowledge of the possible future consequences) have a direct effect on the extent of free will which individuals may exploit in any given present. Where Sartre advocates the individual's need to assert their free will, Massie shows how the very process of existentially defining oneself by one's actions limits the capacity of the individual for future 'free' choices. There is, Massie suggests, only a limited extent of free will available to the individual in any given circumstance yet the individual is accountable for his or her actions – or indeed, failure to act. There is therefore no clear division between freedom and determinism.

Sartre stresses the necessity of freedom in the face of determinism in any given situation of choice (and for Sartre, any situation is a situation of choice); Massie lays

more stress upon the determinism and necessity which impinge upon the freedom of choice in such situations. This point is repeatedly reinforced by Massie:

'Everything was just a response to what went before. . . . We're not free agents. I've never felt any guilt at all. Anger at what I wasted, but anger at fate, not at myself. How could I have acted otherwise?'

I've seen faces like Candy's on Gothic windows. As she looked through the haze of cigarette smoke she took on the implacability of the saints.
(*ONIW* 193)

Candy is a character surrounded by religious imagery in the eyes of the young Dallas. Such religious determinism is dismissed by Sartre, yet it still holds some force for characters in Massie's novels. This in itself is an attack on the rationalist absolutism of Sartre. The use of 'up to a point' above may also be read in terms of its use in *Scoop* by the (converted Catholic) writer Evelyn Waugh, where it is the phrase used to express disagreement with a powerful superior.³⁶ Massie has utilised Waugh's phrase more explicitly elsewhere: 'Up to a point, Lord Copper.' (*TLP* 169) In employing this specific context for Candy's statement, then, Massie has Candy portraying herself as a saintly stoic asserting her limited freedom in the face of forces she cannot control: 'fate' and history. She is aware that she has gone beyond any moment of irreversible commitment. History and fate become synonymous after any period where choice is still possible (such as the period where Lorna could have left Fraser) even where it is a choice that is limited by both personal and public history. Candy, therefore, for all her existentialist protestations, is seen to acknowledge both implicitly and explicitly that the individual cannot ignore the past at all, since it determines the present. The Scotland portrayed in *One Night in Winter* is replete with the pervasive hereditary influence of Calvinism: predetermination paradoxically sits alongside personal responsibility. Candy has recognised the 'truth' which

Massie had stated in the 'Nevis Quarterly' that a contempt for history is dangerous, especially in Scotland.

Both Hugo and Dallas seek to confront their actions and take responsibility for them. Hugo effectively commits suicide by refusing to deny the political motivation of his action. This is awkward for the Party which has since valorised Hoederer and therefore cannot be seen to have been responsible for his murder:

HUGO. You've turned Hoederer into a great man. But I loved him more than you will ever love him. If I deny my act, he becomes an anonymous corpse, a wreckage of the Party. [. . .] Killed by chance. Killed for a woman.

OLGA. Get out.

HUGO. A man like Hoederer doesn't die by accident. He dies for his ideals, for his policy, he is responsible for his own death. If I recognise my crime before you all, if I reclaim my name of Raskolnikov, if I agree to pay the necessary price, then he will have had the death he deserved.³⁷

The idea contained in Hugo's statement that he must 'agree to pay the necessary price' in order to justify his actions and Hoederer's death is interrogated by Massie. Echoing Iris Murdoch's view of Sartre as a 'romantic rationalist',³⁸ Massie's narrator draws the conclusion that the idea that one may choose to assert one's personal responsibility for any action is in itself delusory since that responsibility exists independent of its acknowledgement. Thus, the assertion of personal responsibility, whether it be in Calvinist theology or Sartrean existentialism, is no more than the acknowledgement of 'reality'. In the case of the pregnancy of his son's girlfriend, Dallas' advice to his son:

[. . .] could be described as half-baked romanticism. What I was clear about was that they should take the consequences of their action. And that really is, in its arrogant division of life, Romantic. Because whatever happens you don't escape consequences—Fraser's fate, and Candy's and Lorna's, not to mention mine, all go to prove that, if you'll forgive the pun, there is ultimately no such thing as

³⁶ Waugh, Evelyn *Scoop* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965; 1938).

³⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, Epilogue, pp. 119-20.

³⁸ Murdoch, Iris *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1976).

coming off scot-free. And for Gilesie and his girl, abortion would have had its own consequences, subtler and harder to identify than those of marriage, yet possibly every bit as dire as my sub-Calvinist temper could wish.
(238)

The above passage implies that Sartre is naïve in urging the assertion of complete freedom and therefore actively assuming responsibility for one's actions ('absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom.' (B&N 554)) Massie is suggesting that responsibility is mandatory regardless of the self-conscious assertion of freedom. In Sartre's play, Hugo's choice to 'pay the necessary price' makes the (inevitable) personal responsibility into a grand and existentially heroic act. In fact, Massie implies, this is a futile and immature romantic gesture in the face of reality.

In allowing Hugo to sacrifice himself, Sartre evades the need to show Hugo confronting and dealing with his own growing cynicism. Sartre has Hugo choose death to evade that necessity. Sartre provides evidence within the play that this is a conscious choice for Hugo when he 'interrogates' his own image in the mirror:

HUGO. I'm looking to see if I'm like my father. (*Pause.*) If I had a moustache, you couldn't tell us apart.

OLGA. (*shrugging her shoulders*) So what?

HUGO. I don't like my father.

OLGA. We know.

Hugo. He said to me: 'In my young days, I belonged to a revolutionary group too. I wrote articles for their paper. You'll get over it, as I did. . . .'³⁹

The young 'pre-experience' Hugo can't understand that the Communist Proletarian Party may change its opinion of Hoederer which in turn would cause the original motivation for his crime to be an awkward fact. The inexperienced Hugo does not realise that deviations from the 'Party Line' may in time come to supplant it, and that

³⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, sc. 1, p. 21.

History will be teleologically rewritten accordingly. Hugo laughs at length during the 'Epilogue' of *Crime Passionnel* when the very people who had sent him to kill Hoederer for his political opinions begin unconsciously to quote Hoederer's arguments as justification of their own actions. It is this reality which Sartre allows Hugo to evade, in apparently 'taking responsibility' for his actions.

In establishing the retrospective viewpoint much later in Dallas' life than it is in Hugo's, Massie 'forces' Dallas to confront that experience-induced cynicism: 'Dallas underestimated the Establishment's absorbent abilities. In his young romanticism he couldn't see how [the fomenter of revolution] Alick Duguid's keen edge could be blunted'. (71) In *One Night in Winter*, Dallas effectively provides his own 'paternal' commentary, echoing Hugo's father – though characteristically Dallas has not acted, merely observed. Dallas accuses himself of youthful romanticism, apparently, because of his former belief that the individual can become fully engaged with the world and remain untarnished by it. Sartre's character 'romantically' chooses death rather than face the consequences of such knowledge. He acts as Sartre would wish, not as Sartre himself acted when in possession of the knowledge which is the major theme of *Crime Passionnel*.

The Death of Men (1981)

The Death of Men, as a work which overtly engages with *politically* motivated murder, shares many more obvious similarities with *Crime Passionnel* than the subsequent *One Night in Winter*. Set in modern-day Italy, *The Death of Men* examines the nihilistic destruction of human life which can result from committing an 'essence-defining' act. In *The Death of Men*, as in the later *One Night in Winter*,

Massie stresses the importance of the chain of events leading to the ‘radical act’ which limits the extent of free will (at the point of ‘execution’) permitted to those who would carry it out. Following the kidnapping of Corrado Dusa, but well before the ‘execution’ (of the) act, Tomaso becomes aware of the irreversible commitment of his group:

All the same something has changed between them, or rather has intervened. Tomaso recognizes the interloper; its name is responsibility. They have passed from the sunlight of the perfect liberty of the abstract.
(*DoM* 85)

In Massie’s novels, ‘perfect liberty’ – or indeed, ‘radical freedom’ – is an entirely abstract concept. Here Tomaso and his comrades have not yet committed what is represented in Sartre’s play as the ‘essence-defining’ act, and yet by taking the first steps towards it they are irrevocably committed. Responsibility exists, in Massie’s novels, independent of the ‘radical act’ itself.

In *The Death of Men* Tomaso is a young left-wing terrorist who takes part in the kidnapping, interrogation and murder of Corrado Dusa, the most powerful politician in this fictitious version of Italy. As Massie states in a brief prologue, *The Death of Men* is based on the kidnap and murder of Aldo Moro. Nevertheless, the relationship between the aristocratic student turned revolutionary, Tomaso, and the political leader, Corrado, correlates significantly with the situation of Hugo and Hoederer portrayed by Sartre in *Crime Passionnel*. Sartre’s play is itself an echo of Trotsky’s assassination. As noted in the opening chapter of this study, it was Sartre’s urging of the necessity of the writer’s engagement with the world around them which Massie most admired in the French writer. In Sartre’s play Hoederer is to be killed for his attempt to negotiate a compromise which will move the (Communist) Proletarian

Party into the political establishment of the imaginary European state, Illythia, just as Aldo Moro was murdered for attempting to bring the Italian Communist Party (PCI) into the political mainstream. Massie's use of intertextuality suggests that this is a significant instance of people 'repeating' history.⁴⁰

The central theme of *Crime Passionnel* (or *Les Main Sales* in France) is the confrontation between abstract liberty and the consequences of 'real' action. In *Crime Passionnel* Hoederer mocks Hugo for the abstract nature of his belief that 'purity' is consistent with (politically committed) action:

How attached to your purity you are, my boy! How frightened you are of soiling your hands. All right, stay pure! Who does it help, and why did you come to us? Purity is an ideal for a fakir or a monk. You intellectuals, you bourgeois anarchists, you see it as an excuse for doing nothing. Do nothing, stay put, keep your elbows to your sides, wear kid gloves. My hands are filthy. I've dipped them up to the elbows in blood and slime. So what? Do you think you can govern and keep your spirit white?⁴¹

Massie draws attention to this passage by echoing it fairly explicitly in his novel.

Corrado mocks Tomaso:

'All action [. . .] contains the seeds of its own corruption. Should we then abstain from action? [. . . P]olitical action is and always must be a matter of constant compromise. I have no doubt that you would call them shabby and seedy, these compromises. What gets done is so much less than is planned; but it is for this, and in this, that I have passed my life. When I tell you that, can you be so confident that your own purity of will and deed can survive?'
(*DoM* 203-4)

For both Massie and Sartre, any action which is performed in the 'real' world is in danger of corrupting any purity of intent, but personal responsibility for such action is inevitable. The fundamental difference between the two writers is in the possible scope for such 'freedom-asserting' action which the individual enjoys. According to

⁴⁰ Massie implicitly draws parallels between Sartre's play (and therefore Trotsky's death), Moro's murder, and that of his own Corrado Dusa to generate a form of archetype, which includes aspects of Oedipal mythology.

Sartre's philosophical thinking we have absolute responsibility *because* we have absolute freedom:

The essential consequence of our earlier remarks is that man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. We are taking the word 'responsibility' in its ordinary sense as 'consciousness (of) being the *incontestable author* of an event or of an object.'
(*B&N* 553) (my italics)

For Massie, on the other hand, we are responsible for our actions regardless of the extent of our freedom. The scope of any action which is not exclusively 'committed' in the abstract is inherently limited, as Corrado points out in a discussion of his insane brother, Guido:

'You've come to talk about Guido. Yet, you know even there, well . . . political analogies abound. Where he is, Guido is in safe hands. That's all. There is nothing else we can do for him, except pray, except pray. We have there reached the limits of action. The limit of action, you can come up against that more abruptly than most people think.'
(*DoM* 41)

When one encounters the limits of action, there is no comfort to be found in a rational world, and in such a world, as in the world of Sartre, there is nothing left but despair, or as Massie shows, a hypocritical flight into the abstract of absolute freedom or futile romantic gestures. Both Tomaso and Hugo (effectively) kill themselves at the end of the respective works. In *The Death of Men*, as in *One Night in Winter*, such suicides are a deliberate evasion of the paradoxical reality that we are *not* completely free yet we must bear complete responsibility for our actions. In Tomaso's case, his suicide is part of his inner totalization which reflects 'the diseased poetry of Romanticism that could scrawl the words, "the machine-gun is beautiful" on the walls of university buildings.' (29)

⁴¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, sc. 4, p. 95.

In *Crime Passionnel* Louis (the leader of the opposition to Hoederer within the Proletarian Party) tells Hugo of the political compromise attempted by Hoederer and concludes: ‘Objectively, he’s a traitor.’⁴² This accusation is repeated by other characters until Hoederer is confronted with it:

JESSICA. He said you’re a social traitor.
HOEDERER. A social traitor! Is that all?
JESSICA. Objectively. He said: objectively.
HOEDERER. [. . .] Why am I a social traitor?
HUGO. Because you have no right to drag the Party into your coalition.
HOEDERER: Why not?
HUGO. Because it’s a revolutionary organisation and you are trying to make it a part of the government
HOEDERER. Revolutionary parties are formed to take power.
HUGO. To *take* it. Yes. To seize it by armed force. Not to buy it by pandering to the authorities.⁴³

To assert objectivity is to abscond from the situation in favour of the abstract. Hoederer will not do that. He acts within his ‘situation’ to work towards the ultimate goal of the Marxist historical interpretation. Sartre here exposes the delusion that the Marxist view of history is of some ‘supernatural force’ which will act out its purpose independent of any individual. As the critic Mary Warnock stated:

The Marxist method, [Sartre] says, is unduly *a priori*. Everything which has ever happened is forced by it into the mould of dialectical materialism, with the result that Marxist thinkers tend to overlook the actual facts, or at least to glance at them only cursorily. [sic] We are led to believe therefore that existentialism, marked as we have seen by an almost obsessive interest in the concrete and the actual, will breathe new life into Marxism by “interiorizing” it, by rendering it concrete and by presenting the dialectic from within. Sartre claims that existentialism, by still concentrating its attention on the individual, can show how the concept of class, with which Marxism is concerned, arose. There is an empty space, a mere abstraction, at the very centre of Marxism, Sartre says, and it is this space which he plans to fill with a concrete anthropology.⁴⁴

Sartre’s argument is represented by Hugo, who comes to realise – as was shown in the earlier discussion of *One Night in Winter* – that his action is directed by the

⁴² Ibid., sc. 1, p. 24.

⁴³ Ibid., sc. 4, pp. 90-91.

determinism of the Party but that he chooses to commit it. Hugo does not carry out the act until there is a personal motivation – adultery – which clarifies for the reader/audience that he has *chosen* to commit the murder. In Sartre's play the act itself is the product of a moment of free choice. In *The Death of Men* as with Massie's earlier novel, *The Last Peacock*, such decisions are not so clear cut: one cannot ignore the significance of other people and ideology as a source of external deterministic pressure.

Tomaso's delusions are in the significance of a single action and in the ability to evade a sense of personal responsibility beneath a blanket of historical 'inevitability'. Massie ensures that both of these delusions are exposed to Tomaso within the course of the novel. In the early stages of the novel Tomaso (described here as a Caravaggio Christ by the aesthete Raimundo⁴⁵) explains that a radical change in society is inevitable:

'And it follows that that must be done deliberately. By a single positive act. An act perhaps shocking in itself but yet made in accordance with the truly perceived demands of historical necessity. An act therefore entirely autonomous, containing its own justification in its own being.' [. . .] His face had the immobility of a wax creation.
[. . .] 'This means then that you would condone violence,' [. . .]
'Condone is a term wholly without significance,' said Caravaggio. 'Say rather that we recognise and consequently accept its inevitability.'
(*DoM* 28-29)

At this early stage in the novel (and therefore in the progression of his understanding) Tomaso finds it easy to face the demands of his ideological affiliation – in the abstract. He shares Hugo's initial bad faith. When the victim of the ideology wears a human face with human dignity, however, as Corrado does for

⁴⁴ Warnock, Mary 'Introduction' to Sartre, Jean-Paul *Being and Nothingness* *ibid.*, p. xv.

⁴⁵ Raimundo is one of Massie's 'dandy' figures who exemplify Being-for-others.

Tomaso later in the novel, the idea that the act justifies itself as part of a historically determined pattern is not so easy to accept: such concepts are ‘only words.’ (228)⁴⁶ In fact, in his commitment to ‘historical necessity’ he is denying his own ‘freedom’, in an existential sense, because he is allowing his assumed essence – as a revolutionary Communist – to determine his existence, and therefore his actions. ‘There is’ as Raimundo states, ‘no alibi like history.’ (*DoM* 14)

In *The Death of Men*, historical determinism can offer a substitute for those who seek to fill the void in their lives left by the death of God. ‘History’ itself, erroneously perceived by Tomaso as an absolute determinism, has become ‘the one true God.’ (*DoM* 191) Massie thus explicitly shows that Tomaso’s belief in historical determinism has become an alternative faith which predetermines his essence as surely as a Christian God. He is therefore like the artefact which, according to Sartre, must have a predetermined essence before it can be brought into existence, and is accordingly described in the passage above as a ‘wax creation’: artificial and inanimate.

Massie shares Sartre’s condemnation of a concept of historical determinism which is entirely independent of all human praxis, though one of the young revolutionaries is mocked for his pompous delight in the abstract notion of ‘praxis and the historical process’. (*DoM* 19) In *The Death of Men*, however, the repetition of an ‘objective view’ is used to create a rhetorical construct which persistently and progressively

⁴⁶ This is itself an echo of Hugo’s dissatisfaction late in the play: ‘Words! Always Words!’ (Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, sc. 5, p. 107.)

ridicules that objectivity first asserted by Louis in *Crime Passionnel* for the horrific absurdity to which such a view can lead. It is not merely the intellectual error which Massie attacks, it is the destruction of human decency at the level of the individual. The human 'tragedy' to which such abstraction leads is exposed in its Oedipal dimension by putting the words in the mouth of Corrado's son.⁴⁷ Bernardo states:

'[Corrado Dusa is] a good man, the best of the bunch by a long way. That's why he was chosen of course. To take someone like Scicchi for example, Gianni Scicchi, would have been pointless. Not only would nobody care what happened to him, but, more important, he represents the system at its worst. He is therefore irrelevant. But Dusa's different. He's decent and humane and, so you see, in the last resort, dangerous. He's the sort of man who can even make people believe in the present state of things. So . . . ' he spread his hands wide again. 'Alternatively, you can say he's the cornerstone. You pull him out and, crash, the whole edifice will begin to crumble. But Gianni Scicchi, he's nothing but an excrescence, a gargoyle. Rip him off the building and its appearance is actually improved. Pointless. Moreover, objectively Scicchi is working for the Revolution.'

[. . . T]he corruption of the state has proceeded unchecked to a point where it may be seen, objectively again, to be preparing the way for a real, an effective, revolution [. . .] Now the most intelligent of the establishment, which includes the leaders of the Christian Democracy and the leaders of what we call the lay parties, and of course the leaders of the PCI, have come to see that only one thing can avert this and create conditions in which counter-revolutionary ameliorating reforms are possible. This is naturally the admission of the PCI to the Government, so that all parties which support the State, as it is presently constituted, will collaborate. Dusa has been the leader of this move. He has possibly won the consent of the Vatican though not yet of the CIA, who are of course historically stupid and slow to appreciate reality.'

'You could say', said Tomaso, 'that objectively the CIA are working for the Revolution.'

(*DoM* 100-1)

The essence-defining act, Massie implicitly posits, far from being the pure expression of radical freedom, may in fact be the desperate consequence of the choice to negate one's own freedom, and in the process, create terror and destruction. This plays upon the aspect of Sartre's Hugo which is partially obscured

⁴⁷ Massie's addition of an Oedipal aspect to this 'tragedy' further elucidates his assertion that the events within the novel are brought about by a combination of actions (motivated by human hubris) and the external determination of 'fate'.

and complicated by his apparent sexual jealousy: Hugo states: 'I joined the Party to forget myself.'⁴⁸ This aspect of Hugo's character is noted by Dorothy McCall:

Hugo loves justice because he is incapable of loving human beings; their life or death, as far as he is concerned, is an irrelevant problem. He has joined the party not to liberate other men, but to escape from his own freedom into a strict discipline that will rid him of his hated self.⁴⁹

It is, then, this aspect of Hugo which Massie concentrates upon because it can lead to the destructive nihilism which he abhors. As Hoederer tells Hugo: 'You hate men because you hate yourself; your purity is the purity of death and the revolution you dream of isn't ours; you don't want to change the world, you want to blow it apart.'⁵⁰

This is the same nihilism which is overtly declared by Tomaso in his suicide note:

I believed in belief, now I believe in nothing.

There was a man I used to know—I shan't give his name for I have no wish to involve him in this affair (on the other hand I am absolutely indifferent as to whether I do or not), but he will recognise himself when he sees this letter.⁵¹ This man used to speak to me of the necessity of the liberating action, the act capable of freeing me from the constraints of bourgeois morality. Well I have performed it and there is no difference; it was a lie like everything else.

(236)

Massie uses the insertion of Tomaso's suicide note to give that character a first person voice, explicitly comparing his disillusionment with his earlier certainty in the extract above concerning the historical necessity of performing the radical act. There, too, Tomaso appears to speak directly to the reader, but it is reported speech. The changing narrative voice which the suicide note represents underlines the altered perspective on the deed. His action drives him to despair and self-destruction. His death is not an act of heroism in the narrow philosophical sense of Sartre's

⁴⁸ Ibid., sc. 2, p. 50.

⁴⁹ McCall, Dorothy *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Crime Passionnel* *ibid.*, sc. 4, p. 96.

⁵¹ The man Tomaso refers to is Enzo Fuscolo, an old fascist who overtly quotes Nietzschean existentialism to the younger man. The Sartrean existentialism is implicit in the repeated parallels with *Crime Passionnel*.

presentation of Hugo's (effective) suicide, rather it is the utter negation of all external values including responsibility.

The assertion of his own Being (in the 'radical act' of murder) causes Tomaso to experience Sartrean Being as 'nausea'. (233) The 'achievement' of Being-for-itself is not enough for Tomaso, and leads only to despair. Tomaso, as the above quotation from the suicide note shows, had sought an act that would free him from all morality other than that which is self-generated, and may have been successful in destroying that which influenced him before the act: 'The act they had just performed severed them from their past.' (*DoM* 229) But the other reality is that what they had just committed would 'form their lives forever.' (*DoM* 230) It is that responsibility which Tomaso evades. Massie causes Tomaso's situation to correlate significantly with that of Hugo to undermine the romanticised existential message of *Crime Passionnel*. McCall notes:

In killing Hoederer, it is himself as a failure Hugo wants to kill. He hopes by a single act, a pistol shot, to inaugurate a future that signifies the destruction of his past. In fact he does just the opposite. Had he taken Hoederer's advice and accepted his help, Hugo's past would have become just a painful adolescent stage, the prelude to his manhood; with the act of murder, that past becomes a radical truth of his present and future.⁵²

If suicide may be construed as an existentially heroic act, then it is, for Massie, an evasion of the absolute responsibility asserted by Sartre. For Sartre, as was noted during the discussion of *One Night in Winter*, that complete responsibility implies a responsibility for the Other, but the ever-present possibility of solipsism means that responsibility for the Other is, again, abstract. Massie implies, further, that in suggesting that in the performance of a radical act one can free oneself from all

responsibility other than the complete responsibility to the self, Sartre is evading the despair engendered by his ideas by proposing a solution which can only exist in the abstract.

Tomaso, unlike Hugo, is shown by the author fully to have confronted the imperfection of any action committed *outwith* the abstract. Before his suicide he drinks whisky: 'even the smell was corrupt'. (*DoM* 233) When his body is found, his cuff smells of whisky. (237) In effect, his physical presence smells of corruption. In accordance with Sartrean thought, Tomaso has engaged himself wholly in his situation and stamped it with his seal. Sartre states:

Thus, totally free, I must be without remorse or regrets as I am without any excuse; for from the instant of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it.
(*B&N* 555)

Tomaso cannot deal with this responsibility, as he states: 'So there is no guilt, but there is no feeling either, except a deep exhaustion. I am drained and futile.' (236) It is the futility of an abstract idealism such as Sartrean existentialism which may lead to the destruction of human life which Massie cannot accept. Sartre states that 'in attempting to get rid of my life I affirm that I live and I assume this life as bad.'*(B&N* 556) He may be 'correct', but how does this assist the individual in living their life? It is, for Massie, life, not death, which is important. (*DoM* 230)

In *The Death of Men*, just as in the later *One Night in Winter*, those who gain their approach to life, their morality, academically and not through experience are in danger of being led to commit futile and (self-)destructive actions. Sartre's flight

⁵² McCall, Dorothy *The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre* *ibid.*, p. 75.

into the abstract, which occurs despite his protestations of the value of experience, makes his philosophy particularly corrupting for such individuals if it is considered as a viable system in its totality. Whereas Sartre's Hugo faces the physical reality of Hoederer's blood in Scene Three but later commits the murder anyway, Massie shows how coming face to face with the physical reality of such an action may have a far greater effect. Tomaso's suicide note concludes:

I am very tired. I am worn out by consciousness. I have had enough of seeing and feeling. Especially feeling.

But I thought what we were doing would make us Caesars and I find we are no more than Catiline.

It's enough.

(*DoM* 237)

Machine-guns and ideological concepts which are beautiful in the abstract offer a temptation to praxis which produces unbearable consequences in the 'real' world. Sartre's invitation – in Massie's view – to slide into a realm where there are only physical sensations abstracted from a wider reality is a solipsism which renders one defenceless against the encroaching reality of the 'outside' world.

Tomaso's reference to Caesar picks up on an earlier statement: 'Tomaso thought, he thinks this is the definitive step, that's what it is. Doesn't he realise that we stepped into the cold night air weeks ago? We're a long way this side of the Rubicon.' (114) This is a reference to Caesar's 'invasion' of Italy⁵³ which opens Massie's own *Caesar*. In that novel the crossing of the Rubicon is itself merely a symbolic act⁵⁴ which clarifies the commitment of the group by causing them to perform an illegal action when in fact they have already been in the power of an Other – Caesar – for a

⁵³ Both Caesar's 'invasion' and the Catiline conspiracy ultimately resulted in the strengthening of the power of the 'Establishment'.

⁵⁴ Massie, Allan *Caesar* *ibid.*, p. 2.

long time. Tomaso had long ago unleashed a deterministic process on himself and Corrado of which he was only dimly aware.

That unconscious awareness is reflected in the 'unconscious' textual symbols of guilt: the flies. This eponymous symbol refers to Sartre's play about the capricious brutality resulting from the idolatry of 'History'. In that play, the guilt ('bad faith') of the populace (which is the result of the manipulation of history and 'the dead' by their rulers) is given the physical form of swarms of flies. In *The Death of Men*, when Tomaso's commitment is 'irreversible' due to his idolatry of the historical process, he notes the presence of buzzing flies. (198) The swiftness in the marketplace 'buzzed black', (199) the Japanese tourists 'swarmed', (199) and Tomaso's final conversation with Corrado is made in the presence of one gigantic fly. (201)

Chapter 2: A Question of Loyalties (1989)

Massie's engagement with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre appears in many ways to reach its apotheosis in *A Question of Loyalties*. The setting of much of the novel (France during the Second World War and its aftermath) causes Massie to engage with Sartre's texts due both to their philosophical importance and their provision of an 'authentic' literary voice for the time and place. *A Question of Loyalties* examines the condition of the individual when the Establishment and most recognisable peacetime systems of ethics and morality have utterly broken down. The narrative structure of the novel appears to be deeply concerned with Sartre's ideas on the act of writing prose and the generous freedom of the reader. There is an extensive metafictional engagement with Sartre's texts, a pastiche of Sartrean style, and an examination of the historical narrative and its relationship with 'being situated'. This is accompanied by a further examination of 'radical freedom' and 'bad faith'.

The Philosophical Engagement

The overall significance of philosophy to an understanding of Massie's novel is teasingly referred to by Etienne himself:

Of course I must admit that my eyes glaze when I attempt to read philosophy, [. . .] What about you, Hugh? Can you read such stuff? Can you imagine mastering it? And if you can't begin to, then can you still hope to make something of my, rather more complicated than perhaps you imagined, father?
(*QoL* 117)

Part of Lucien's problem is an approach to life which is based on archaic philosophical doctrines, but philosophy, and the philosophy of Sartre in particular, appears to pervade every level of the book. Sartre is the philosopher who provides a

framework for understanding the situation of the individual condemned to choice/freedom within the abyss which is created when pre-existing society and morality have been torn apart.

Sartre is implicated within the narrative structure of the book and in the principal characterisations. The ultimate 'failure' in life of the two primary narrators of the novel echoes a highly specific illustration of a point made by Sartre in the conclusion of *Being and Nothingness*. The narrative of Etienne, the lonely bourgeois alcoholic, encloses the narrative of his father, the landed aristocratic government minister.

Sartre stated that:

Many men, in fact, know that the goal of their pursuit is being; and to the extent that they possess this knowledge, they refrain from appropriating things for their own sake and try to realise the symbolic appropriation of their being-in-itself. But to the extent that this attempt still shares in the spirit of seriousness [which "transfers the quality of 'desirable' from the ontological structure of things to their simple material constitution"; an aspect of bad faith] and that these men can still believe that their mission of effecting the existence of the in-itself-for-itself is written in things, they are condemned to despair; for they discover at the same time that all human activities are equivalent (for they all tend to sacrifice man in order that the self-cause may arise) and that all are on principle doomed to failure. Thus it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations. If one of these activities takes precedence over the other, this will not be because of its real goal but because of the degree of consciousness it possesses of its ideal goal; and in this case it will be the quietism of the solitary drunkard which will take precedence over the vain agitation of the leader of nations.
(*B&N* 627)

Etienne's narrative overtly engages with Sartre and may therefore be taken to be conscious of 'being'. Etienne has sought consolation in the ability to own things – he is wealthy – and found only despair and alcoholism, yet his narrative ultimately 'triumphs' over that of his father by enclosing it. His father attempts to save and preserve the old France – the social order which would guarantee his property rights and those of his descendants – against the perceived threat of Communism. Lucien,

too, becomes aware of his being yet ends in failure and despair. The alcoholic and the political leader amount to the same thing.

Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* trilogy examines how the individual performs a radical act to assert his or her freedom when faced with the external deterministic forces present in the situation of the individual during the Second World War in France. *A Question of Loyalties* appears to perform a similar examination, but Massie implicitly denies the possibility of such a 'radical act'. As in *The Death of Men*, the main characters in *A Question of Loyalties* are confronted by the various limits of personal action: this represents an attack on Sartrean radical freedom.

Massie challenges the 'reality' of Sartre's presentation of the manner of the individual's 'choice' to act. This is inextricably linked with the narrative viewpoint which the presentation of either perceived 'manner of choice' demands within a novel. Sartre's act of narrating characters interacting with known history yet apparently acting out their freedom in a series of non-determinative 'present' moments in *The Roads to Freedom* in fact consigns those characters to the narrative of history. Sartre encloses and delimits the capacity of his characters to act just as he pretends, as author, to promote it. Furthermore, Massie shows how actions performed in any present moment will progressively delimit the capacity of the individual to act out their freedom in each succeeding present. At the moment of acting those actions themselves become the object of the historical narrative. The history of the self and others, for Massie, unlike Sartre, *does* affect the freedom of the individual.

In *The Roads to Freedom*, the disembodied narrator's location in time is contemporaneous with the events described, and within these novels the characters' conversations refer to the impossibility of knowing the future:

'In a year the war may be over,' he said cautiously.
'Over? Don't you believe it: we may know when a war begins, we never know when it is going to end.'¹

Within the narrative this conversation takes place in 1938, so the characters clearly do not know when the war will even begin. Since the first two volumes of Sartre's trilogy were published in 1945, they must have been largely written when the date of the end of the war was not known. By the time they were published, and certainly by the time of *Iron in the Soul* (1949), the readers would know what the characters could not. Since the narration itself does not provide that retrospective viewpoint, however, there is no voice *within* the books which can judge the actions and choices of the characters in any context other than their own. In *A Question of Loyalties* the central narration which anchors the book, that of Etienne, firmly places the texts written during the war within a historical context.

In Sartre's philosophy and, significantly, therefore in his novels, the choice is a definitive moment. For Massie's characters, such moments of irreversible commitment are more nebulous. Sartre pinpoints the moments when characters take momentous decisions. Sartre's Lola notes the moment of choice of another character almost simultaneously to the decision itself: 'How odd, she thought, he's just taken a decision that will change the whole course of his life.'² Lucien de Balafre, on the other hand, 'in choosing to be a man of a certain sort of action, chose death'. (290)

¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* *ibid.*, p. 324.

‘Choosing to be a man of a certain sort of action’ necessarily entails performing several separate decisions to act.

Massie repeatedly portrays and states that at the various times of acting, the full implications of choices do not seem as clear cut to the individual as they do in retrospect. The ‘act’ of choice which Massie portrays is in fact a cumulative process which, largely unconsciously, takes place over a period of time and *demand*s a retrospective viewpoint in order that one may understand that any choice has been made at all.

There are so many ways of interpreting every decision, even while one realises that the very word ‘decision’ is itself misleading, suggesting as it does a degree of consciousness which is very often not there at all.
(*QoL* 256)

Massie reinforces this point: ‘Someone who chose – that lying word again’. (*QoL* 257) When Mathilde’s wartime history is briefly related towards the end of *A Question of Loyalties*, the idea of radical freedom – as expressed by consciously self-defining radical acts – is criticised. Despite her ‘suspicion of commitment’, (260) Mathilde begins doing some printing for the Resistance. Etienne, as narrator, retrospectively views a series of actions over a period of time and condenses them into a single sentence which nevertheless implies that passage of time: ‘Soon, or rather gradually, she was committed.’ (261)

Massie exposes the wilfully deceptive artifice of Sartre’s narrative perspective. Massie’s (Etienne’s) narrative viewpoint allows him to highlight the implications of a *series* of actions on future freedom within a single life. As Massie’s Marcel states:

² Sartre, Jean-Paul *Iron in the Soul* *ibid.*, p. 211.

‘people do change – our natures are not immutable but each step we take in our progress through life leads us in a certain direction’. (187) Sartre’s narrative vantage point precludes such complexity. In *The Roads to Freedom* Mathieu does not creep inexorably towards his destruction but rather spontaneously gains his radical freedom (and presumably chooses the manner of his death) in an instant destructive expression of free will. For Sartre, Mathieu has ‘chosen’ since he could have surrendered along with his comrades, or deserted. In Massie’s novel, however, it is strongly implied that the ultimate act which ended Lucien’s life was not his to choose by the time he had committed his series of actions in the novel.

Sartre’s characters are not free in the sense that his philosophy would suggest, being themselves instruments which are manipulated to demonstrate that philosophy.

Sartre himself confessed this:

Some years ago, it was pointed out to me that the characters in my plays and novels make their decisions suddenly and in crises – that, for instance, it takes only a moment for Orestes in *Les Mouches* to achieve his conversion. By Jove: that is because I make them in my own image; not as I am, I dare say, but as I have wanted to be.³

Sartre’s act of narration – which masquerades as contemporary ‘reporting’ – is part of Sartre’s philosophical denial of the deterministic effect of history on the individual. For Massie, it is the power of narrative which enables the praxis of any individual within that narrative, just as it is the narrative of history that gives shape to a life whilst simultaneously denying the *absolute* capacity for praxis of any individual represented within it (by his or her objectification within the structure of a ‘predetermined’ narrative.) The dead then seem to the reader (as they do to Etienne)

³ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p. 148.

to have held a capacity to act which is denied to the individual within the apparently 'narrative free' living moment of the present. Yet, for Massie, it is precisely the relative narrative vacuum of the present moment that enables any contingent capacity to act.

Within *A Question of Loyalties* Massie demonstrates this concept of the power of narrative and by the presentation of various 'narrative acts' reverses the capacity for praxis which Sartre claims separates the living from the dead. The 'action' of *A Question of Loyalties* takes place in wartime France. This situation is partly narrated as personal journal, memoranda and letters written by Lucien, who becomes a Minister in the Vichy administration. These documents are ordered and presented to the reader by his son, Etienne – through his act of reading them in the Fifties and partly from a perspective which was two to three years prior to the novel's publication. Etienne also imaginatively recreates certain wartime scenes for the reader. Lucien's narrative is enclosed by Etienne's successive 'presents' in the same way that the force of History has enclosed, delimited, and ultimately evaluated Lucien's life. As Sartre states, 'the dead [. . .] have portrayed themselves completely, but without having meant to'. (*WL?* 20) Yet within his own narrative, Lucien becomes aware of the extent to which his own capacity to act is curtailed by his 'situation'. Nevertheless, to his son, it is Lucien who appears to have had vitality and the existential freedom to define himself, whereas the older Etienne has been reduced to stasis – partly, he feels, due to the actions of his father.

Sartre's overall philosophical importance to the post-war situation of Etienne is more complex than Sartre's philosophical importance in relating the story of his father. Since Etienne knows of Sartre the engagement can be conscious, but Lucien shared the milieu which gave Sartre's ideas their popularity; Etienne did not. Etienne's adult life is outwith the milieu of the war where one is confronted with one's necessary freedom quite overtly (although the courage required to act in that situation may seem greater). Etienne has to confront a world in which the ideological, philosophical and psychological environment (which includes Sartrean existentialism) is a direct by-product of those years. Etienne's is a world where good intentions have been shown to have the capability of motivating actions which may be judged retrospectively as evil: 'Patriotism is like Christianity, you know: what evil has been committed in the name of France, Germany, or Christ!' (317) For Etienne, the radical action urged by Sartre is not necessarily Self-defining – or at least one does not control the definition of the Self which results from it. At the moment in which such actions are performed they become the object of the subjective narration of the Other. Conscious of this, Etienne's story suggests that he possesses an inherent fear of taking 'Self-defining' action. Sartre dismisses this: 'I do not have to bother myself with the judgements that the future will bring to bear upon my work since there's nothing I can do about them.' (*WL?* 232)

Etienne lives in modern-day Geneva. In *A Question of Loyalties* Switzerland is an existential hell in which Etienne is immured in the self-imposed stasis of bad faith. Etienne in Geneva mirrors the situation of the characters in the narrative-free room in Sartre's *No Exit*, who, as McCall states: 'are left with no future except the endless

repetition of the present, which itself is merely an image of the past for which they were condemned.’⁴ The past which has ‘condemned’ Etienne is not his own past. (14) Etienne feels himself condemned for the sins of his father.⁵ Etienne has been branded with an image that is not his own, yet refuses to take affirmative action to generate his own image in the eyes of others: he is complicit in his own damnation. Etienne prefers to remain cocooned in the mist and snow of Geneva, despite his statement that ‘the city feels like a prison where one is the only inmate.’ (16) This image recalls Rudolf Hess in the Spandau prison. Etienne is being held in a personal ‘prison’ for the war crimes of others. Like the characters in *No Exit*, however, he will not walk through the open door and leave his hell. He is eternally condemned to repeat his father’s worst moments as a broken and helpless victim of torture, seeking judgement on his actions.

Etienne states that the Swiss are despised because of the ‘complacency with which they refuse the temptation of the abyss.’ (*QoL* 10) The abyss which Etienne encounters is a legacy of the war years: the relativity of values and the awareness of nothingness beyond the present moment. Etienne has not had to watch the destruction of all his values in the way that his father did.⁶ In the absence of an all powerful spiritual God Etienne finds himself uncomfortably floundering in the nihilistic moral vacuum represented by an absolute moral relativity throughout his adult life.

⁴ McCall, Dorothy *ibid.*, p. 122.

⁵ This problem is the eponymous concern of a later novel in the post-war trilogy.

⁶ Lucien’s value system was premised on his religious faith, yet he is brought to declare the abdication of the ‘Almighty’. (307)

Etienne comes to understand that his father acted with ideological sincerity and good intentions yet history accuses Lucien of active participation in ‘evil’. Consequently, the only ‘gods’ which Etienne acknowledges and serves, are the present, and money itself. Hence his location in Switzerland; a relative haven from the historical events of World War Two which weigh so heavily on him and a place in which: ‘you are valued simply according to the promptitude with which you settle your bills.’⁷ (*QoL* 3) This represents a highly bourgeois ‘objective standard’ to which Etienne seeks to retreat as a necessary – for Etienne – haven from other more overtly political, or indeed, abstract ideologies.⁸ He has falsely and vainly attempted to transmit his ‘need for being’ on to his ‘need for acquisition’. His shame over his lusts provide evidence that he is aware that they contribute to, rather than alleviate, his despair.

Etienne wrestles with the problem that rationalising the horrific actions of another time by attributing them to their context and precluding any moral judgement may be tacitly to condone those actions: ‘if we deny evil, if we explain and excuse choices, if we can always find some reason why the cork, that particular cork, should be drawn from the bottle, do we become accomplices?’ (17-18) Despite his ‘bad faith’ – manifested in his alcoholism – Etienne would seem to find a comforting affirmation in Sartrean philosophy, which dictated that no action can be judged outwith its context. Whilst refusing to condemn Lucien absolutely, Massie exposes the complexities hidden by Sartre’s judgement. Sartre further stated that historians will decide the sincerity of our intentions by their success. (*WL?* 166-7) In comparing

⁷ Colin makes the same point in *The Last Peacock*. (132)

⁸ Bourgeois capitalism often portrays itself as a rejection of ideology.

Lucien with Senator McCarthy (backing draconian measures to fend off the greater threat of Communism) Etienne states 'History [. . .] hardly suggests that his judgement is to be applauded.' (23) In this novel, it is not the sincerity of motivation but the judgement of the individual, and therefore the understanding of the situation, which will be judged by history from its privileged standpoint.

In Sartrean terms Etienne is acting – or rather failing entirely to act – in bad faith. Yet in many ways the depiction of Etienne serves to interrogate Sartrean principles from the 'inside'. In appearing to support aspects of Sartrean thought, Etienne frequently exposes a problem with that system of thought, so that an expression of freedom simultaneously becomes a denial of that same freedom. For instance, Etienne states:

I cannot accept the notion that addiction to the bottle is some sort of illness or disease. It seems to me, naively, yet – I would claim – with justice, to be essentially a matter of choice.
(288)

Yet he also confesses that he has succumbed to the temptation of alcohol, by choice; and equally by choice, has sought 'treatment' for his alcoholism when in utter despair. The reader of Etienne's text is thus left wondering as to the extent of choice which Etienne himself actually experiences despite his insistence that he is responsible for his actions.

In discussing the murder of Julius Caesar, Etienne demonstrates his scepticism over the possibility of a future and the ability to assert one's freedom in the face of history:

'They thought they were restoring Liberty. They ran through the streets crying that the Republic and Liberty had been won back. Within eighteen months you had the proscriptions, then more civil war, then the empire, and little by little, even the name of Liberty was forgotten. It's been the same with revolutions ever since. They set out to destroy evil and men release the evil in themselves.'

'But in the long run,' Neils said.

'In the long run?'

'Daddy,' Sarah said, 'history doesn't repeat itself. That's an old lie.'

'No,' I said, 'people repeat history.'

(342)

To avoid repeating history or succumbing to its deterministic force, it seems from the above that one must understand its lessons. Sartre's idea of the ability of the individual to act to supersede the pressure of their historical situation is thus shown to be premised upon an ability to care about – and therefore learn from – history, whilst simultaneously denying its power and relevance. Like Sartre, Etienne acknowledges the problem of 'other people' but pays lip-service to decrying solipsism, (7) yet Etienne attributes this solipsism (in the young) to the lack of 'objective standards'. The obliteration of objective standards and the emphatic solitude of the individual are precisely what Etienne appears to fear most, and yet they are his reality. They make up part of the 'situation' of the individual which Sartre's ideas dissect.

The Intertextual Engagement

Massie's text is engaged with the dramas and fiction of Sartre at a comprehensive level. This assists the 'authenticity of voice' but also extends and underlines the philosophical engagement. Sartre's dramatic works are significant to an understanding in this novel. *Crime Passionnel* is important in understanding the full extent of the contradiction within Jacques' 'radical' act. Aspects of Sartre's play

*Lucifer and the Lord*⁹ are also present, though since that play offers an allegorical representation of Vichy France the significance is less conclusive. Etienne explicitly attacks Sartre's ideas as expressed in *No Exit*. Most significantly, however, Massie uses an extensive intertextual engagement with Sartre's *The Roads to Freedom*. Massie's repeated use of cinematic metaphor and train journeys is a close parallel to that employed by Sartre in that trilogy.

Just as Sartre's characters in the 'Second Empire' room in *No Exit* view the image which others have of them after their death, so Etienne acknowledges his father's wartime death in a 'Second Empire room' (*QoL* 32) prior to receiving the varying opinions on Lucien's life and character. Etienne is thus doubly separated from his possibility to act to change the image others have of him since that image, he feels, is not contingent on his own possibility for action, and the original source of that image, his father, is now dead. The name with which his father left him – de Balafre, or 'Scarface' – signifies that like a medieval criminal, he has been marked for shame in the look of the Other. Like a scar, the mark of his father's name is permanent and is not subject to the praxis of the individual: Etienne.

Etienne's father himself did not act with absolute freedom, however. Lucien's death had been inevitable – that is, he had lost any lingering power to act – from the time Laval (from the comfort of a 'Second Empire' chair) hands him a spy report in which he, Lucien, is the object under surveillance. (*QoL* 283) Lucien is thus forced to encounter the image of himself in the eyes of the 'official' Other, for a second time.

⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *In Camera and Other Plays* *ibid.*

The reader is told that Lucien may have killed himself. With echoes of both *No Exit* and Colin's situation as perceived by his sister, (*TLP* 107) Lucien's brother tells Etienne that 'ultimately, you know people kill themselves for a very simple reason: because they have come to the end of the road, and discovered it's a one-way street. They missed the sign "*sens interdit*".' (*QoL* 93)

According to the Baron in *A Question of Loyalties*, Nazism had led the entire German people into a 'black blind alley'; a 'stinking cul-de-sac.'^(QoL 327) The exercise of their democratic will – the free democratic choice of the German people in electing the Nazi Party – had, paradoxically, put the German people beyond praxis in the power of that Other. Massie suggests here that at that point the future possibility of the German people had been willingly, though unknowingly, ceded to the vision of Hitler and the Nazis with all the subsequent attendant horror which that implies to the modern reader.

In *A Question of Loyalties* the mention of Sartre by name immediately follows the narration of the moment where Lucien begins to realise the impact of his 'situation', following his shock at seeing a poster reporting the execution of a housepainter by the occupying Germans. Lucien feels 'nausea' at the realisation; (250) his abstract world of beliefs is effectively liquefying around him, like the world of Roquentin:

So this is the Nausea: this blinding revelation? To think how I have racked my brains over it! To think how much I have written about it! Now I know: I exist – the world exists – and I know that the world exists. That's all.¹⁰

¹⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Nausea* *ibid.*, p. 176.

At this point Lucien also becomes acutely aware of the authoritarian gaze of the Other, a policeman, upon him. (250) Lucien's feels his freedom to act curtailed from this point. Sartre's Mathieu feels the full impact of the war on his life in the same way when he understands he is being called up: 'suddenly the placard seemed aimed at him personally'.¹¹ Both Lucien's and Mathieu's deaths happen 'off screen', but with different implications. Mathieu experiences his freedom (and presumably determines his death) in a moment of destructive terror whereas Lucien may or may not have committed suicide. Lucien's death is the product of a series of choices/actions during the war which progressively lead him to a cul-de-sac.

Up to this point in the novel, and within the constraints of his status as a 'historical individual' Lucien had been making decisions and generating his own image through his actions. Within the narrative structure of *A Question of Loyalties* Lucien's period of narrated praxis within the novel ends there in Paris. Etienne then briefly begins to act to take control of his present – when he spends time in Italy with his daughter, giving the reader of Etienne's narrative a sense of Etienne's renewed vigour – but on failing to gain the closure on his father's life which he seeks from Anne he returns to his moribund state. This is underlined by the repeated metaphor of the train journey.

Sartre uses 'trains' to symbolise the unifying force of history on a varied group of individuals in his novel *The Reprieve* and to symbolise an externally-applied sense of purpose in life in his autobiographical *Words*. In *A Question of Loyalties*, Drieu states to Lucien 'that the whole war has been like a railway journey'. (313)

¹¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* *ibid.*, p. 73.

Etienne's first journey to Paris (and the Fernie's dinner party where he is brought face to face with his patrimony and the legacy of the war) begins with a description of the train, (29) as does his trip to his father's old house. This could be described as necessity in the Fifties setting, but when travelling to meet Anne in the late Eighties, Etienne expressly states that that mode of transport is chosen by him. (343) Lucien views the station where men are boarding the train to the frontline as the point at which the men surrender their free will, (191) and Lucien, the reader is told, is arrested on a train. (350) By this stage Lucien's own previous actions have placed him firmly beyond the capacity for any further Self-defining praxis.

When Petain has an oak tree dedicated to him in *A Question of Loyalties*, Massie manipulates the event to bring out the Sartrean characteristics. It is Lucien who argues for this type of tribute:

Does it not seem that he is like a great tree, and that only a tree – let me be more specific – a great oak tree – will be the proper monument to his Being and his work for France.
(239)

The upper case 'B' of 'Being' is highly irregular except in philosophical works such as Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Further, in *The Reprieve* Daniel bemoans the self-awareness which hinders his ability to act on his desires: 'To be a paederast, as an oak is an oak. [. . .] Oh to be like a tree'.¹² Etienne's visit to the site of the dedication allows Massie to extrapolate the comparison by showing only the dead tree stump which remains: in choosing to allow himself to be viewed by others as a specific kind of being, Petain has given them power over him, just as Daniel cedes power to others by craving vilification for his sexuality.

Philip Thody has stated: 'Of all Sartre's characters Daniel is the one whose problems are most immediately linked to the theory of consciousness put forward in *Being and Nothingness*.'¹³ Massie's Marcel is a clear echo of Sartre's Daniel in *The Roads to Freedom*. In *A Question of Loyalties* Marcel is the lover of Uncle Charles and later the close friend of Lucien. Massie's Marcel initially works as a female impersonator. He is a homosexual who feels the need to confess his 'perversions' to Lucien (249) like the Sartrean 'pervert archetype',¹⁴ Daniel. Thody states:

In everything he does Daniel is trying to realize that self-awareness and coincidence with his own being which, in Sartre's view, each individual is pursuing. This is the main reason for his self-torture [. . .] in his final decision to marry Marcelle. As long as he is suffering for being what he is, then he can think of himself as really *being* what he is, although he is ashamed of it.¹⁵

Marcel, like Daniel, seeks out surprises. (189) Marcel has 'come to appreciate bitterness' (187) just as Sartre's Daniel deliberately marries Marcelle to torment himself. Marcel's attraction towards a Gestapo officer (249) echoes Daniel's desire for the occupying German troops.¹⁶

The need which Daniel has to confess his 'perversion' is revealed to Mathieu in the final scene of *The Age of Reason* when Daniel simultaneously informs him that he is to marry Marcelle having been instrumental in the split between her and Mathieu. This aspect of the Sartrean 'pervert figure' is also taken on by Rupert, who seduces both Polly and Anne for no better reason, apparently, than his need to possess what Lucien possesses, (348) and 'nothing would serve but that Rupert must confess to

¹² Ibid., pp. 115-116.

¹³ Thody, Philip *Jean-Paul Sartre* ibid., p. 48.

¹⁴ These are terms associated with the Sartrean philosophical concept.

Lucien.’ (144) Rupert takes ‘delight in declaring that he was “utterly contemptible”.’

(144) Rupert’s affair with Polly may have been part of the reason for the failure of the marriage of Lucien and Polly.¹⁷

The connection between Massie’s Marcel and Sartre’s Daniel would explain a slightly curious passage in *A Question of Loyalties*:

‘No,’ said the farmer’s wife. ‘I’ve no milk, or anything. It’s all gone, you know. You’re not the first. Not by any means.’

She wiped her hands on her apron. ‘Just like a peasant woman in a film,’ Lucien thought. ‘I must remember to tell Marcel.’

‘Do you mind if we rest anyway?’ he said.

(195)

The apparent request of a rest and some milk – which the reader must surmise preceded the above chapter opening – suggests a scene from *The Reprieve*¹⁸ when Daniel asks a farmer’s wife for permission for the pregnant Marcelle to sit down and rest, then requests a glass of milk for her. Since Marcel is a film maker, the above comment may not seem so strange, but it is significant that Lucien’s comment is made during the rout of the French forces. At the same historical moment Sartre’s Brunet states; ‘it’s just like a film, nothing looks real’.¹⁹ Massie’s paragraph can be read as strongly referential in terms of both the scene itself and the repetition of the film imagery.

¹⁵ Thody, Philip *ibid.*

¹⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Iron in the Soul* *ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁷ The triangle of Polly (Etienne’s mother), Lucien and Anne echoes Marcelle (who is pregnant when she leaves Mathieu), Mathieu and Ivich. Ivich, having returned to Paris unannounced, is waiting for Mathieu when he returns to his flat. (Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* *ibid.*, p. 332) Anne, waiting on the doorstep of his apartment, similarly surprises Lucien. (314)

¹⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* *ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Iron in the Soul* *ibid.*, p. 231.

Massie makes extensive use of film imagery in *A Question of Loyalties* echoing Sartre's use of the cinema motif as the alienation of the self from external reality.

As Etienne states:

[. . .] if real life is a sort of novel, then it remains one told in the first person, and the only sure knowledge we have is of the narrator. Everyone else is only observed, as in a film, in which one action is required to stand for a whole way of life, ocean of feeling, or history of experience. Choose the significant detail, you say; but the choice is arbitrary. We cannot play God in the novel of life.
(*QoL* 138)

When Etienne reviews his relationship with Freddie he switches his narrative perspective on his own actions to the third person: 'He didn't understand – I see now – understand anything, that young man'. (96) He justifies this by stating: 'I put it like that, in the third person, because the scene remains framed in my memory like a film sequence'. This is significant in terms of the overall narrative viewpoint because it reflects his feelings of distance from – and therefore powerlessness to alter – the past which he feels governs his present. The retrospective ('I see now') on his behaviour as a young man, however, allows Etienne to communicate that even in the 'present' of the early Fifties, when he could have acted, he was again rendered powerless due to the limited knowledge which is a concomitant of the 'present' moment.

While Etienne views his life 'on screen', Polly explicitly denies such a metaphor for the lives of Lucien and Rupert: 'it wasn't like the pictures.' (147) Towards the end of the novel Etienne refuses permission to his friend who wants to make a film of the life of Rupert and Lucien. (334) Thinking of them, Etienne concedes his impotent distance from them: 'I am a spectator who has accepted his role.' (335) Lucien

initially did not acknowledge any constraint on his ability to act, idealistic or otherwise, and would not be a spectator in his own life.²⁰

There is an existential 'hero' in *A Question of Loyalties*, however: Etienne's half-brother Jacques. In *The Roads to Freedom* Mathieu's brother Jacques is the representative of bourgeois bad faith; Mathieu Delarue (of the road) becomes an existential 'hero' insofar as he asserts his freedom by a radical act. In Massie's novel Etienne is the bourgeois figure who exhibits aspects of bad faith whilst his half-brother Jacques becomes an existential 'hero'. Mary Warnock has commented:

For Sartre (the existentialist Sartre) morality according to rules was no morality but only Bad Faith. This was, in fact, the dilemma from which Sartre could not free himself. He was probably right if he thought that as a matter of fact there could not be an existentialist moral philosophy. If the true course of morality lay necessarily in political action, as he came to think, then it would be absurd to suppose that this morality could be presented in terms of the existentialist hero. Such a hero is essentially *not* a political man; for he cares only for his own integrity.²¹

Lucien is the father of both Jacques and Etienne. Massie shows how Lucien's 'integrity' led him to deny the 'reality' in which he was participating. Lucien shares Sartre's major philosophical flaw; solipsism. Jacques' personal 'integrity' leads to his 'radical act' and the subsequent curtailment of his freedom.

Both film and prison imagery coincide within Etienne's narrative to elucidate the comparison between Etienne and Jacques in this novel. Etienne states his empathy with a friend's observations on being in prison:

'It was like being free of living,' he said, 'and simply watching a movie of one's own life.' And immediately he said that, I could feel the velour under my hands

²⁰ The only character named Lucien in Sartre's *Iron in the Soul* is a young prisoner: "'Hell!' said Lucien: 'I'm sick of cinemas. For God's sake lets give 'em a rest!'" Sartre, Jean-Paul *Iron in the Soul* *ibid.*, p. 336.

²¹ Warnock, Mary Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul *Being and Nothingness* *ibid.*, p. xvii.

and sense the dimming of the light. One has no responsibility for an auto-movie. Such surrender of control is a way of escape, yet it may also be a trap [. . .]
(18)

Etienne, like his brother Jacques, has effectively chosen to live in prison, but Jacques at least has the consolation of acting to put himself in that situation, whereas it is the fear of action that keeps Etienne there. The attitude to prison as an escape from life recalls Atwater's bad faith in his perverse enjoyment of being in prison (and his reluctance to leave) from Massie's first novel.

Etienne had taught Jacques to shoot in that first summer in Provence: Jacques uses that knowledge to shoot Simon the garagiste. Etienne himself is first told of Jacques' incarceration by Yves, Jacques' other half-brother. Etienne records his disgust with Yves:

[L]ooking at that ugly yellow face, listening to him spew out his accumulated resentment at the hand life had dealt him, I saw my own image there. His coil of bitterness was mine too; his vomit and self-pity mine.
(104)

During the prison visit, Jacques states of Yves – and therefore in the reader's mind, of Etienne:

'He accepts everything they've thrown at him and does nothing but whine. But I acted, you see. I did what I had to do, and that makes me a free man, even here. But Yves is not only a shit, he's a slave.'

'But Jacques, can it matter to you what other people have done to other people? Matter enough to land you here?'

'Evidently, brother, since it has done just that. I had a choice. I could have let Simon live and in doing so I would have abandoned what I had intended to do since I was a child. Perhaps it would have been right to do so. Perhaps my dream of killing him was only a childish dream, to be put away when I became a man. Instead it is I who have been put away, as a man. But I can stand up. I have done what I set out to do, what seemed right. If Simon had lived, if I had not brought myself to shoot him, all my life I would have been conscious of what I had failed to do. Every day would have been a reproach to me, and I would have asked myself if I had declined to act simply because I was afraid. Now I know, do you understand? Descartes said, "Conquer yourself rather than the world," and that is what I have done. I acted, without hope, which, brother, is ultimately the only way to act and the justification of all actions. And now there is no Simon to reproach me. It is really quite simple.'

I leaned across the table and kissed his cheek, and then left.

Jacques was released some years ago and now runs a bar in another part of France. I sent him the money to establish himself. He is married, and sends me a card at Christmas with a photograph of his two daughters. I am glad they are daughters, though my experience with Sarah has taught me that not even daughters are safe. Safe from the temptations of idealism, I mean.
(105-6)

Jacques appears to be an existentially heroic figure, particularly in comparison to the bad faith shown by Etienne and Yves: Jacques acts without hope, Etienne retreats from action in the same circumstances. Jacques, above, is clear that he had a choice about what he would do, but the choice is to act, like a man, or to be a coward in his own eyes because he was too frightened to satisfy his burning desire to remove the shaming influence of the past: 'I couldn't bear seeing him about, strutting'. (105) Sartre's Mathieu admires the Communist 'man of action' Brunet for precisely the reason that Jacques gives here for committing his act:

'You are a man.'
'A man?' said Brunet with surprise. It would be awkward if I wasn't. What do you mean by that?'
'Exactly what I say: you have chosen to be a man.'²²

Sartre's Mathieu admires the ideologically committed Brunet, yet when Mathieu himself comes to commit his radical act it is in the name of freedom as terror; it is the destruction of all shame and determinants which impinge upon his liberty:

Each one of his shots avenged some ancient scruple. One for Lola whom I dared not rob; one for Marcelle whom I ought to have left in the lurch; one for Odette whom I didn't want to kiss. This for the books I never dared to write, this for the journeys I never made, this for everybody in general whom I wanted to hate and tried to understand. He fired, and the tables of the Law crashed about him – Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself – bang! in that bugger's face – Thou Shalt Not Kill – bang! at the scarecrow opposite. He was firing on his fellow men, on Virtue, on the whole world. Liberty is Terror. [. . .] Just time enough to fire at that smart officer, at all the Beauty of the Earth, at the street, at the flowers, at the gardens, at everything he had loved. Beauty dived downwards like some obscene bird. But Mathieu went on firing. He fired. He was cleansed. He was all-powerful. He was free.
(*Iron in the Soul* 225)

²² Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Age of Reason* *ibid.*, p. 119.

Massie's Jacques has achieved his 'manhood' in his own eyes by committing an ideologically inspired act, but the ideology which implicitly inspires it is Sartrean existentialism. Simon the garagiste had oppressed him by his gaze so Jacques took action to free himself from that oppression. In fact, like Tomaso in *The Death of Men*, Hugo in *Crime Passionnel* and Sartre's Mathieu, this act only succeeds in ensuring that the past will be a radical determinant on his future freedom. The continued influence of the actions and situations of others upon Jacques is reinforced symbolically since the reader's attention is drawn to the 'coincidence' that Jacques is being held in prison in Lyon, just as the heroes of the wartime Resistance had been, (104) as indeed had Lucien. (305) Jacques' fate, in a parallel with that of Etienne, had been dictated by the collaborative actions of his mother. This is symbolised within *A Question of Loyalties* by Jacques' shaved head when Etienne first encounters him. Jacques declares then: 'I can't stand looking like this'. (61) It is the shame of having to watch his own mother's head being shaved by Simon's men that Jacques sought to wipe out.

Jacques believes his act was an (existential) assertion of the self in the face of society. Clearly, this incident bears a resemblance to Meursault's act in Camus' *L'Étranger*. But whereas Meursault's act could be viewed as gratuitous (Dorothy McCall claims it is 'almost an accident',)²³ Jacques' act is more thoroughly determined by the external forces of history. Meursault acts largely without premeditation, but the premeditation of Jacques' act is clear: 'He did this the day before his own eighteenth birthday, choosing the date exactly so that he would

escape the guillotine.’ (64) This is why Etienne feels that Jacques is an idealist: Jacques exhibits the idealism of French existentialism which implies that a ‘free’ act is possible, just as Jacques stresses his freedom of choice.

Massie repeatedly suggests that such ‘free’ choices are always governed to some extent by external factors. And if radical freedom is unattainable, or attainable only as unacceptable terror for others, why spend one’s life labouring on the road to such freedom in a delusional state? So Browning’s Bishop Blougram might argue – the character who is the source of the epigraph to *A Question of Loyalties*. This is an echo of the ‘wisdom of Solomon’ in *These Enchanted Woods*. Furthermore, if such a radical act traduces the individual into a denial of the value or equivalent reality of another, how valid is a philosophy which advocates radical actions? Sartre himself was aware of this problem – it would be strange if Sartre intended that one should look upon Mathieu’s final moments as an unmitigated recommendation – but Sartre does not provide an obvious resolution within his fictions or dramas.

The (In)Authentic Voice

By engaging with Sartre – as the ‘authentic voice’ of the period – so extensively in *A Question of Loyalties*, Massie constantly reinforces the importance (and presence within his novel) of a retrospective view in coming to an understanding of the various significant moments of action in the life of an individual. In his obituary for Sartre in *The Scotsman*, Massie declared:

Now that he is gone, and with him a great age of French literature; an age distinguished by the names of Gide, Mauriac, de Montherlant, Malraux and Camus

²³ McCall, Dorothy *ibid.*, p. 77.

as well as Sartre, is almost extinguished, only Sartre's famous Simone de Beauvoir survives.²⁴

In terms of the creation of a sense of the life and thought of the period, one would expect that some of the authors mentioned above would be mentioned within *A Question of Loyalties*, and this is indeed the case, though not always with the reverence which a retrospective view would imply; the opinions expressed reflect the 'presents' of the individuals. 'That ass de Beauvoir' is castigated by Etienne's aunt. (231) Malraux is mentioned as being under an obligation to La Rochelle. (311) Gide and de Montherlant are specifically identified as acquaintances of Lucien. (6) Gide is discussed by Etienne at the beginning of the text, (11-12) with reference to the power which the pervert gives to others and the power of the amoral to twist ideologies and morality to their own benefit. This underlines Etienne's fears of the exposure of his dreamt-of desires, and his suspicion of ideological commitment.

Philip Thody extends the parameters of Massie's view: 'I myself regard [Sartre] as someone who reflected the great crisis of Western European civilisation, between 1933 and, say, about 1957.'²⁵ However, the overtly vague selection of the dates which Thody employs to express his judgement demonstrates that such a statement is intensely subjective, and indeed necessarily retrospective. Sartre's 'authenticity' of voice is conferred by reading later perceptions and texts-then-unwritten back into an earlier period. For both Massie and Sartre, it is the fog of the present within which we must make our decisions to act. Etienne's Geneva, to which he returns at the end of his historical 'odyssey', is 'fog bound and murky'. (321) But for Massie most

²⁴ 'A generation's pioneer on the road to freedom' *The Scotsman* 16/4/80.

²⁵ As quoted in Charlesworth, Max *ibid.*, p. 35.

significantly, it is from the clarity of a retrospective view that we can delineate the relative significance of those actions.

It is reasonable to view the popularity of Sartre's ideas in post-war France as an indication of their power to express and engage with the dilemmas that had been experienced by many. Raymond Aron has stated:

I have known Sartre now for, I would say, fifty years, so I know that his main ideas were present in his mind before the War, before the atom bomb, outside the fashion of the day. So, if Sartre is an important philosopher, his real significance is not linked with the historical context of the post-war period in France. But, the impact of his ideas, the fact that he became so fashionable is clearly to be explained by the circumstances.²⁶

It is the rise and subsequent decline in Sartre's popularity with the shift in historical context which took place in the decades succeeding the Second World War which generates the perception of 'authenticity' which has been conferred upon the work of the French philosopher by a later historical period. Clearly the above comments also provide an explanation for Massie's use of Sartre (as an 'important' philosopher) in novels which do not directly engage with the issues arising from the conflict of the early Forties.

Massie can be seen to utilise Sartrean philosophy in *A Question of Loyalties* to provide an intellectual framework for his 'sympathetic imagining' of the situation of France and its leaders in the early Forties. The fact that there has been comparatively little philosophical engagement with Sartrean existentialism in Britain

²⁶ As quoted in Charlesworth, Max *ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

(particularly in England)²⁷ may well be because of the lack of such an experience occupying every area of society in living memory. As R.D.Laing has stated:

If British philosophers had had to live through a German occupation, if they'd had to take sides, if they'd had to go through all these agonising choices and decisions and were really put in a position where they couldn't be neutral but had to be one political side or another, then this would inevitably have affected their lives and hence their philosophy. I can't help feeling that there has been a certain failure of sympathetic imagination in the past by the technical, professional British philosopher [. . .]²⁸

This lack of sympathetic imagination identified by Laing is not confined to Britain, however. The philosophers and public of a later period in France demonstrate a similar indifference. Raymond Aron declared that

[T]he Parisian fashion in philosophy now [1975] has become different. The fashion is no more subjectivity, consciousness, freedom of the individual, choice, the tragic nature of human destiny – all topics more or less related to the mood of the French people after the War.²⁹

The philosopher of the 'necessity of choice' became less popular as the immediacy of a situation in which the individual was compelled to make difficult (and often public) decisions to act receded into history. Clearly thirty years after the end of the war that situation would have become exclusively historical for a new generation of philosophers and writers.

In *A Question of Loyalties* Massie effectively asks the question: 'How does one deal with the legacy of History?' Etienne invokes this question fairly explicitly: 'It was impossible to say what I would do with my inheritance.' (102) Massie's situation as author is mirrored by the situation of the 'present day' 'author' within the text. Etienne's presentation and limited interrogation of his father's texts can be viewed as the interrogation of a period and place (France during the German

²⁷ See Appendix 2, p. 323.

occupation/collaboration of the early Forties) by those for whom such a situation must be understood at one remove, whether that be from a different period or a different geographical location. Etienne, having left France as a child before the conflict and being brought up in Britain and South Africa, fulfils both criteria. Massie is a British author who was a very young child during the conflict of the early Forties. Within this novel he interrogates Sartre's texts and thoughts as representing the 'authentic voice' to emerge from that period. In both cases the question which emerges is, more exactly: 'To what extent can one come to terms with a period – a period so formative of the present – at second-hand?' It is the question which Massie suggested (in 1979) no-one in Scottish literature had succeeded in answering: 'How do you write about a second-hand society?' Massie overtly attacks any attempt to deny the impact of the past on the present, whether that be the past of others and history or the individual's own. Etienne reports an exchange in which he participates: "'You can't draw a line under the past. You of all men ought to know that.'" "But it is not our past," I said.' (*QoL* 14)

For Massie – a historian by education – and Sartre, history is reconstructed teleologically from the present moment. For Massie, however, cutting 'the thread to the future'³⁰ on the basis of this understanding (as Sartre does) and committing a 'Self-defining' act in fact, ironically, renders one vulnerable to subsequent re-definition. Sartre suggests that because the full implications of an action cannot be known to the individual making choices in the present, the individual should act to

²⁸ As quoted in Charlesworth, Max *ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

²⁹ As quoted in Charlesworth, Max *ibid.*, p. 73.

supersede the pressures of history and ignore posterity. In *The Roads to Freedom* Sartre adopted a narrative style which reflected this belief. The stories of Lucien and Etienne suggest that Massie is aware that this may not always be possible. As Sartre himself stated, historical personages pre-exist the events in which they participate; one writes about the epoch or situation in which one exists without really understanding it in the way in which those looking back at the period will come to understand it.

The striking thing about lives of the past is that they always unfold *on the eve* of great events which exceed forecasts, disappoint expectations, upset plans, and bring new light to bear on the years that have gone by.
(*WL?* 156)

As a novelist, Sartre therefore concentrates on the present moment, whereas Massie shows *within the text* that Lucien does not understand his situation in the same way that his son Etienne does, but acts within it for what he perceives to be the best interests of his view of France³¹ *at the time*. Massie underlines this point by having Etienne reflect upon one of his father's texts:

He didn't mention the Nazis. They were a mere temporary phenomenon of no historical significance. And Lucien wasn't a fool.
History is written from then to now but understood back to front.
(141)

Sartre himself is only mentioned once by name in the novel – by Etienne. (*QoL* 255) Chapter Twenty-two, where the reference occurs, is highly significant in terms of the engagement with Sartre's 'authentic voice' since it offers a self-conscious discussion

³⁰ 'The thread that attaches you to the future snaps. You have no responsibility for what's going to happen.' Massie, Allan *One Night in Winter* *ibid.*, p. 213.

³¹ A key area of critical engagement between Massie and Sartre being that in Lucien's early texts his view of the 'best interests' is predicated on Lucien's religiosity and his aristocratic perception of a timeless eternal 'France'.

of the practice of narration followed by a pastiche of Sartre's theory and practice of narrative technique. Sartre stated:

If I fix on the canvas or in writing a certain aspect of the fields or the sea or the look on someone's face which I have disclosed, I am conscious of having produced them by condensing relationships, by introducing order where there was none, by imposing the unity of mind on the diversity of things. That is, I feel myself essential in relation to my creation.

(*WL?* 27)

Sartre's narrative viewpoint is clearly a product of his belief in the act of writing as an assertion of the freedom of the individual with a concomitant assertion of Being or 'value'. Massie agrees with Sartre's awareness of the artifice of the narrative act, yet the narrative perspective exploited in *The Roads to Freedom* is 'inauthentic', for Massie, in that it implies a denial of the 'situatedness' its own act of production. In opening the section of the Sartrean pastiche, Etienne states:

Let me sketch out three other wars to bring Lucien into focus. If I was an artist, Hugh, I would have contrived to entwine these stories with Lucien's and, if I was writing a novel – and we toyed with making his story a novel – I would devise a cunning plot which brought them together in less arbitrary and more consequential fashion. But that is not how things happen. One life touches another only from time to time [. . .]

The artist labours to bring these things together, to impose a pattern which he pretends he has extracted; but life forces them apart.

So, take: Rupert. We left him in Zermatt [. . .]
(257)

The section which follows gives brief sketches of Mathilde, Rupert and Torrance. The statement about life forcing these lives apart highlights the artifice of the narrative itself, since both Mathilde and Torrance were with Etienne at the dinner party in Paris, and Rupert's wartime servant, the Baron, is with Etienne in Geneva. It is Etienne, the narrator, who has sought out Mathilde later and spoken to her of Torrance and Lucien. It is the narrator/editor who has mentioned them throughout the text, giving the impression of their being intertwined with the story. This is all within the context of a world-weary narrator who suggests that his 'real life' has led

him to distrust such coincidences. The metafiction is therefore overt; the 'So, take:' is like reading a recipe book.

Like Sartre, demonstrating the simultaneous co-existence of individual consciences within the same historical situation which are nevertheless eternally alien to one another, in this Sartrean pastiche Etienne switches the viewpoint of his narration with little compunction:

He was tall and thin with a little black moustache; he could hardly have looked less like a toad. A rat, perhaps, Rupert thought.

Rupert was embarrassed by the silence. [. . .]

He wanted to put her at ease. Perhaps she was the kind of girl who was never that. Now she looked stricken. She was tall, beaky, perhaps a little drunk; her breath carried a whiff of wine to him. [. . .] There were cobwebs, big ones, across the window: he could see into another room which was quite dark.

It was not surprising that Mathilde Dournier was perturbed by the arrival of a German officer. Somehow his claim to be a friend of Lucien's made him more sinister.

(259-60)

The other 'room which was quite dark' metaphorically suggests that Rupert is in the presence of another consciousness which is unknown and unknowable to him. He then appears within that other consciousness described in the third person, apparently seen through the eyes of the woman he has just described. The use of Mathilde's name clarifies that this is not, however, an act of projection on behalf of Rupert, since he doesn't know her name at this point in the 'history' related by the novel. The narration is therefore clearly Etienne's, and *appears* to be omniscient because Etienne knows the pasts and futures of these characters. The narration of this incident reflects Etienne's act of 'totalization' of the world within his own mind. It is a construct by Etienne, imagining the consciousness of a series of 'others' and presenting it as a reality when in fact he is only succeeding in confirming for the

reader his own act of internal totalization from his perspective of being situated within the world presented in the novel.

In *A Question of Loyalties* any narrative act is performed by a writer who is 'situated' within the text of the novel. Sartre's narration implicitly denies the situation of the writer which he claimed to insist upon, but only *appears* to fulfil. Sartre's narrator does not share the physical world with the other characters within *The Roads to Freedom*. Sartre's narration of *The Roads to Freedom* never steps outwith the temporal situation of the characters but is privileged with knowledge beyond that of the individual characters. Sartre's narrative can therefore jump around Europe and America at a single moment, demonstrating the simultaneous 'presents' of characters making choices with no knowledge of the future or the other 'presents' which may affect their own future, whereas Massie's narration jumps back and forth through time by the overt vehicle of a series of texts presented by Etienne and written by Etienne, Lucien and others. The narration of events in the Thirties and Forties is overtly retrospective, or enclosed by a narrative that has been 'written' at a later date.

A further illustration of this difference in narrative technique can be observed when comparing the passage above with Sartre's 'jump cuts' in *The Reprieve*:

I was just a kid, he thought, though not in self-excuse. He would die without having known any duchesses, but he regretted nothing. In one sense, he might, during the months to come, make the most of any opportunities that offered, but he didn't really want to: I should waste my energies. When a man has no more than two years to live, he ought to concentrate on serious matters. [. . .] And he was going to begin at once. He turned his head and eyed her attentively.

'Why are you looking at me like that?' asked Lola.

'I'm studying you,' said Boris.³²

Boris, like Rupert³³ in Etienne's narration, is both named and described in the third person on the same page, which is fairly conventional. In both cases, however, the 'seeing eye' of the narrative also provides access to the inner thoughts of the character before jumping to view them externally. In the excerpt from *A Question of Loyalties*, the absence of the first person from the presentation of these thoughts is notable. In Massie's novel this expression of thought in the first person is provided by Etienne, and Etienne has trouble with imagining the view of the other, though he is intensely aware of it. He may state 'I' of himself, but has difficulty in imagining the 'I' of the other (as he states. (138)) This 'other I' is only offered in the documents written by others which Etienne presents. In this sense, Etienne has more 'authenticity' than Sartre's narrator, for whom the act of freedom involved in the construction of the narrative masquerades as the product of a consciousness outwith a historical situation as experienced by any individual.

With the paragraph heading 'Third war: Philippe Torrance' (264) the most significant of the 'three wars' which collide in that office in *A Question of Loyalties* begins, but, again stressing Etienne's historically privileged viewpoint, it largely covers Etienne's opinions on how Torrance's war impacted on his life and career *after* the war. The 'I' of Etienne opens the section:

I haven't, I am aware, been just to Torrance. He is a man to whom it is hard to do justice. I disliked him so the only time I met him, at Virginia Fernie's table. I have disliked what I have read of his work. Even the early stories which delighted Lucien now seem dated, tainted with affectation and insincerity. In the fifties he

³² Sartre, Jean-Paul *The Reprieve* *ibid.*, p. 193.

³³ Boris's relationship to Mathieu, and a wound which removes him from the front line, are similar in many ways to Rupert's relationship with Lucien and his wound. Both Rupert and Boris are also romantically fatalistic.

wrote a long novel of the Resistance which won prizes; I found it disgusting. His reputation faded in the changed mood of the Fifth Republic; he died a few years ago. Even to the end, or near the end, he retained a constantly renewing bank of admirers, mostly young girls. He made a fool of himself during the Events of May '68, proclaiming that he was a Maoist. Obviously he was everything too late, a man who just missed every bandwagon. Yet there must have been something there which I am too prejudiced to detect.

He almost missed the bandwagon of the Resistance. Lucien's refusal to introduce him to Laval infuriated him. His writing became angrier, more extreme. As Lucien observed, however, polemics ill became him; his talent evaporated in rage.

Throughout '41, even after the invasion of Russia, he was a fervent man of the Right. He fulminated against Jews, celebrated the impotence of England. Yet a certain Norman caution prevailed; he never burned the boat that had brought him to any shore. Two things happened in the New Year which caused him to shift his opinions. He began to suspect that the Soviet Union would hold out and turn the war; and Drieu La Rochelle refused a short novel which he had hoped to publish in the *NRF*. Torrance discarded his beret, bought a roll-neck pullover, began to frequent the Flore and the Deux Magots. He cultivated Gaston Hunnot, an old friend with whom he had never, cautiously, quite severed relations. He began to spout a lukewarm Marxism, toy with the ideas that would later be called Existential.

(308-9)

Again Massie has his narrator emphatically declare his own subjectivity whilst simultaneously inviting the reader to ponder the portrayal of Torrance. Torrance is reviled throughout the novel and possibly responsible for the ultimate betrayal of Lucien, quite apart from the personal betrayal for which Mathilde cannot forgive him. He is held responsible for the betrayal of Alastair in *Shadows of Empire*. (*SoE* 271) The character of Torrance appears from the above description to be based on Sartre himself. Closer analysis, however, reveals that he is a sort of doppelganger figure to Sartre, and could be little more, since Sartre already exists within the novel. By including more than one 'Sartre figure' within the novel Massie implies the multiple subjectivities of Sartre-the-novelist which Sartre's own narratorial perspective in *The Roads to Freedom* would necessitate.

The nature of the value which Lucien placed on Torrance's 'early stories' has already been revealed to the reader in a letter from Mathilde to Etienne, where she recalls Lucien talking about Torrance:

'But it's not his cries from the rooftops which interest me, it's the murmurings he brings of his boyhood in Le Havre. Now they are tender and original, it's the way he catches the shadowy yellow light of November afternoons on the quays and overhears the conversations in his father's drapery shop.'

Everything in fact which Torrance came himself to despise. . .

[. . .]

And then I remember how Torrance betrayed him.

(159)

Sartre was not brought up in Le Havre, but he went to teach there before moving to Paris in 1936.³⁴ Torrance, from Le Havre, was only a 'provincial schoolmaster back in '37'. (39) He is therefore identified teaching outside Paris (possibly, obviously, in Le Havre) at the point when Sartre had just left for Paris: Torrance is just behind the times. Sartre's first story 'Le Mur' was published in 1938 by Gallimard in the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise* – presumably the 'NRF' of the above quotation. Sartre's short novel, *La Nausée* was initially rejected by Gallimard but eventually also published in 1938. The reader of *A Question of Loyalties* is informed that Torrance's first short novel was rejected by the publisher of the NRF in 1942, four years after Sartre's work was published. Sartre's first collection of stories, including the eponymous earliest published one, was *Le Mur* (1939) in which the story 'Childhood of a Leader' also appears. Parts of that story are semi-autobiographical, as the later autobiography *Words* demonstrated (the childish androgyny and experiments with automatic writing, for instance). Sartre therefore wrote stories incorporating his childhood before the war, rejecting his petit-bourgeois upbringing just as Torrance did.

Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* trilogy was to have been a tetralogy. The fourth volume, which was never finished, was about the Resistance in 1943. Since the third volume was published in 1949, and by 1960 Sartre had concluded that he could not write that novel,³⁵ it seems that Torrance's novel of the Resistance is the one that Sartre did *not* write in the Fifties. Further, the specific mention of the prizes which Torrance won further enforces the idea that Torrance is a 'negative Sartre' in that Sartre famously refused the Nobel prize for literature in 1964. Sartre was interned as a French prisoner of war when Torrance was still a man 'of the Right' and fulminating against Jews. Sartre wrote a tract (*Anti-Semite and Jew*)³⁶ against anti-Semitism after the war. The existentialism and mitigated support for Marxism is common to both Torrance and Sartre, however. The 'Deux Magots' is one of the cafes which Mathieu frequents in the *Roads to Freedom*, as indeed did Sartre. In addition, Torrance's late Maoism, and his support for the students of '68 were two of the aspects of Sartre's life which Massie criticised in the obituary.³⁷ Massie states in that piece his feeling that Sartre's real strength lay in creative writing rather than tracts, an opinion echoed by Lucien of Torrance. Torrance's death – 'a few years ago' when Etienne is writing in the mid/late Eighties – is more or less contemporary with Sartre's own in 1980.

³⁴ Biographical information on Sartre is from Sartre, Jean-Paul *Les Mouches* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1963; 1943), pp. 7-28.

³⁵ McCall, Dorothy *ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Anti-Semite and Jew* (Becker, George (trans.)) (New York: Schocken Books, 1970; 1946).

³⁷ Sartre, though, explicitly denied being a Maoist in his essay 'The Maoists in France'. Sartre, Jean-Paul *Sartre in the Seventies: Interviews and Essays* (Auster, Paul and Davis, Lydia (trans.)) (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1978), p. 162.

In Torrance, Massie again highlights the benefits of retrospection in conferring ‘authenticity of voice’ for a historical period on a writer. Etienne mentions Sartre by name but Lucien, who is more closely linked to the situation that produced Sartre’s popularity, attaches importance to a writer who is a twisted mirror image of Sartre. Sartre, who would later emerge as the great voice of his generation in France, is only in the nascent stages of development as a writer during the period of Lucien’s life. The status which he later acquired could potentially – during Lucien’s lifetime – have been conferred upon any number of writers.

There is another kind of literary ‘authenticity’ which Massie presents concerning that period. If Lucien did not understand his own time whilst writing about it then, in accordance with Sartre’s ideas, neither did Sartre. His novels, plays, and post-war philosophical tracts may be ‘authentic’ in terms of expressing the perception at the time, but they do not explain what we have come to understand about those periods subsequently. Massie’s deliberate presentation of a ‘de-centred’ narrative where multiple texts are edited, presented and written by a man living in a vacuous stasis operates as a constant subtextual commentary on the dislocation and horror with which we now perceive the period which allowed the Holocaust. Lucien’s mind – his morality and reasoning – may have been coherent enough (particularly initially) but the text which is its representative has been smashed and fragmented by the imposition of successive teleological totalizations of the narrative of history in the succeeding years. That fragmentation of the narrative in *A Question of Loyalties* echoes the destruction of Lucien’s value system by the revelation of the horror which

it tacitly condoned.³⁸ At one level, then, ‘authenticity’ demands that Lucien’s narrative – his ‘totalization’ – be ‘damaged’ or fractured. As Etienne states:

In those days the Holocaust was not what it has since become, a subject trailed and trampled through the newspapers and across our television screens. It was still a barely imaginable horror. I had seen, like everybody else, photographs of corpses piled high at Belsen, photographs which were beyond words and below them.
(90)

The Situation of the Writer

The dual narration of Etienne and Lucien examines how one deals with a life/text which has already been partly ‘written by someone else’, providing a metaphor for the examination of how one lives in a second-hand society, as Massie puts it. However, more specifically, Massie also examines Sartre’s concept of the ‘situation’ of the individual in the world, and as writer and reader, as discussed in *What is Literature?*: ‘In a word, the author is in a situation, like other men. But his writings, like every human project, simultaneously enclose, specify, and surpass this situation, even explain it and set it up.’ (WL? 111-2) Whilst appearing to support this aspect of Sartre’s argument, Lucien simultaneously draws attention to the danger of abstract reasoning in the face of an *irrational* reality. Etienne, on the other hand, acknowledges the power of the ‘situation’ from the start, but in attempting to confront it (through his ‘free act’ of reading his father’s text) and thus supersede it, Etienne finds himself brought face to face with his own powerlessness. Sartre’s argument again appears to evaporate into the abstract when confronted with Etienne’s narrative.

³⁸ A similar narrative device may be observed in Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* where the horror of the

Sartre states: '*Being situated* is an essential and necessary characteristic of freedom. To describe the situation is not to cast aspersions on freedom.' (WL? 112) Sartre rejects the deterministic power of the 'milieu' (WL? 55) and insists that the author/individual must assert his/her freedom in the face of such a force. Rather than expressing his radical freedom in the face of his situation, Lucien denies the power of the present until it intrudes upon his life so forcibly as to bring physical and mental ruin, and ultimately death. At the textual level, this manifests itself as the presentation of a diminishing authorial contribution by Lucien in telling the story of the latter stages of his war years and his final days. Thus, as the situation exerts its maximum force on Lucien and he becomes increasingly powerless to alter his fate, his freedom to act as symbolised by his freedom to write is not asserted; his silence is deafening.

As a writer, Lucien appears to differ from Sartre on a fundamental point: the intended reader. The Catholic Lucien is addressing the Almighty, whilst inevitably in his own view being guided by Him. The 'public' for whom Lucien is writing is, in line with Sartrean theory, the Other, (WL? 55) but Lucien's concept of the Other is premised upon his religious faith; a faith which Sartre rejects.³⁹ Sartre states:

[S]ince the freedoms of the author and reader seem to affect each other through a world, it can just as well be said that the author's choice of a certain aspect of the world determines the reader and vice versa, that it is by choosing his reader that the author decides upon his subject.
(WL? 52)

Holocaust is expressed by the complete reversal of chronology within the narrative. (Amis, Martin *Time's Arrow: or, The Nature of the Offence* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1992).)

³⁹ Sartre claimed to be a representative of 'atheistic existentialism'. *Existentialism and Humanism* *ibid.*, p. 27.

Moreover, Sartre states that the reader for whom he writes, and to whom, therefore, his remarks and subject are tailored, is explicitly *not* 'God the Father', (*WL?* 50) but the central part of Lucien's first person narrative is referred to as his 'confessions'. (*QoL* 111) In the first half of the novel Lucien states: 'I write this automatically, as if another – The Other perhaps – possesses my pen.' (149)

In fact, the attitudes towards writing expressed by both Sartre and Lucien are more closely aligned than may be initially apparent. Those who premise their ideas upon secular utopias have more in common with those dreaming of a religious paradise than they may realise, as Albert Camus suggested. In Act IV of Camus' 1949 play *The Just*, the utopian, egalitarian paradise aspired to by the revolutionary terrorists is explicitly compared to the 'kingdom of God'.⁴⁰ Here Massie implicitly attacks Sartre from within French existentialism itself. Lucien, initially at least, believes in literary creation for which a future or eternal transcendent 'public' is the audience. In Sartrean terms this represents an act of bad faith. Sartre, however, acknowledged that his own idealised 'reader' was just that: the product of a utopian situation where the public would have the 'freedom of changing everything'. (*WL?* 119) The writer must therefore discard such a reader and write for the readers of the present moment of creation, but this too, according to Sartre was a notional public since it must be – to an extent – created by the writer along with the work: for a writer Sartre wrote, the public 'is a waiting, an emptiness to be filled in, an *aspiration*, figuratively and literally.' (*WL?* 55) At some level, then, the public for which both Sartre and

Lucien create share a basis in the abstract: both are theoretical projections,⁴¹ rooted in acts of faith – albeit a secular faith in Sartre’s case. Sartre is thus shown to be self-deluding in much the same way as the devout ‘realist’ Lucien. In *Shadows of Empire* Lucien’s brother observes: ‘Lucien was an idealist who thought he was a practical man facing reality.’ (*SoE* 257-8) This reflects Massie’s fundamental problem with Sartre. Massie however refuses to condemn Lucien – and therefore Sartre – completely.

In many ways Lucien seems to have been created to interrogate Sartre’s idealised ‘modern’ existential author. Sartre states:

As no aristocratic pride would any longer force him to deny that he is in a situation, he would no longer need to soar above his times and bear witness to it before eternity [. . .]
(*WL?* 117)

Lucien has a considerable stock of aristocratic pride, and his choice of ‘reader’ would seem to imply that he does indeed perceive himself as a witness before ‘eternity’. As such, according to Sartre, he is in implicit denial of ‘being situated’. Massie emphasises this by having Lucien name his literary magazine *L’Echo de l’Avenir*: ‘the echo of the future’. Defending his brand of atheistic existentialism, Sartre stated:

From the Christian side, we are reproached as people who deny the reality and seriousness of human affairs. For since we ignore the commandments of God and all values prescribed as eternal, nothing remains but what is strictly voluntary.⁴²

⁴⁰ Camus, Albert *The Just* in *The Collected Plays of Albert Camus: Caligula, Cross Purpose, The Just, The Possessed* (Gilbert, Stuart and Jones, Henry (trans.)) (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), p.158.

⁴¹ Etienne is also conscious of writing for his ‘purely hypothetical grandchildren’.

⁴² *Existentialism and Humanism* *ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

Lucien, however, equates free will with the *presence* of God. The war, which brings Lucien to declare, latterly, that ‘the Almighty has surely abdicated’, (307) first brings about the loss or abdication of free will. The reader is told that ‘in war man loses his Self, which in peace too easily rules him.’ (165) And later, describing the departure of a train carrying troops to the front Lucien states:

The cavernous station was like an antechamber of the infernal regions, as men surrendered themselves, their individuality and their free will, to a malevolent force over which they were powerless, against which they had no protection.
(191)

In this novel, as the situation enforces its deterministic power (in the manner of the ‘milieu’ concept which Sartre dismisses) free will becomes the first casualty. From Lucien’s point of view it is hard to see how ‘being situated’ has become an ‘essential and necessary characteristic’ of freedom, as Sartre insists.

The disastrous error of Lucien’s initial (philosophical and theological) position is elucidated in the first half of the novel. Lucien’s attempts to deal with an irrational, secular, delusional present by means of an archaic system of rationalism which is grounded on religious faith are shown to fail in *A Question of Loyalties*. Basing his ideas on his early learning in the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, Lucien states that only with a grounding in ‘lucid realism’ could one be safely exposed to the ‘illuminating, and yet profoundly deceptive, imaginings of such as Plato, Hegel and Nietzsche.’ (116) Lucien states:

If I am to be remembered for anything, I hope it will be because I have managed so to alter the educational values of France that every child will learn to insist on the reality of things; and will come to understand that change is not a denial, but an affirmation, of that reality, which can ultimately only be explained as part of a greater and complete reality, which is God.
(116)

As is stated in the companion piece *Shadows of Empire* for Massie, reality is never lucid. (SoE 242) Lucien's 'lucid realism' is premised upon an irrational act of faith. He has an eye on posterity from the start, yet he urges the need to recognise and react to the present whilst he himself paradoxically appears to deny its power. As Etienne states:

My poor father. Did he really imagine it was possible, in the twentieth century, in the age of the Panzer divisions, the barbed wire, and the operatic delusions of Nuremberg, to base his life on medieval theology? Or, more extraordinary still, that he had in fact succeeded in doing so?
(116)

This is a clear criticism of Lucien's self-deluding denial as to the influence of his 'being situated' from the earliest stages of his life (though it is delivered by Etienne whose consciousness of 'being situated' is a considerable source of constraint rather than a liberating influence.) Furthermore, it is Etienne, not God, who reads Lucien's text in the novel.

In this novel, 'loyalty' itself is delusional and irrational. On encountering evidence of his father's loyalty to his own highly specific idea of an eternal 'France', Etienne states: 'How dated is the language of patriotism.' (113) In a phrase reminiscent of Nietzsche – the existential philosopher whom Lucien had originally found to be both illuminating and deceptive – Lucien ultimately concedes that far from being a lucid realist, he had 'loved ideas more than life.' (303) He had, in fact, fallen into the trap of idealism that Nietzsche took to be represented by Plato, as Massie repeatedly notes in his journalism and throughout *Shadows of Empire*: for Nietzsche, Plato lacks courage in the face of reality and therefore relinquishes his control over that reality by a flight into the abstract.

Lucien's loyalties to transcendent ideas are themselves proof of his 'being situated' within France during that period, though he is – initially at least – unaware of this. The abstract concepts and language which preoccupy readers of Lucien's texts – both Hugh and Etienne – in the early part of the novel are shown to be indicative of a level of hypocrisy (as a 'realist') and a denial of his situation. The same might be said of Sartre. When Lucien realises he is 'situated' however, he realises not his freedom, but its futility in the face of external deterministic forces. Again, just at the point at which the depiction of Lucien appears to uphold one of Sartre's arguments – the necessity of an awareness of being situated – Lucien elucidates one of Sartre's flaws: the abstract nature of Sartre's thought. Either one asserts one's freedom solipsistically, or one acknowledges external 'reality' and the constraints that implies.

Etienne, as writer, represents the danger of acknowledging the power of the 'situation' from the outset: the danger of allowing one's awareness of 'being situated' to become a deterministic force which cripples the capacity to act by stifling the possibility of imagining a future. This is a major problem for Etienne from the earliest pages of the novel. Sartre's 'solution' to the power of the situation is acknowledgement *accompanied by* an insistence on confronting and superseding that force. Confronted with his father's text and the influence of that text/life on his own, Etienne must recreate and understand that which is pre-existing (i.e. acknowledge his situation) whilst writing his own story – creating his own life and situation by asserting his freedom.

Etienne confronts aspects of his situation throughout the novel, but he consistently finds that situation to be a product of actions which were committed by others (now dead) in the past; actions which cannot be revoked or superseded by Etienne in the present. His creative freedom is akin to that of a historian constructing a narrative of history: he can impose a pattern on events, but the events themselves constrain his or her absolute creative freedom.

At a structural level within the text, the presence of Lucien's various texts, representing Lucien's power to act in life, inhibit Etienne's ability to act (as writer). It is Lucien's authorial silence towards the end of his life which allows Etienne his opportunity to assert his 'freedom' as a writer, as he reconstructs the events leading to his father's death. In attempting to 'read' – to understand – his father's life, Etienne has to fill in the gaps in his father's text. Etienne's role is an extension of that of the reader who must (according to Sartre) therefore simultaneously attempt to be a writer. Paradoxically then, whilst Etienne's texts seem to enclose and delimit those of his father, his father's texts direct Etienne's power to imagine certain situations. Etienne's situation and freedom as writer is fundamentally affected by the texts which pre-exist, offering a metonymic parallel for Etienne's life.

On the last page of the novel Etienne is playing chess with another 'scarred' man in Geneva. Elsewhere, Massie has admiringly noted the metaphoric significance of another literary chess game: 'The figures are condemned, there can be no doubt, to sojourn in the city, play out the game to which they have been committed, and of

which they are ignorant.’⁴³ For Etienne, the power of the past obliterates his power to create – to assert his freedom – in the present. In his introduction to Linklater’s *The Dark of Summer* Massie notes a particular passage:

Mungo Wishart – of whose unhappiness I often thought – was right when he said there was no contentment for a man who remembered everything, for a nation that could forget nothing; and the obvious reason is that such a man, and such a nation, have no faith in the future. They go with the stream and their memories cling to them; they swim in a jelly of unhappiness. But the upstream swimmer and the spawning fish can shed their yesterdays.

Linklater was an artist, not a writer with a message. But that passage is worth pondering – for individuals and for nations. The past imposes a burden of unhappiness and causes for discontent. The up-stream swimmer can let the past go.⁴⁴

For Etienne, the weight of the past is such on his personal situation that he can have no faith in the future. The very last words in the novel, reported by Etienne, are ‘there is nothing new, even from Africa.’ (360)

According to the narrative trajectory shaped by Etienne, Lucien’s personal psychological ‘journey’ within *A Question of Loyalties* represents the collapse of both his religious faith (on which his faith in the future is founded), and his resistance to acknowledging that he is ‘situated’. Consequently, Lucien is brought to state that ‘*L’Echo de l’Avenir* is drowned by the clash of the present.’ (248) There can be no consideration of a future or eternity when the present elucidates the ‘situatedness’ of the individual so forcibly. Lucien’s belief in the transcendent power of the future and the past is forcefully obliterated by the intrusion of the present, whereas Etienne’s ‘eternal’ alienated present has to be endured due to his perception of the power of the past. Etienne’s situation does not allow a forward

⁴³ Massie, Allan *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989* *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁴ Introduction to Linklater, Eric *The Dark of Summer* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1999; 1957), p. xi.

trajectory or journey – psychological or otherwise – to take place: ‘there is too much “I” in this motionless narrative’. (83) His active narration begins and ends in a fairly short space of time (two years) within the context of the years spanned by the overall narrative of the novel.

The Situation of the Reader: the Day of the Dead

Massie clearly goes further than merely exploiting Sartre’s literary voice to give sections of his own narrative philosophical and situational ‘authenticity’. As Etienne states:

The fact is that anyone trying to recreate Berlin 1930 is up against a master [Isherwood]; it is like attempting a tragedy in blank verse and avoiding echoes of Shakespeare. This is part of what I mean when I say that our knowledge of what is real is conditioned by the imagination of others.
(140)

The imaginative recreation of events in that period of time, in France, is therefore impossible to write without such echoes of Sartre. The extent of the echoes and interrogation of Sartre, however, demonstrate that Massie is self-consciously expanding such ‘inevitable’ echoes into a metafictional point relating to the influence of literary history over the free will of the writer. Significantly, before such echoes may be present, the author must first be a reader, like Etienne.

In communicating the ruin of Etienne’s life through his prose, Massie alludes to Sartre’s ideas on the function of words themselves. Massie uses this to question the principle of freedom. In *What is Literature?* Sartre stated: ‘The word is a certain particular moment of action and has no meaning outside it.’ (*WL?* 11) Etienne states: ‘I have been broken by words.’ (85) Etienne has been broken by the actions

of his father, the creator of the words which have had the most impact on his life. The signifier 'words' is the title of Sartre's autobiography (*Les Mots*), so for Sartre, too, text itself may represent a life. Massie exploits this within *A Question of Loyalties*, fostering the metonymic representation of life as text.

The meaning of Lucien's words, as they represent his actions – and to an extent *as* Lucien's actions – cannot be dismissed by Etienne as having no meaning outside their situation. Yet by a Sartrean reading, Lucien's words – his fragments of autobiography – should have no power in themselves to affect Etienne. They require to be reanimated by the free choice of a reader. Etienne, however, seeks to reanimate Lucien's text – that of a dead author – because he needs to understand his own situation to hold out any possibility of superseding it. Just as the words themselves are moments of action, in Massie's novel they represent his father's historical actions which *have* had an impact. Etienne's patrimony has literally and metaphorically scarred him.

Sartre's ideas on the separation of power between living and dead must be predicated on the ability to free oneself from the past. As has been noted, Massie sees danger in the notion that the influence of history can be dismissed by the action of the individual. On this issue the metafictional aspect of Massie's engagement with Sartre represents both history, and the life of individuals within history, as texts which pre-exist the 'present-day' reader; a reader who appears within the text of the novel itself. Consequently, Etienne states that the experience of reading his father's texts, in his father's study, does affect him: 'The room oppressed me, overladen with

the being of another from whom personality had departed. Yet wasn't it precisely to discover that personality that I had come here?'(53)

For Sartre, the acknowledgement of the power of the dead over the living is a wilful act of bad faith, as he showed in the Day of the Dead scenes in his play *The Flies*. Sartre's attitude to the (in)significance of history and the historical perspective is largely the result of his belief that the individual in the present has the power to supersede any such legacy, and similarly should not attempt futilely to 'second-guess' the future historical perception of his/her own actions. Sartre extends this opinion to the texts of dead authors. The problem with this is that *The Flies* is itself based on the Orestes myth which had been extensively exploited by preceding playwrights in Ancient Greece.⁴⁵ In *A Question of Loyalties*, as elsewhere in his post-war trilogy, Massie engages with this aspect of Sartrean existentialism: he calls Sartre's separation of power between living and dead into question, and this extends to texts by other authors. For this reason, it is not surprising to find that Etienne, weighed down by the past, introduces the reader of the novel to the first sheaf of his father's papers on 'The Day of the Dead'. (109)

Sartre compares libraries with cemeteries and the act of reading a text by a dead author to a consensual 'possession'. For Sartre, the reader 'lends his body to the dead in order that they may come back to life.' (*WL?* 17)⁴⁶ Massie clearly goes

⁴⁵ Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes.

⁴⁶ Massie's engagement with this section of Sartrean thought is underlined by Sartre referring to the hypothetical reader as 'the critic', and: 'Our critics are Catharists. They don't want to have anything to do with the real world except eat and drink in it, and since it is absolutely necessary to have relations with our fellow-creatures, they have chosen to have them with the defunct.' (*WL?* pp. 18-19) Etienne

along with part of this, since the same revivifying imagery pervades the scene where Etienne first enters Lucien's old study: Etienne envisages his act of entering the study as awakening Sleeping Beauty. (53) More significantly, however, Etienne states: 'I was left with the ghost of my father'. (*QoL* 52) So Etienne is haunted by his father and his father's writings, as Sartre haunts the text of the novel, and indeed just as the characters in *One Night in Winter* are haunted by Sartre the dead writer; the 'Spectre of the Left Bank'. The imagery of haunting strongly suggests that this is not an entirely voluntary process, as the reference to Isherwood confirms.

Massie thus engages with Sartre's thoughts on reading as requiring the generous exercise of freedom by the reader. (*WL?* 36) Etienne had indeed chosen to begin reading the journal, but at this stage in the novel he had gone to his father's old house in order to understand the life which seemed to affect his own so profoundly. In this case, then, is the creative imperative of the act of reading located, as Sartre suggests, solely within the text's 'pure exigence to exist'? (*WL?* 34) Massie suggests that here, at least, it is an external imperative generated by the effect of both history and the contemporary milieu (containing 'other' people) on the life of the individual – the reader.

Massie's portrayal of Etienne shows a man caught in a situation where to do nothing would be to act in bad faith, but to seek to understand and overcome his situation will also lead him to an act of bad faith. When Etienne wonders whether there is any

lives in a moribund Switzerland but crosses the border into France - the location of the action of the novel - to eat and drink, at the opening of the novel.

point in the act of reading Lucien's texts, he reflects: 'Yet I felt, obscurely, committed, all the more so because my memories of him were so sparse and unsatisfactory.' (55) Etienne has a choice whether or not to attempt to understand his father's actions by reading his texts, but to turn his back on that would be to live in wilful ignorance and denial: bad faith. The act of reading the text, however (being a metaphorical regeneration of his father), is in this context a deliberate acknowledgement of the power of the dead over the living – in itself an act of bad faith.

Sartre commented on the freedom of the author as compared to the freedom of the reader:

The future is then a blank page, whereas the future of the reader is two hundred pages filled with words which separate him from the end. Thus, the writer meets everywhere only *his* knowledge, *his* will, *his* plans, in short, himself. He touches only his own subjectivity; the object he creates is out of reach; he does not create it *for himself*. If he re-reads himself, it is already too late.
(*WL?* 29)

Whilst writing and editing, Etienne, it seems, is re-reading his life. The process of creating his existence – the ongoing formation of his Being – has halted while Etienne reviews his life from the 'terminal' position.

Despite this tacit affirmation, Massie repeatedly attacks Sartre's insistence that all of the power lies with the living reader. Sartre stated that such a text as that of Lucien 'is by no means an object, neither is it an act, not even a thought. Written by a dead man about dead things, it no longer has any place on this earth; it speaks of nothing which interests us directly.' (*WL?* 17-18) Yet the first excerpt from Lucien's journals with which the reader of *A Question of Loyalties* is presented contains Lucien's

feelings on the birth of Etienne, the reader within the text. (53) It is hard to see how this does not interest Etienne directly since he himself appears in the text which he is reading. His own attitudes towards his origins will be affected by his father's feelings towards him. In this sense the text is very much 'alive' for Etienne. Conversely, Etienne refers to the thoughts and events recorded in his own journal as 'this dead stuff'. (9) By 're-reading' his own life, Etienne is confronted by his own past which is delimited as to its scope by his knowledge of his own present. His father's text, conversely, contains the possibility that Etienne will be able to 're-write' his own attitude towards his origins, that is, to re-construct his totalization of the world and thus his narrative of 'history'.

Just as echoes of Sartre imply that the writer must first become the reader, so Sartre implies that reading itself requires that the reader must become creator/writer: 'Reading seems, in fact, to be the synthesis of perception and creation.' (WL? 30) Etienne's attempt to reconcile himself with his dead father through reading his words causes him to write at the same desk. Etienne is to become a creator in order to fulfil his act of reading. Since it is Etienne who presents the documents to the reader, he is always simultaneously writing and reading: he writes; 'reading it all again now'. (12) In *What is Literature?* Sartre talks of the dialectical nature of subject and object within a text:

[. . .] the literary object is a peculiar top⁴⁷ which exists only in movement. To make it come into view a concrete act called reading is necessary, and it lasts only as long as this act can last. Beyond that, there are only black marks on paper. (WL? 28)

⁴⁷ Sartre uses 'toupie' which suggests a *spinning* top in the French, thus suggesting an object which requires to be acted upon by an external agency in order for the object to 'become itself'.

The text only truly exists as a literary object at the moment of reading, of decoding or even translation, thereafter reverting to meaninglessness, or at least a condition of being which is significantly less than its potential power. Massie represents this idea and the problematic power of the 'situation' within his text:

It is a romantic fallacy to suppose that anyone's story is an individual thing. We share our contemporaries' emotions as well as ideas, hopes and fears, as well as political convictions. In trying to decipher Lucien and tell his story, I find the picture blurred. He becomes one of the crowd of history's victims. To call him that will seem to some special pleading, as if I am saying that he was not responsible for his actions. Of course he was – and wasn't.
(*QoL* 255)

Etienne cannot escape his 'situation'; his milieu, within which he is compelled to be the reader of his father's texts. For Etienne, Lucien, represented as his own text and by the text of others, *must* be 'deciphered' since he has become the 'words' which have ruined Etienne's life.

Freedom and Responsibility

The constant intrusion/insertion of other texts into Etienne's own suggests that, contrary to Sartrean philosophical doctrine, (*B&N* 553) Etienne does not view himself as the 'incontestable author' of either his own text or his own series of (in)actions, though he cannot escape responsibility for his conduct or his creativity. The presence of Sartre's texts within Massie's, largely without Etienne's 'conscious knowledge' of them, would tend to support Etienne's view. He may or may not have inherited certain character traits, but Etienne 'Scarface' feels himself to have been born into a limiting situation which he inherits from the actions of his father (and others) during the period of Etienne's childhood.

Because of Etienne's consciousness of the weight of circumstances on the individual, his 'bad faith', Massie has Etienne repeatedly question absolute responsibility. This corresponds with the differences in narration (and opinions on the nature of 'choice') between the novels of Sartre and Massie which I referred to previously. Was Lucien responsible for his actions? 'Of course he was – and wasn't'. (*QoL* 255) 'It was the history of his time which determined what Lucien became. In saying that, I am not attempting to deny free will. Or am I?' (153) Etienne's deliberations on this point are pervasive.

Only a fool however can pretend to singularity, though only a fool denies it. This is the bottom line: our actions are compelled by circumstances and yet we choose to commit them. Lucien could not have avoided following Petain and committing himself to Vichy, and yet can be seen to have neglected the chance he was offered to avoid doing so.
(256)

Lucien's freedom of choice is curtailed by his situation and it is only in retrospect (with the teleological construction of 'history') that actions may be perceived in the light of the consequences to which those actions led – the impact of responsibility. Since, for Massie, responsibility is an experienced fact of existence, it is only the issue of ethical culpability which hinges on the extent of awareness of the choice(s) to commit oneself. Massie leaves the reader to work out which 'chance' Lucien neglected – one conclusion being that he had numerous chances, and the other being that he had none at all since at the time he was not aware of their significance as opportunities to avoid the horror towards which a later generation would perceive his actions ('compelled' by unforeseen circumstances) to have contributed.

The point which all the texts presented by Etienne imply is that, in line with Sartrean philosophy, one cannot 'judge' the actions of the individual on the basis of events of

which they were only partially aware, if at all. If Etienne wants to construct a justification of his father – and therefore of his family and himself – then Lucien's motivation is the all important factor, and the most difficult to deduce. It is that which Etienne seeks within the journals.

According to Etienne's 'research', Lucien is one of the victims of history, but Etienne himself draws a distinction between being a victim of history and personal responsibility. This is consistent with Sartre's ideas insofar as Lucien cannot control the historical judgement of his actions which will depend on whether his 'side' wins or loses. Sartre's philosophical judgement on the extent of personal responsibility in a situation such as Lucien's is consistent and absolute:

If I am mobilized in a war, this war is *my* war; it is in my image and I deserve it. I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion; these ultimate possibilities are those which must always be present for us when there is a question of envisaging a situation. For lack of getting out of it, I have *chosen* it. This can be due to inertia, to cowardice in the face of public opinion, or because I prefer certain other values to the value of the refusal to join in the war (the good opinion of my relatives, the honor of my family, *etc.*). Any way you look at it, it is a matter of choice. This choice will be repeated later on again and again without a break until the end of the war. Therefore we must agree with the statement by J. Romain, 'In war there are no innocent victims.' If therefore I have preferred war to death or to dishonor, everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war.
(*B&N* 554)

By extrapolation, for Sartre, Lucien is unquestionably not an innocent victim of the war. He is, for Sartre, completely responsible since he chooses to participate in the war and later in the Vichy administration by preferring to fulfil his inherited sense of duty rather than fleeing France or committing suicide. For Massie, it is not the radical freedom of the individual which enables responsibility, but reality. In *A Question of Loyalties*, written/edited by Etienne in the 'city of Calvin', (354) personal responsibility must co-exist with an element of determinism.

Our 'judgement' of Lucien alters our perception of him but not the character himself.

Massie presents this concept when Etienne discovers Marthe's personal history:

When Marthe brought in the coffee that evening, I watched her, as though in some way she could be marked by the knowledge I had been given. It was ridiculous. She had accommodated herself to experience years ago. The fact that I now knew was only a fact. Of no significance. It was like meeting someone released from prison and supposing that he would be changed by my knowing that. But other people's knowledge is trivial compared to the fact of what happened. It is only peripheral.
(63)

Revealing to the spectator what has happened to an individual does not change the individual, it merely changes how the spectator views that individual. This is the fact encountered by successive generations of revisionist historiographers, and one which Massie exploits within *A Question of Loyalties* to create the central paradox of the novel. In the world which Etienne inhabits, he understands the significance of the actions of a previous generation yet is powerless to change the fact of their occurrence, yet the previous generation acted to create Etienne's present without knowledge of the significance of their actions.

The trouble with this reading is that these are the conclusion towards which *Etienne* points the reader, and Etienne is a flawed human character who requires just as much analysis as Lucien. Etienne needs to comfort himself that his inaction is imposed by circumstance rather than a personal flaw such as cowardice. Furthermore, Etienne needs to know that his father wasn't a thoroughgoing sadist to comfort himself that he has not inherited such a trait. He notes a comment by T.H. White on Lancelot: "probably sadistic, or he would not have taken such frightful care to be gentle". I scribbled in the margin: "this is me; *facilis descensus Averni*".' (48) If such a trait

was part of his inheritance, it need not be sourced to his father, but may be endemic to humanity. The connection of Lancelot and Aeneas here implicates mythology. An earlier comment following the relation of his own dream suggests the Jungian collective unconscious:

[I] have experienced a certain horror of my own nature. Yet my nature is only human – the most pathetic of standard excuses – and humanity has shown such a relish for cruelty as exists in no other species. It is ironic that we also use the word ‘humanity’ to describe a moral quality of which we approve. At this very moment a trial for war crimes is being held in Israel [. . .]
(22)

Humanity’s inherent capacity for cruelty is thus fairly explicitly connected with war crimes. This idea of a psychological inheritance and a collective unconscious undermines the fundamental premise of Sartrean existentialism that for the human, existence precedes essence. This is the bedrock upon which Sartre’s argument for radical freedom is founded.

Etienne and Lucien do bear responsibility for their (in)actions, but the extent of their freedom to act is shown to be curtailed by another irrational *internal* determinism which operates on the conscious mind and which Sartre seems to ignore in his philosophical works: love; unselfish devotion to either an idea or, more importantly, other people. This is a blind spot in Sartre’s theorising – if not, as has been noted, in his personal opinions – which contributes to the accusation of solipsism. Sartre discusses sexual desire in the ‘Concrete Relations With Others’ section of *Being and Nothingness* but this, as the title of the section suggests, ignores the non-physiological aspect and certainly precludes the forms of love which have nothing to do with physical sexual desire. Furthermore, love has repercussions for the way we view the past, because of its ‘otherness’, as Gabriel Josipovici points out:

And what is love? It is the acknowledgement by the whole self of the otherness, the uniqueness of the thing loved, as well as the attempt to comprehend that otherness. It draws us out of our limited selves and frees us from [. . .] seeing the past as either frozen and monolithic or as non-existent.⁴⁸

Love is a redemptive quality for both Lucien and Etienne. Despite their flaws as individuals, both have the capacity to love. But can one be held responsible for the things or people that are loved? Not entirely, given that love is devotion to otherness, which by definition is beyond one's complete control. For Massie, love 'defeats' solipsism and the denial of history.

The problems which Massie highlights concerning Sartre's dismissal of the power of the dead, of 'historic' individuals, seem to bear a close resemblance to the problems which Massie suggests (throughout his fictional oeuvre) are created by the existence of the 'other' within Sartrean existentialism. Etienne states that 'it is not only History that acts on us. Sartre's drama which tells us that Hell is other people is too glib. The fact is that life here is other people too.' (255) It is, then, not merely the power of the 'situation' of the writer as it differs from that of the reader which is the problem, but the fundamental 'otherness' of the writer from the reader. Josipovici expressed precisely this problem of 'otherness' between writer and reader:

To [the historicist's] question: 'What can we know about the literature of the past since we can never emerge from the prejudices of our own age?', we may reply: 'What do you call the past? Five hundred years ago? One hundred years? Fifty? Ten? Five? One year? Ten minutes? One minute?' To put these questions to him is to recognise that what he is arguing for is not the impossibility of bridging the gap between *cultural epochs*, but between *any two people*. It is not just the past that I cannot understand except in my (limited and prejudiced) present terms, but any form of communication that I cannot understand except in my (limited and prejudiced) private terms. It looks as if the premises of the historicist drive one back into a complete solipsism, a total relativism, which has dogged philosophy almost from its beginnings.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Josipovici, Gabriel *The Lessons of Modernism and Other Essays* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977), p. 104.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

In the light of this Etienne's expressed consciousness of both the power of the situation and 'otherness' may be viewed as a further attack on the danger of solipsism inherent to Sartre's existentialism. Early in the novel Etienne reads his retrospective consciousness of the future of a character back into an original situation:

If someone had told me then [. . .] what would I have felt? The blank incredulity with which we view the lives of others? The sense of wonder that people so different from oneself can exist? And indeed the fact of the existence of others is one of the hurdles one is continually brought down by.
(74)

The sense of wonder and difference, *exacerbated* rather than produced by time and language, is reinforced within the text which Etienne writes. Though many of the conversations which Etienne relates take place, ostensibly, in French, the moments at which Etienne as narrator interjects to remind the reader of this are frequently concerned with highlighting the most crucial aspects of 'otherness'. At the Fernie's dinner party, for instance, Etienne states that the conversation is flicking in and out of French, yet he relates it all in English with only infrequent observations of the sounds of the actual conversation. He states: 'the double r of *'guerre'* rasped out'; (38) "*epuration*" – a word I must leave untranslated, because "*purge*", which is its dictionary meaning, lacks the connotations with which history has now encrusted the French'. (39) This implies that the experience of the Second World War in France cannot be fully translated. In this novel, the power of history is such that it creates a milieu which affects the subject matter and structural approach available to the writer. More importantly, it operates upon the language which that writer may use, particularly in retrospect. "It's absurd," [Colette] said, rolling her Burgundian "r", to talk of being an artist, and, ultimately, I despise all those who do, but it amounts to

this all the same: we write what we have to.” (112) The creative freedom of the writer, as the interaction with pre-existing texts within this novel confirms, is not absolute.

Massie also uses language itself to show the gulf of otherness between Etienne and his father. Etienne states ‘I write for those ignorant of the language of the Third Republic of France’ (114) when explaining a specific turn of phrase. The reader is therefore insistently made aware that they are reading a translation through both time and language. Furthermore, Etienne states elsewhere that ‘I translate for the benefit of my purely hypothetical grandchildren – for it seems unlikely that they will read French.’(57) This reinforces the sense of Lucien’s loss. It was the shared language which Lucien felt to be ‘almost the only thing that holds France together.’ (25) While this alone of the things he treasured may have survived the war – though by no means unscarred – his life and death have removed his descendants from the language and therefore from France. The value which Lucien placed on his inherited duty to serve France has not been transmitted to his own descendants.

This consciousness of language and of speaking to the hypothetical ‘other’ in the narration, implies Etienne’s consciousness and torment of being viewed by the ‘other’. In a metafictionally significant section, Etienne notes Ortega y Gasset’s existential conceit that man’s best image of himself is as a novelist. He states that he himself failed in an attempt to become a writer of fiction – offering a clear parallel with his failure to ‘write’ his own life. He concludes: ‘the problem must be the existence of other people. Man himself may be a novelist, but he can’t make a

novel only of himself; and the trouble is that other people are only seen from the outside'. (138) The problem of other people is of course the central preoccupation of Sartre's play *No Exit* to which Etienne refers. Yet Etienne's acknowledgement of the possibility of salvation offered by those same other people (and represented in the text by his love for his daughter) suggests that Etienne himself has, at some level, accepted what Sartre's philosophy could not: the need to internalize an accommodation between the rational 'threat' to individual freedom offered by other people and the irrational comfort which is provided by a loving relationship with the other. These loving relationships inhibit freedom but enable the individual to transcend alienation.

As Massie portrays it, Etienne's problem, as both a writer of fiction and the novelist of his own life, is not the otherness of other people *per se* – the impossibility of knowing the other as one knows oneself – but rather his resistance to coming to terms with the inevitability of such imperfect knowledge. In *A Question of Loyalties* language is portrayed as an imperfect bridge translating across the chasm which divides the consciousness of individuals. Elsewhere, in a work of literary criticism, Massie has stated:

The novel is an exploratory form, seeking out routes by which the author and reader can come to a truer understanding of the world. Dealing in imperfections, the novelist understands that this understanding can itself be never other than imperfect.⁵⁰

Etienne doesn't accept that one's knowledge will always be incomplete because he craves solidity and security. Just as he is haunted by solipsism, he is petrified of the abyss of relativity with which that solipsism is connected by Josipovici.

Lucien's 'hubris' is that he consistently and unwittingly rejects that which could 'save' him, because of love: love of tradition and country, and love of his family. The love he feels for his family causes him to despatch to England the dissenting voice (Polly) which could have prevented his becoming embroiled in the Vichy regime.⁵¹ The metafiction in the following excerpt is overt.

Rup was right when you made him say that the war was really between decency and indecency, but Lucien didn't understand that you can't be reasonable with indecency, you just have to biff it. It makes me angry still. I still think he stayed because he was a conceited coward, and an ass to be taken in by his precious Marshal.
(338)

Lucien is vulnerable to irrational physical violence because of his attachment to abstract ideas. Nevertheless, whatever other aspects of Lucien's personality may have contributed towards his decision, Lucien couldn't follow Polly to England in order to 'choose the value of his family over all else' as a Sartrean reading might suggest, since travelling to England in that situation – as his brother Armand demonstrates – is a politically charged act in itself which could endanger his remaining family in France. Lucien does not have the luxury of the clear cut choices which Sartre posits. Furthermore, Lucien rejects Nietzsche – presumably from love of a God who had not yet 'abdicated' – yet it was that philosopher who said: 'That which is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil.'⁵² Of course not all of Lucien's actions are motivated by love. His education leads him to be an intellectual anachronism and this conditions his response to situations, as does his pride. Nevertheless, given Massie's consistent implication that Lucien's 'fate' is

⁵⁰ Massie, Allan *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989* *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵¹ Rupert's love of honour and Lucien causes him to act in such a way that may have affected the outcome, as the quotation below demonstrates.

⁵² Nietzsche, Friedrich *Beyond Good and Evil* (Hollingdale, R. J. (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990; 1886), p. 103.

determined by a whole series of actions, then those which are motivated by love are inextricably connected to his ultimate demise.

Sartre claims that since everyone is condemned to be free, one must accept that which is not personally initiated but nevertheless impinges upon one's life as one's own responsibility and no possible cause of regret:

[E]ach person is an absolute choice of self from the standpoint of a world of knowledges and of techniques which this choice both assumes and illumines; each person is an absolute upsurge at an absolute date and is perfectly unthinkable at another date. It is therefore a waste of time to ask what I should have been if this war had not broken out, for I have chosen myself as one of the possible meanings of the epoch which imperceptibly led to war. I am not distinct from this same epoch; I could not be transported to another epoch without contradiction. Thus I am this war which restricts and limits and makes comprehensible the period which preceded it.
(*B&N* 555)

In Sartrean terms, Etienne's life explains the period which preceded it, and this would seem to be the case within the novel. Etienne's 'war' is with the judgement of history which ruined his life (though he has been financially successful)⁵³ and caused the collapse of his first love in Fifties France. Etienne cannot regret this, but not because he sees it as a matter of his own choice, rather he cannot regret it because he went on to marry and produce his daughter Sarah with another woman, Rose. This argument is put forward in the passage when Etienne sees his daughter off to Africa at the airport.

'I know what you've been thinking ever since we left Anne.' Sarah placed her arm on mine. 'You've been thinking about her conversation with Guy Fouquet and wondering whether Berthe and Armand weren't completely wrong when they warned you off Freddy. Haven't you?'
'Daughter,' I said. 'You're Rose's daughter, and mine.'
The intercom crackled, calling them to Africa.
'Well, won't you?' she said.

⁵³ 'Society depends on the creation of wealth, but it depends on other things too, and sometimes the creation of wealth may make it impossible for these other things – human sympathy, love, the religious sense, art and beauty – to flourish. [. . .] These are the things that novelists are concerned to point out.' Massie, Allan *The Novelist's View of the Market Economy* *ibid.*, p. 16.

'I'll see out winter in Europe.'

[. . .]

Of course Sarah was right. These thoughts had indeed occupied my mind. If things were not what they have been, they would not be as they are. My uncle and Aunt's intentions had been of the best, brought about the worst. And yet there was Sarah calling me back to Africa, my daughter was one consequence of their intervention in my life. If only, if only . . . but then, also, if only, for example, Rupert had laughed at Lucien in that casino where they had discussed his love for Polly, if only he had played the man, instead of the man of honour, and gone off with her, mightn't Lucien himself have behaved differently in 1940? Things are as they have been made, and not as we might wish to rearrange them in the past. Life takes its shape undeflected by imponderables, and my residence in the city of Calvin comes close to persuading me that that shape is determined irrespective of our will.

(*QoL* 354)

Etienne feels the anguish of being forced to assume a level of responsibility for his own life – as it turned out rather than as it could have been – but does not convert this to a consciousness of his being as freedom. Sartre's observation may seem entirely appropriate:

The one who realizes in anguish his condition as *being* thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation. But as we pointed out at the beginning of this work, most of the time we flee anguish in bad faith.

(*B&N* 556)

The mitigation of Etienne's regret is not freedom, however, but the love of and from his daughter: the Other. Again, he draws consolation from the sincerity of good intentions of others even when the actions they initiate seem to have done him harm. The actions of the Other, even the loved Other, may create the impression of pre-determination to the individual. God, 'The Other' as Lucien calls him, is supposed to be Love. That particular Love, though, is crushed by the weight of external determinism in the power of an unleashed historical force in *A Question of Loyalties*.

As Tiberius states in Massie's novel of the following year: 'love and tenderness are hopeless against the fact of power.'⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Massie, Allan *Tiberius: The Memoirs of an Emperor* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 178.

Chapter 3: Sartre and Scott's 'Jacobite Theme'

The connection between Massie's engagement with Sir Walter Scott and Massie's engagement with Sartrean existentialism is most obviously contained in an overarching theme which is common to all three authors. As Massie stated in his introduction to Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*: 'Philosophy, drama and fiction are all rightly concerned with the question of free will and determinism, and it is a question which Scots reared in the Calvinist theology can rarely escape.'¹ If Sartre was not exactly 'reared in the Calvinist theology'² he was sufficiently aware of the theology which underpinned Calvinist Protestantism to refer to the influence of the concept of the Elect on the development of his thought in his autobiography.³

In *The Historical Novel* Lukács identified Scott as a massively influential figure on European literature, and it is notable that Lukács was also one of the more prominent critics of Sartre. Massie's critique of Sartrean ideology is very similar to that of Lukács, in that the two most significant issues on which Lukács attacks Sartre, as has been noted, are solipsism and lack of originality. Of course, in *The Historical Novel* Lukács also famously praised Scott for both an awareness of the effect of the outside world – the historical reality of the 'age' Scott was portraying – on the individual and for the originality and subsequent international influence of his approach. The following two chapters will examine the ways in which Massie's engagement with

¹ Introduction to Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993; 1819), p. xxiii.

² Sartre's grandfather, the family patriarch, was a Lutheran Protestant but Sartre was brought up as a Catholic. Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p. 41.

³ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p.155.

Scott – and the influence which that author exerts on Massie’s writing – may be seen to elucidate Massie’s engagement with Jean-Paul Sartre.

Massie shares a multiplicity of concentric identities with Sir Walter Scott. Massie certainly considers himself to be a Scottish writer, as well as a British and European one, and all these identities are entwined within his writing. Massie’s residence just outside Selkirk (a few miles from Scott’s Abbotsford) and his shared political inclinations as an ‘honest Tory’ are other common factors. In terms of a literary connection, Massie creates political and historical fictions: it is clear that Scott’s general sphere of interest (in the creation of a European political-historical novel) is present in, for instance, *The Death of Men*. This is also present in the post-WWII trilogy which looks into the manner in which Western society works its way out of the disruptive trauma of that conflict. Massie has written both a novel (*The Ragged Lion*) and a play (*The Minstrel and the Shirra*)⁴ in which he seeks to regenerate Scott himself. In the introduction to *The Ragged Lion*, in the midst of the bogus provenance for the manuscript, *A Question of Loyalties* is judged by the Contessa within the context of Walter Scott’s work. (xi) Furthermore, in an echo of Scott’s career, early in his own career Massie edited a collection of poetry, *Edinburgh and the Borders in Verse*,⁵ which contains some of the ballads which Scott published in his *Minstrelsy* and some by Scott himself.

Sartre and Scott

⁴ Massie’s three plays *Quintet in October*, *The Minstrel and the Shirra* and *First Class Passengers* are all as yet unpublished.

⁵ Massie, Allan (ed.) *Edinburgh and the Borders in Verse* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983).

If Scott and Sartre appear to be somewhat strange bedfellows within Massie's work, it should be remembered that at the very least they are both firmly rooted within the tradition of Western European literature. In *Words* Sartre makes reference to Homer, Shakespeare⁶ and the influence of Cervantes.⁷ He compares himself to Aeneas.⁸ All of these are consistent with Massie's portrayal of Scott within *The Ragged Lion*. Many of the Nineteenth century French authors to which Sartre refers when discussing his formative years are themselves thought to be influenced by Scott.

In his introduction to Muir's *Scott and Scotland: the Predicament of the Scottish Writer*, Massie argues: 'The separation of thinking and feeling, inasmuch as one can identify it, is a Western European, not a purely Scottish, phenomenon.'⁹ This of course places Scott at the heart of a Western European tradition and resists the attempt to place Scott within a cultural situation which is unique and endemic to Scotland. Massie further denies the absolute veracity of Muir's argument since he declares that it is an oversimplification of the Scottish cultural heritage.¹⁰ In discussing 'the nature of the Word' in his autobiography, Sartre stated: 'you talk in your own language but you write in a foreign one.'¹¹ It is to the work on the separation between literature and language done 'in France' since Muir's day that Massie refers as substantiation of his argument that Muir oversimplifies.¹²

⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p 41.

⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹ Introduction to Muir, Edwin *ibid.*, p. xiv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

¹¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹² Introduction to Muir *ibid.*, p. x.

Sartre may not be a reliable gauge of the 'Western European-ness' of the phenomenon, but he does show that it is by no means limited to Scotland. It does not seem appropriate to argue that this is merely evidence of the influence of Scott. Sartre's description of the situation of the people of Alsace, where he spent his early childhood, is curiously familiar: 'trapped between two nations, two languages, these Alsatians had their studies broken, and there were gaps in their culture [. . .]'. (*Words* 99) This is of course by way of reference to the influence of France and Germany on the region of Alsace, but the idea of a culture which is fragmented and incomplete due to the influence of more than one language has clear parallels with Scotland.

It is in Sartre's reaction to the fragmentation of his cultural inheritance that one may perceive the greatest difference between Scott and Sartre. Sartre rejects the influence of the past utterly, and attempts to create a philosophy and literature that justify this, whereas Scott attempts to create a new culture which is a unified synthesis of his diverse cultural influences. Sartre states that he hated his childhood, (*Words* 104) and that; 'Protestant and Catholic, my twin denominational adherence preserved me from believing in the Saints, the Virgin and eventually in God [. . .]'. (*Words* 155) He created a literature which reflects his alienation: 'I was Roquentin; in him I exposed, without self-satisfaction, the web of my life; at the same time I was *myself*, the elect, the chronicler of hells, and a photomicroscope of glass and steel bent over my own protoplasmic juices.' (*Words* 156)

In Massie's opinion, Scott shows how the past must be understood in order that we may understand the present,¹³ Sartre's solution to an understanding of the present is to eliminate past and future from consideration. This is despite Sartre ostensibly sharing with Scott the Enlightenment developmental view of history (in Sartre's case, by way of his Marxism.)¹⁴ The juxtaposition of a deterministic view of history with the avowal of radical freedom within Sartre's system of thought produces an intellectual paradox which closely mirrors that between predestination and personal responsibility within Calvinist theology. Sartre is reduced to arguing about what Marx *really* meant.

Since Sartre is both a philosopher and a writer of fictions – and as has been shown, in Sartre's case his philosophy has a deterministic effect on his fictions and dramas – the influence of ideas of destiny on the human individual creates a problem for Sartre which Scott does not have to confront. Sartre's understanding of the predestination of the Elect is something which he is aware of within himself but rejects, just as he protests the injustice of Communism being 'degraded to a stupid determinism' (*WL?* 194) but does not entirely reject the idea of a progressive historical model. Massie's Scott, similarly, rejects the idea of the Elect (*TRL* 35) (and indeed Scott converted to Episcopalianism) but does not reject the concept of God. Ideas of predestination are incorporated within Scott's novels by way of folk tales and prophecies: they are retrospective artificial constructs. Massie has noted: 'Scott finds it quite natural that people should believe in such [supernatural] things,

¹³ Introduction to Muir *ibid.*, p. xxi.

even though he does not himself, and that they should allow their understanding of life to be influenced by them'.¹⁵ Any concept of predestination causes problems for Sartre since as a philosopher they threaten his most fundamental theories, yet as a novelist such an observed 'reality' causes contention with the philosophical ideas which his novels seek to reveal. As Wilfred Desan observes:

Destiny in Sartre's view does not present us with a determinism built upon the mechanistic conception of a succession of cause and effect, yet is so pressing and weighs so heavily upon man's decisions that by a strange contradiction with Sartre's fundamental view on absolute freedom, it tends to threaten freedom altogether, or at least that which is its most cherished concomitant, responsibility. *Praxis* is always in danger of becoming *processus*.¹⁶

According to Desan, Sartre does acknowledge the conditioning effect of culture on the mind of the individual in his later philosophical work,¹⁷ but within the overall scheme of Sartrean ideas it is clear that such conditioning can only be determinative for the individual insofar as that individual *chooses* to 'interiorize' it. This is remarkably close to Massie's presentation of Scott's conception, but the significant difference is Scott's implicit scepticism over the absolute freedom of choice possessed by the individual concerning the act of interiorization itself.

It is in the *extent* of free will enjoyed by the individual in society that the difference between Scott and Sartre most clearly presents itself. For Scott, ideas of free will are *based upon* the existence of others,¹⁸ as Hume had suggested:

The mutual dependence of men is so great in all societies that scarce any human action is entirely complete in itself or is performed without some reference to the

¹⁴ This point of a shared view of history between Scott and Sartre was made by Massie in conversation with me 22/8/00.

¹⁵ Introduction to Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, p. xxii.

¹⁶ Desan, Wilfred *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1974), p. 247.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁸ A discussion of free will between two characters is premised upon the existence of others in Scott, Sir Walter *The Antiquary* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998, 1816), p. 105.

actions of others, which are requisite to make it answer fully the intention of the agent.¹⁹

For Hume and Scott, freedom is rooted within a society governed by laws. Sartre's ideas of free will, according to the critique which Massie presents in his novels, necessitate a rejection of – or at least a level of disregard for – other people:

'You must realise,' Alastair said, 'that we have got beyond thought. What do we know now? That thought and words are evasions. It is in action that man realises himself.'

Alastair's assertion was, like Sartre's similar boast, the cry of weakness – a refusal to look facts in the face, to admit that we have got beyond the stage when man can act spontaneously, uncorrupted by thought. There was an absurdity in it: Alastair was always conscious of the mirror.
(*Shadows of Empire* 75)

For Sartre, the individual must resist all curtailments on personal freedom whilst bearing the responsibility for their actions in the knowledge/trust that others must/should do likewise. But Massie suggests that in Sartre's assertion of radical freedom there is a posturing which undermines itself by inherently admitting the consciousness of (the gaze of) the other. Sartrean existentialism, Massie here implies, is a dogma which ignores the reality of the human situation on which it is postulated.

Massie and Scott

The shadow cast by Sir Walter Scott is considerable within Europe,²⁰ and in Massie's opinion at least, still dominates modern Scotland. The extent of Scott's importance to Massie is shown quite clearly by a declaration which Massie causes

¹⁹ Hume, David *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748): 'Of Liberty and Necessity' Part I in Hume, David *On Human Nature and the Understanding* Flew, Antony (ed.) (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1962), p. 99.

²⁰ The author's son, Alex Massie, recently noted Simenon's remark that Scott had 'invented all of us.' *Scotland on Sunday* 16/6/02, 'the Review', p. 1.

his Scott to make in *The Ragged Lion*. The following excerpt could well be taken as a form of literary manifesto for Massie's own works.

I believe I have never concealed the manner in which commitment to a cause, leading as it so often does, to fanaticism, is used by men to justify the most barbarous cruelties, and indifference to the tender and natural impulses of humanity. [. . .] I have often observed that men rarely act so vilely as when they are buoyed up by the conviction that the Lord, or destiny – which is perhaps another name for the same idea – is guiding them. In like manner, *Liberty* has [so] often been made the pretext for crushing its own best and most ingenuous supporters, that I am always prepared to expect the most tyrannical proceedings from those who boast themselves democrats – aye, and the most cruel persecutions from those who claim liberty for their own tender conscience. The vilest deeds are often performed by those who profess the most noble purpose, and it is one of the most wretched features of our existence that it is so much easier to inflict pain than to create pleasure; moreover, the infliction of pain, if presented as a duty executed in deference to some high ideal, easily becomes pleasure in itself.
(TRL 188)

Whilst it is unacceptable completely to identify the thoughts of a writer with the thoughts of a character merely because the writer has created that character, it is clear that many of the themes which Massie takes for his novels deal with precisely these issues, and the reader of these novels is led by Massie to draw similar conclusions. The excesses committed by the young revolutionary Tomaso in *The Death of Men*, for instance, clearly follow this pattern. So too the ambivalent treatment of Lucien the Vichy minister in *A Question of Loyalties*. The behaviour of an otherwise unremarkable man (who shows himself not to lack aspects of human compassion in his post-war existence) when placed in a position of power, controlling systematic acts of ideologically-led horror in a concentration camp, is an aspect of *The Sins of the Father*. The dangers of cant ideology to the discernment of inhumanity in any given action are clear from the above, and provide a major theme for *One Night in Winter*, as will be shown. In that novel, Fraser's cause of personal liberty causes him to oppress and brutalise those around him.

In his introduction Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland: the Predicament of the Scottish Writer*, Massie describes his own view of Scott's achievement:

What did Scott do for Scotland?

And the answer seems clear. He gave Scotland consciousness of its own history and nature. By doing so he supplied what had certainly, as Muir points out, been lacking: a cultural heritage. He contrived beyond what might have been thought possible, to assimilate English and European influences, and to create out of this something distinctively and unmistakably [sic] Scottish and modern; his method was seized on and developed elsewhere. But not in Scotland; here Scott's heirs tended to imitate what was most imitable but least important. The result is that we are still waiting for the writer who can usefully learn from Scott. And this is not surprising. Genius casts a long shadow. Shakespeare destroyed Blank Verse as a medium for drama. Milton as one for Epic. Such writers occupy territory and hold it against all-comers. So far, then Scott has done more for readers than for writers; he continues to supply us with a good part of our understanding of what it means to be Scottish.²¹

Through the influence of – and engagement with – such writers as Waugh and Sartre Massie clearly assimilates English and European influences. However, there are two significant differences (of many) between the environment in which Scott operated and that of Massie. Firstly, the writer of today must write in the wake of Scott's own achievement. Scott has, as Massie notes, been a principle contributor to the setting up of a Scottish tradition, and if one seeks to emulate Scott's achievement, one cannot do so without engaging with the product of Scott's endeavours. The second significant difference is the end of the British Empire. Both factors have provided subject matter for Massie, with Scott being portrayed as an Aeneas figure – creating greatness from the ashes of the destruction of the Scottish oral tradition – in *The Ragged Lion*, and providing a subtext of intertextual discourse in *Shadows of Empire*.

²¹ Introduction to Muir, Edwin *ibid.*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

A further complexity lies in the end product, which for Scott, Massie asserts, was something ‘distinctively Scottish and modern’. Massie has also stated that at the present time, to be modern is to be international.²² There may appear to be a difficulty for the modern writer in accommodating Scottishness with such a concept of modernity, but of course, arguably, Scott is the most ‘international’ of all Scottish authors. Massie can therefore confront the necessity of being both Scottish and ‘international’ by locating himself within the tradition of Scott and exploiting many of Scott’s themes – particularly the discourse on free will and determinism. Massie writes novels of international politics and conflicts retaining a flavour which, though not peculiar to Scotland, is certainly prominent within a Scottish tradition containing writers such as Scott, Buchan and Linklater.²³ Massie’s engagement with Sartrean existentialism represents an engagement with European philosophy, political thought and literature from within a tradition of ‘Euro-engaged’ Scottish fiction.

Broadly speaking, Allan Massie’s attempts to confront Scott’s influence and exploit his legacy have taken three basic forms. The most obvious is an examination of Scott as a writer and human individual in a historical ‘situation’ in *The Ragged Lion*. Massie exploits another form of engagement by interrogating Scott’s literary practice as contribution to – and exploitation of – his cultural heritage in *The Hanging Tree*. These two novels will be examined in depth in the next chapter. The focus of this current chapter will be upon the influence of Scott’s prominent use of the ‘Jacobite theme’.

²² Massie, Allan *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989* *ibid.*, p. 8.

In his introduction to John Buchan's *Midwinter*, Massie states:

Scott observed that "the Jacobite enthusiasm of the eighteenth century, particularly during the rebellion of 1745, afforded a theme, perhaps the finest that could be selected for fictitious composition, founded upon real or probable incident." This judgement has been scorned by the thoughtless [...] But Scott's view was well-founded nevertheless . . .²⁴

Redgauntlet is, as has been noted, Massie's favourite amongst the novels of Scott, and Massie exploits the interpretation of the 'Jacobite theme' and the discussion of free will which that novel presents in his own novels. Massie has stated:

Scott's Scotland retained a public life; ours has none; or at least it has none that can invigorate, or prove fertile to a writer. The writer thus lives in a society which has abandoned responsibility for its own direction, and which, by allowing its 'peculiar features' to be smoothed away, finds that whole sectors of it do no more than reflect a way of life that is lived more intensely and urgently elsewhere. Accordingly, Scottish novelists achieve their surest success when they treat of a life on the geographical periphery, where manners do remain distinct, or in that one area, our decaying industrial heartland, where, for sombre historical reasons, we do actually experience more intensely and more colourfully, afflictions common to other formerly dynamic cultures now left behind by progress. Clydeside by this reading is this century's Jacobite theme; the problem for the writer is to place it as Scott placed *Redgauntlet*.²⁵

Massie has attempted to place the Jacobite theme in a modern context most notably in *One Night in Winter* and *Shadows of Empire*. Clearly 'the shipyards of Clydeside' as a symbol of the working class culture of the industrialised West of Scotland has not provided Massie with his immediate subject matter in the way it has for other modern Scottish writers, and it may surprise many that Massie should have made such an observation. The explanation lies in the connection between the industrial power of Britain and the Empire. In his novels, Massie frequently utilises characters

²³ Massie has a great interest in Linklater, and in that writer's *The Dark of Summer* a discussion of Sartrean ideas sits alongside the influence of Scott in the discovery of the body of a distant victim of the Jacobite conflict.

²⁴ Buchan, John *Midwinter* (Edinburgh: B&W Publishing Ltd., 1993; 1927), p. v.

²⁵ Introduction to Muir, Edwin *Scott and Scotland* *ibid.*, pp. xxii-xxiii. Massie wrote this before the Scottish Parliament was set up, though judging by the opinions he has expressed about that parliament

who have inherited wealth from the vigour of previous generations, but have been progressively marginalised by a changing society; they represent a periphery of Scottish society. Their wealth clarifies that they are not entirely ‘powerless’,²⁶ yet they often lack the vigour to make anything of their lives. Massie presents the reader of *One Night in Winter* with the young Dallas Graham in the decaying Canaan reading *Redgauntlet* whilst confronting a character from the ‘industrial West’, and in *Shadows of Empire*, in a passage which engages with the Waverley’s return to a rejuvenated Tully-Veolan,²⁷ the ageing Alec Allan visits the derelict shipyards where his grandfather once built the vessels which sailed the world and generated the family’s wealth and influence.

In both *One Night in Winter* and *Shadows of Empire*, existentialism and Jacobitism are treated as contingencies of alienation. If Jacobitism is the romantic avowal of old loyalties in the face of the ‘progress’ of history (elucidated retrospectively by the narrative of progressive history), so, for Massie, existentialism is the romantic avowal of the power and importance of the individual in the face of all deterministic forces. Massie cautions that both Jacobitism and existentialism can slide easily into the oppression and objectification of others as a common contingency of the denial of external ‘reality’ which those ideologies can represent.

in various pieces of journalism it is by no means certain that he would alter such a statement if he were writing it today.

²⁶ Massie made a similar observation of Muriel Spark’s characters in Massie, Allan *Muriel Spark* *ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁷ See my Introduction, p. 35.

For Scott, Jacobitism gains sympathy and support from the emotions. Massie portrays existentialism as appealing to the same irrational side of the individual since its portrayal within Sartre's novels and dramas demands a deliberate negation of Sartre's own lived experience. Whilst Jacobitism laid no claim to being founded upon rationality, however, Sartrean existentialism does just that. In engaging with Scott, Massie exposes the seductive and delusional nature of any alternative artificial 'order' which is founded upon the irrational – this includes existentialism. One should not, however, according to Massie's novels, underestimate the power of the irrational as it operates within the unconscious mind. The power of the irrational unconscious to invade and corrupt the rationality of the conscious mind (which is portrayed in *The Ragged Lion*) is omnipresent and provides a metaphor for the invasion of 'counter-historical barbarism' into the progression of society.²⁸

Civilisation and society do not represent a threat to the individual for Massie, rather they are enablers for the individual to live in *relative* freedom. For Sartrean existentialism – as it is presented within Massie's oeuvre – society represents an infringement of the absolute freedom of the individual. Massie has referred to 'the existential attraction to the *acte gratuit*, the motiveless murder, the one that exists simply as a gob of spittle in society's face.'²⁹

Massie and Scott provide a 'bourgeois' affirmation of the stuttering continuum of the 'real' world in response to Sartre's eternal 'non'; Sartre dismissed the 'middle-class

²⁸ Massie has noted 'the beast in all of us shrieking for release.' Massie, Allan *Ill Met by Gaslight: Five Edinburgh Murders* (London: Futura Publications, 1987), p. 2.

idea of continual progress' (*Words* 147) as a childish infatuation. Whilst Sartre, Massie and Scott are all sceptical of an absolutist view of historical progress as a determinism which is independent of human activity, both Massie and Scott do subscribe to the idea of historical change – 'progress' – as an observable phenomenon within the lifetime of the individual. You cannot, Massie shows, ignore the power to destroy the individual which is possessed by the force of 'history', once unleashed. Sartre's call to assert radical freedom in the face even of such a determinant as this is, for Massie, largely delusional. Conversely, of course, Massie believes that for a very few individuals history may be given a 'nudge'.³⁰ As Massie presents it, the reduction of all life to the level of personal action which Sartre performs is, for the majority of people, a delusional ordering of the world (*Shadows of Empire* 133) which leaves the individual particularly vulnerable to the machinations of external forces.

The Jacobite Theme: Scott and Sartre in One Night in Winter

In Massie's fourth novel *One Night in Winter* Scott and Sartre are both overtly discussed within the text. Their juxtaposition is focused around the issue of predestination and free will. The intertextual engagement with Sartre as a writer and the overt philosophical discussion of his ideas in *One Night in Winter* has already

²⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰ 'I don't think it's absurd to say that history, or the course history takes, is often given a nudge, by the existence of individuals of unusual ability. I mean it seems to me that if Augustus had been a lesser man I don't think the Roman Empire would have taken the shape it did. [...] And on the other hand if Petain had not existed perhaps they would have had to find a substitute. [...] I can't think that German history would have taken the same course if a chap hadn't pulled Hitler down in the in the 1923 putsch, and he had actually been shot dead.' Appendix 1, pp. 301-2.

been observed, but running alongside that is a pervasive engagement with Scott's *Redgauntlet*.

The young Dallas reads *Redgauntlet* throughout the 'action' of the early period of his life, and that novel is explicitly referred to and quoted from on several occasions. (52, 159, 201) Dallas explicitly identifies himself with Darsie on his first encounter with the novel, (25) and like Darsie, Dallas' inheritance is significant but the movement of history has affected its value within society; his finances are controlled by a trust-fund administered by an Edinburgh lawyer. (26) The intrusion of the narratorial voice of the older Dallas sets up a discourse within the novel between the romantic young Dallas/Darsie and the older Dallas which is reminiscent of the interchanging of narrative voice – between Darsie Latimer and Alan Fairford – created by Scott in the epistolary section of *Redgauntlet*. The fact that many commentators believe Scott's two characters represent two powerful sides of his own personality merely underlines the similarity. Of course the older Dallas is also full of despair and self-pity like Redgauntlet himself³¹ at certain stages of that novel. This aspect of Massie's engagement with Scott allows him to expose the 'evasion of the real' in Sartre's writings, even when Sartre purports to be portraying 'retrospection from a distance of sceptical experience' in *Crime Passionnel*, as I showed in the first chapter.

The wilful and manipulative fanaticism which is an aspect of Redgauntlet's character is represented by Fraser. As Dallas notes: 'it's a matter, isn't it, of will.

He imposes himself on the company. They all have to think the way he does.' (51)

Dallas writes his initial observations of Fraser in a notebook:

He's forty-ish. Comes out of the West, that mysterious land of Glasgow Rangers and overalled armies marching from factory gates with spanners sticking out of their pockets, and huge cranes swinging erections across the sky-line, and bare crowded pubs where all cigarettes are Woodbines, and razor-slashings and crumbling tenements with Greek stucco lintels and art nouveau tiles in passages that stink of urine. [. . .]

Connection must exist between natural authority and standing at an angle to the law and to convention; again, cf Charlus; even more perhaps Redgauntlet himself, with his contempt for the comfortable, for the 'common cant of the day'. That's it, must be it: contempt for the common cant of the day.

(51-2)

This is consistent with Massie's attempt to place Clydeside as the Twentieth century's Jacobite theme in Scotland. Dallas' description of the culture from which he perceives Fraser to originate – the 'overalled armies' – suggests that it is as alien and alarming to Dallas as the Highland contingent of the Jacobite army are to the lowlanders of Scotland in *Waverley*.³² The phallic imagery which Dallas employs further suggests the sense of atavistic power with which Dallas associates this 'foreign' culture. The young Dallas is an aristocratic Episcopalian (37) Graham living in the North-East of Scotland. He is a symbol of the negated power of Jacobitism, just as, for Sartre, Hugo is a victim of Marxian doctrines which have lost their grip on the Marxist interpretation of reality. Dallas inhabits the 'lost paradise' of the past: the crumbling ruin of the grand house that was 'Canaan'. Just as the movement of history has sidelined Dallas' form of power, so the commerce and industry which enacted that change (in Scott's fictional oeuvre) has in turn become sidelined by the movement of history.

³¹ Massie has noted Redgauntlet's 'despair'. Introduction to Muir, Edwin *ibid.*, p. xix.

³² 'The grim, uncombed, and wild appearance of these men [. . .] created surprise in the Lowlands, but it also created terror.' Scott, Sir Walter *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* *ibid.*, Chapter XLIV, p. 214.

The use of 'Clydeside' in this context, however, does not simply translate to 'Red Clydeside.' Fraser is not the leader of, or deviant from, a lost Marxist cause. Fraser explicitly rejects the idea of an 'old-fashioned, wave the red flag revolution' in favour of a 'revolution of consciousness'. (43) One could argue that, just as it had been for Sartre, the tension between existentialism and Marxism is insurmountable for Massie, too, in the sense that it causes a difficulty in placing the 'Jacobite theme' within late Twentieth Century Scotland which Massie cannot resolve in this novel. However, the description of Clydeside as a vital community marginalised by the historical process which Massie presents in his introduction to Muir's *Scott and Scotland* (above) ties in with the revisionist view that the radicals of Clydeside were, initially at least, not fuelled in an obvious sense by Marxism, but were, rather, attempting to safeguard the interests of various privileged groups of skilled workers threatened by increased mechanisation.³³ These skilled workers and their forebears had been partly responsible for Britain's industrial strength, yet they were now being progressively marginalised by economic and technological developments. This is the Jacobite aspect of the Clydeside 'cause' which Massie exploits. The historical progress which is the agent of alienation is, in this reading, more complex than a dialectical class struggle.

Fraser is associated with the industrialised West which is represented by Clydeside, and therefore the 'Jacobite theme': the alienation of a cultural group by the

movement of history. Fraser's existentialism is a contingency of this alienation. The link between Fraser's brand of existentialism and the pagan rituals of Crete suggest that he will justify his attempt to interrupt that historical narrative by exploiting the 'totalizations' of the past – those which manipulated the atavistic impulses to create an alternative counter-historical ordering of the world based on the irrational. This is a reflection of what Cairns Craig has identified as Scott's 'two antithetical modes'.³⁴ Fraser himself is prefigured as a victim of that alternative ordering of that world (as demonstrated in Frazer's *Golden Bough* – and that author's name is clearly significant) when the knife is held to his throat in Crete and he 'bellowed' like a bull.³⁵ (130) Fraser's exploitation of the past and his need to enforce his personal will in the face of his alienation from the society which surrounds him, results in his destruction; this is a function of the wider historical narrative and part of the Scottesque 'Jacobite theme'.

Scott's Darsie symbolically predestines the Redgauntlet character to failure by comparison with historical figures. In figuring Fraser as Redgauntlet, Dallas incorporates this implicitly. In his initial reflections in a letter to Alan Fairford, Darsie notes the power and presence of Redgauntlet: 'I could not help running mentally over the ancient heroes, to whom I might assimilate the noble form and

³³ Iain McLean declares that this view of Clydeside achieved prominence from '1971 onwards'. McLean, Iain *The Legend of Red Clydeside* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1999; 1983), p. xiv.

³⁴ Craig, Cairns *Out of History* *ibid.*, p. 70.

³⁵ Fraser is a Nietzschean Dionysus figure, (Nietzsche, Friedrich *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (Large, Duncan (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; 1888)) but his portrayal within this novel owes much to Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which relates the Cretan Dionysian festivals, (389-390) and the significance of the bull (464) and human sacrifice (392) in the rituals associated with that god. (Frazer, Sir J. G. *The Golden Bough: A History of Myth and Religion* (London: Chancellor Press, 1994; 1890).)

countenance before me.’ After running through a number of possible correlatives, Darsie notes that Redgauntlet has ‘more of Marius, seated among the ruins of Carthage.’³⁶

The description of Fraser by young Dallas (above) is interrupted by the intrusion of the older Dallas into the text:

Of course Dallas was young, easily impressed, without adequate basis for any judgement. He couldn’t see who spoke the common cant of the day. And which day? They all have their cant—yesterday, today, tomorrow—which has this in common: that it substitutes for the discrimination of true feeling a surefire response. Anyone in tune brings out the jargon with the click-clack of a speak-your-weight machine.

I find it macabre, you know, to read these notebooks; and it is very hard not to patronize the boy as he fumbles towards the realization that his imagination simply wasn’t up to the task he wanted to set himself; as he looked for patterns in life’s Turkey carpet.

(52)

Within the context of the Darsie/Alan Fairford discourse this statement of insufficient imagination echoes Alan’s reply to Darsie’s letter. In attempting to describe the same person, Fairford bemoans his own poorer power of imagination.³⁷ The older Dallas is of course doing just that. The reference to the Turkey carpet is disingenuous, since such a carpet does have a pattern, but it is far more complex than the repetition of a single simple shape. Fraser may indeed represent aspects of Redgauntlet, but he is by no means a facsimile. The young Dallas is allowing himself to be seduced by the artificial order imposed by the construction of an internal totalization which is urged by Sartre. The older Dallas does not completely reject the need to construct an internal totalization, but warns against premature simplifications. In this he is absolutely in line with Sartre: ‘if one totalizes too

³⁶ Scott, Sir Walter *Redgauntlet* *ibid.*, Letter IV, pp. 39-40.

³⁷ Scott, Sir Walter *Redgauntlet* *ibid.*, Letter V, p. 51.

quickly, if one transforms—without evidence—signification into intention, and result into an objective deliberately aimed at, then the real is lost.’³⁸

It is the older Dallas who reconstructs the episode in Crete for the reader, but the references to Fraser as a figure doomed by mythology are allusive rather than overt. The significance is not directly acknowledged within the text; it is beneath the level of Dallas’ narrative which suggests that it is part of the seductive yet delusory need for order which exists even at the level of the irrational unconscious. It is, as Dallas later puts it, one of the strategies we use ‘to persuade ourselves that life makes sense’. (186) As such, the construction of an ‘internal totalization’ is here shown to be inevitable because of a conception of human nature as a ‘will to internal order’. Such artificial ‘orders’ are delusional, but, Massie argues, necessary for life to continue. Sartre’s refusal to acknowledge the *delusory* abstraction in such an act of ‘totalization’ is shown to lead to the objectification of the other beneath an ‘interiorized’ dogma.

As Sartre himself observed, ‘ideologies are freedoms when they make themselves and oppression once they are made.’ (*WL?* 117) However distant it may be from Sartre’s original intentions, in *One Night in Winter* (Sartrean) existentialism is a cant ideology with the concomitant danger that, like Fraser’s oppression of those around him, the need to insist on the importance of the individual can be replaced by the fanatical pursuit of the assertion of self at the expense of others.

³⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Search for a Method* (Barnes, Hazel (trans.)) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963; 1957), p. 45.

The most significant reference to *Redgauntlet* in terms of the current argument involves a significant quotation from Scott's text within the text of Massie's novel. At the point in *Redgauntlet* from which the excerpt is taken (chapter VIII of the Narrative section)³⁹ Herries'/Redgauntlet's actions are inhibiting the free will of Darsie by holding him prisoner, to which Darsie protests his fundamental right of freedom.

“The true cant of the day,” said Herries in a tone of scorn. “The privilege of free action belongs to no mortal—we are tied down by the fetters of duty—our moral path is limited by the regulations of honour—our most indifferent actions are but meshes in the web of destiny by which we are all surrounded . . .

“The liberty of which the Englishman boasts gives as little real freedom to its owner as the despotism of an Eastern Sultan permits to his slave. The usurper, William of Nassau, went forth to hunt, and thought, doubtless that it was by an act of his own Royal pleasure that the horse of his murdered victim was prepared for his kingly sport. But Heaven had other views; and before the sun was high a stumble of that very animal over an obstacle so inconsiderable as a mole-hillock, cost the haughty rider his life and his usurped crown. Do you think an inclination of the rein could have avoided that trifling impediment? I tell you it crossed his way as inevitably as all the long chain of Caucasus could have done. Yes young man, in doing and suffering, we play but the part allotted by Destiny, the manager of this strange drama—stand bound to act no more than is prescribed, to say no more than is set down for us; and yet we mouth about free-will, and freedom of thought and action, as if Richard must not die, or Richmond conquer, exactly where the author has decreed it shall be so . . .”

“The true cant of Calvinism?” Dallas said. “Though why a Jacobite should spout Calvinism beats me. But fine stuff, of course, fine stuff, can't be denied.”

Dallas was a young man of no convictions.
(159-60)

For Redgauntlet, the presence of external determinism is a ‘truth’, yet his delusory Jacobitism rebels against such ‘truths’. This provides a metaphor for Massie's perception of Sartrean existentialism. Within the narrative scheme of both Massie's novel and Scott's, of course, it is the narrative power of the author which fulfils this function. Redgauntlet's abortive ‘uprising’ is entirely the product of Scott's imagination. The location of the passage within *One Night in Winter* is between

³⁹ Scott, Sir Walter *Redgauntlet* *ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

Fraser's act of brutality in Crete (which effectively seals his fate) and his murder. He too is already finished, but does not yet know it.

In the excerpt above Scott has Redgauntlet portray himself as a stoical sufferer, though his stoicism is necessitated by his fanatical devotion to the Stuart cause. The form of words 'doing and suffering' recalls the phrase which Scott, beset by (impending and actual) financial concerns, would later quote with reference to himself in his *Journal*, and which would in turn be utilised by Massie in *The Ragged Lion*: 'Agere et[atque] pati Romanum est.' (TRL 5)⁴⁰ (To do and suffer is Roman).

There is, then, a limited identification between Scott and Redgauntlet at this stage. Massie has noted Buchan's observation that in this exchange between Darsie and Redgauntlet, 'Scott is uttering his deepest convictions as he rarely did elsewhere.'⁴¹ Massie cautions against identifying the utterance of Redgauntlet wholly with Scott, but in quoting this particular passage within *One Night in Winter*, Massie would seem to be consciously setting an argument concerning free will *presented* by Scott against that of Sartre within the body of his novel.

The concept of free will discussed by Scott is fairly directly opposed to that presented by Sartre, particularly if one accepts Iris Murdoch's statement:

The conclusion of *Huis Clos*, and one message of *L'Être et le Néant*, is that *l'enfer c'est les autres*, hell is other people, all men are enemies, an expression of

⁴⁰ Anderson, W.E.K. (ed.) *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1998), 5/12/1825, p. 31; 22/6/1826, p. 184.

⁴¹ Introduction to Muir *ibid.*, p. xviii.

desperate or insolent solipsism which left no place for love or duty or the complex network of ordinary morals.⁴²

Sartre's philosophy would imply that Redgauntlet is acting in 'bad faith'. Redgauntlet attributes his situation to an unshakeable loyalty which operates as a form of predetermination, yet by Sartre's thinking, his loyalty to the Jacobite cause is itself clearly a choice for which he must bear full responsibility. Within the view of the world presented by Scott, 'radical freedom' could not exist precisely because it solipsistically precluded love, duty or morality, which, according to Scott's fictional oeuvre, would seem to be aspects of personality which exist *a priori* in human nature. As 'a young man of no convictions', the young Dallas cannot understand the feeling of frustrated powerlessness which Redgauntlet experiences because of his commitment to a cause: Redgauntlet is a prisoner of his loyalties. The older Dallas, with a family and therefore loyalties and commitments of his own, clearly has more – though not complete – sympathy. By contrast, Philip Thody has noted that Sartre displays 'no conception of family life'.⁴³

Massie, it seems, is using Scott and by implication the ideas of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy to attack the absolutism and solipsism of Sartrean ideas. Later in Massie's novel, Candy states: 'The mistake lies in thinking there's a clear cleavage between free will and—what's the opposite? Determinism, predestination, fate? It's not like that.' (*ONIW* 212) This is an echo of Darsie's reply to Redgauntlet. Darsie points out how Redgauntlet is presenting a politically partisan view of 'pre-ordained' events. Darsie adds:

⁴² Murdoch, Iris *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (London: Vintage, 1999; 1987), p. 14.

⁴³ Thody, Philip *ibid.*, p.67.

[. . .] I feel myself incompetent to argue a question of such metaphysical subtlety, as that which involves the limits betwixt free-will and predestination. Let us hope that we may live honestly and die hopefully, without being obliged to form a decided opinion upon a point so far beyond our comprehension.'

'Wisely resolved,' he interrupted, with a sneer—'there came a note from some Geneva sermon.'

'But,' I proceeded, 'I call your attention to the fact, that I, as well as you, am acted upon by impulses, the result either of my own free-will, or the consequences of the part which is assigned to me by destiny. These may be—nay, at present they are—in direct contradiction to those by which you are actuated; and how shall we decide which shall have precedence?—*You* perhaps feel yourself destined to act as my jailer. I feel myself, on the contrary, destined to attempt and effect my escape. One of us must be wrong, but who can say which errs till the event has decided betwixt us?'⁴⁴

Here then, by an anachronistic reading, one could conclude that Scott attacks the idea that Sartrean 'radical freedom' may be achieved and that the problem of other people defeats any absolute assertion of the will of the individual. In fact, this merely places Scott as a writer influenced by the philosophy of Hume. By extension, the same could be said of Massie.

In *One Night in Winter*, Dallas hears an explicitly Marxist critique of Fraser's actions:

'A' this liberation he blethers about, well it pre-supposes the existence of an alienated individual. Now I'm a good Marxist and I ken fine about alienation—that's inevitable under capitalism. Nevertheless what we have here in Scotland, even in Glasgow, hell, no, especially in Glasgow, is a strong sense of the tribe.'
(162)

Within the context of this novel, this operates as a critique of Sartre's attempt to consolidate Marxism with existentialism, exposing the idea that Sartre himself is not a 'good Marxist', but rather, in Massie words, a 'heretical Marxist'.⁴⁵ It also clarifies Dallas' erroneous assumption that Fraser could be completely equated with Redgauntlet: the wilful leader of men against the authority of the state. Dallas reflects on the words quoted above:

⁴⁴ Scott, Sir Walter *Redgauntlet* *ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴⁵ Personal conversation 22/8/00.

Dallas, [. . .] responded to what he found cogently attractive in the argument: to re-enter the tribe would be to accept others' reality. [. . .] Wasn't it also what had drawn him to Fraser, that he had seen him as a tribal chief? And now it seemed he was wrong about that. Fraser was a deviant, an exile.
(162-3)

Fraser does not conform to the literary typology which Dallas had associated with him, and indeed Fraser, unlike Redgauntlet, will not end the novel as an exile. By denying the validity of other people Fraser represents a threat to society as an individual and is therefore 'removed' as such within the novel. French existential thought, if translated into actions, can only result in a further alienation or loss of liberty for the individual. The imprisonment of Candy and Lorna for the murder of Fraser reinforces this point. They commit a radical act to assert their individual freedoms which were being oppressed by Fraser's own assertion of freedom. On the other hand, since Redgauntlet is not solipsistic, the government of the day can eliminate him as a threat to society by showing that his party is completely powerless. As an individual he is not a threat and his liberty is therefore not removed from him.

Scott's character ultimately participates in a form of 'tribalism' in the sense that he is involved in a movement which relies on the actions of others as much as himself; a movement of which he is not the figurehead. In fact, as A. N. Wilson has observed, this is part of a pattern in Scott's characters: 'Uncompromisingly themselves, Jeanie Deans, Nicol Jarvie, Meg Dods, Redgauntlet and the rest, all recognize, or come to recognize, the larger reality outside themselves.'⁴⁶ Massie has

⁴⁶ Wilson, A. N. *The Laird of Abbotsford: A View of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 166.

recommended Wilson's interpretation of Scott,⁴⁷ and it is logical that such an interpretation should be part of his own views on Scott's thought. In Massie's later book *The Ragged Lion*, he has Scott write:

The paradox of man's condition is that we are each of us isolated individuals, activated frequently by mean and selfish impulse – fear, resentment, hatred, greed. We are each conscious of our own uniqueness, and this feeling is intensified with the progress of civilisation. Yet a man alone is but a paltry thing, for we are also tribal beings, and we flourish best in a community where we live in a state of reciprocal obligation towards our fellows.
(TRL 205)

Fraser's solipsistic existentialism goes against the spirit of 'reciprocal obligation' as indeed does Sartre's, despite Sartre's protest that in choosing a course of action we are choosing for the whole of humanity.⁴⁸

Massie sets up the lengthy quotation from *Redgauntlet* within *One Night in Winter* (cited above) by describing how Dallas goes to Canaan for no reason that he can understand and encounters a country frozen in immobility.

The country was locked; movement impossible.
In the nursery *Redgauntlet* lay on an armchair; with a marker where he had finished reading.
(159)

Dallas – ostensibly the 'writer' of the novel – has a relationship with Scott which is similar to that of other Scottish novelists. The context of the above excerpt is in fact highly reminiscent of the situation bequeathed by Scott to his literary followers, according to Cairns Craig:

In England, Scott was mentor to several generations of English novelists trying to grasp the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation: in Scotland Waverley is grandfather to J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, who cannot get out of the world of romantic 'Never Land' and back into the world of adult development. Barrie's Kailyard stories are the fulfilment of the historyless world that Scott bequeathed.

⁴⁷ Massie's 'Suggestions for Further Reading' in Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, p. 313.

⁴⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Existentialism and Humanism* *ibid.*, p.48.

Like Scott, Barrie sets his narrative two generations back, but his town of Thrums is inhabited by weavers who are being displaced by more modern production methods. They are, quite literally, dying out and will have no connection with the world in which their stories are read. In such a context, their lives, like the narrative itself, become discrete, fragmented, discontinuous, significant only as an excuse for moralising sentiment by Barrie's narrator, who writes in a house cut off by a snow-storm: the suspended animation of his environment images precisely the historical white-out in which his characters exist.⁴⁹

The significance of drinking in Dallas' description of the working-class culture of the West is given added significance in this light: 'In one sense of course, all bars were the kingdom of limbo, the never-never land of those lost girls and boys who had been caught half-way out of their prams.'⁵⁰ (65)

Isolated by forces beyond his control, the young Dallas is reduced to a child-like state of helplessness, being unable even to turn on the water in the house. He returns to the nursery. He is reduced to brooding on the culture that has been bequeathed to him, being unable to act in the present. Denied the capacity for praxis – and therefore in a Sartrean 'hell' – and subject to the whim of the irrational, he broods on the words of Redgauntlet/Herries. The argument of Redgauntlet doesn't make sense: Scott's character expounds the *inescapable* pressures on free will which are brought about by history and the existence of others even while he seeks to subjugate those determining factors to his own individual will. Redgauntlet's argument is inconsistent; it is Calvinism in the mouth of a Jacobite who sneers at the sermons of Geneva. It is this disorder with which the young Dallas must come to terms, but the construction of an internal totalization is inherently flawed.

⁴⁹ Craig, Cairns *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ Drinking and alcoholism is a form of 'bad faith' which Massie exploits in many of his novels, including *The Last Peacock*, *Tiberius* and *Antony*.

Ultimately, Dallas appears to become reconciled with, or at least resigned to, the nebulous border between free will and predestination. Fraser's brand of existentialism, like Jacobitism, is seductive yet ultimately delusional: both are a betrayal of the 'reality' where love and other people (the possibility of secular salvation) exist. Dallas is a nominal Episcopalian yet the influence of Calvinism, so pervasive in Scotland, affects him. Culture has more determinative power on the individual's psyche than Sartre will admit. Dallas' son's name, Giles, appears to represent the acceptance of that cultural influence (from St Giles' in Edinburgh) and part of the manner of its transmission. It is that son whose actions cause the older Dallas to reflect on the futility of asserting personal responsibility – whether Sartrean or Calvinist – since responsibility, or rather its consequences, are an experienced fact of existence. (238)

The older Dallas becomes reconciled to the inconsistencies that had troubled him in his youth; he learns to live within the border land between free will and predestination, as the curious mixture of imagery at the end of *One Night in Winter* demonstrates. The closing paragraph of the novel shows old Dallas betting on a horse named Nemesis: 'We made our way through the scattering of betting-slips, once the hope of less fatalistic punters, to collect our winnings.'(240) The older Dallas is an (existentially heroic) gambler who bets on the triumph of predestination.

The Jacobite Theme: Shadows of Empire

In this novel Nazism, British Imperialism, its Christianity, and existentialism are all symbolically equated with Scott's 'Jacobite theme' by the narrator – a distant

relative of Scott himself. (5) All four ideologies are significant and powerful, but at the particular point in history where they collide, they are shown by Massie to be ‘counter-historical’ and ultimately, therefore, they are delusions. The negation of all ideologies in favour of ‘common sense’ is of course in itself an ideological stance. The offset moral centre of the novel, Toby Macrae, rejects ideology in favour of personal ethics. (349) As the course of the novel shows, however, this attitude in itself holds the danger of putting yourself at the mercy of the violence of the other. This echoes the danger illustrated by Scott in the constant eruptions of atavistic violence into society. To ignore counter-historical forces completely is not to negate their power. They must be engaged at some level, even if it is that of the anti-climactic end of *Redgauntlet*. Massie has stated that ‘civil society has to be defended.’⁵¹

In *Shadows of Empire* Nazism ‘calls on men to deny reality’: (50) Hitler’s call to action is a call to ‘annihilate thought, to reduce man to a condition only of feeling.’ (50) It is clear that the analysis which Alec presents here shows Nazism as a twisted version of Nietzschean existentialism with an expansionist imperial intent. If Imperialism in its expansionist stage is a deliberate aggressive objectification of the other in *Shadows of Empire*, then, equally, Massie shows how the senescent stage of the British Empire represents an evaporation of energy, commitment and self-confidence into a retrogressive self-destructive denial of external reality.

⁵¹ Massie, Allan *Ill Met by Gaslight* *ibid.*, p. 7.

As Germaine Bree has observed (in relation to Camus):

The drama for this Nietzschean generation was that it lived on Nietzsche's thought and had simultaneously to deal, in actual fact, with its caricatural realisation on a practical plane. It exalted the will to power in the individual at the very moment it prepared to fight it outside in the form of imperialism.⁵²

Sartrean existentialism therefore has to deal with this problem, but for Alec, Sartre does not seem to have succeeded in doing so. Alec subjects Sartrean existentialism to a similar criticism as that which is levelled at the quasi-Nietzschean Nazism: in Alec's eyes it is, as was noted above, a solipsistic denial of external reality. (75) As in *One Night in Winter*, in *Shadows of Empire* Massie shows how the French existentialism which was propagated in post-war Parisian café society could be oversimplified – Alec's understanding of existentialism is portrayed as incomplete – as an invitation to exclude the outside world. Writing of a brief sexual liaison which takes place in that context but is insignificant to the pattern of Alec's life, Alec observes: 'Existence, Sartre says, preceded essence, and this affair [. . .] represents the most intense existence.' (323) After the loss of Imperial power – which happens earlier in France than in Britain – the valorisation of the individual and the reduction of all conflicts to the personal is understandable, but provides no solution if it is premised upon the alienated individual.

In *Shadows of Empire* Massie uses the same narrative device as he had in *One Night in Winter* with the old Alec narrating a story where the young Alec is, at times, described in the third person and criticised for his romantic 'naivety'. (30) This sets up a dialectical narration which again echoes *Redgauntlet*. In *Shadows of Empire*,

⁵² Bree, Germaine (ed.) *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 94.

however, it is not just the significance of certain actions within a largely personal, fictional, ‘conflict’ which becomes obvious in retrospect – as it is in *One Night in Winter* – but rather the process of historical change surrounding a ‘real’ conflict, and the individual’s experience of it. This device allows Massie to examine the movement of history not as a determinative narrative construct, but rather as the lived experience of an individual.

The key engagement with Scott’s portrayal of Jacobitism in this novel is with *Waverley*. The narrator of *Shadows of Empire* explicitly identifies one of his friends, Colin, as being ‘like a Scott hero – Edward Waverley, to take the most obvious example – an agreeable and [. . .] honourable young man adrift in a world he could not understand.’ (149) Within the novel, this is given additional weight since Colin’s married home is at ‘Tullymoran’ (191) which echoes the ‘Tully-Veolan’ of *Waverley*. Like some of Scott’s other Jacobite ‘heroes’ – Redgauntlet and Fergus Mac-Ivor – Colin takes up arms, in part, because he has no alternative source of income. (18) Colin is good-looking and has courage but also a legacy of heroism within his family which imposes an oppressive sense of duty on him. (248) Colin represents a Romantic aspect of Scott’s Jacobite ‘hero’ figures, in that ultimately he is more acted upon than acting. Colin is killed within the novel – he represents the human tragedy of Jacobitism, perhaps more like Redgauntlet than Waverley in that his tragedy is one of an inherited outmoded ‘loyalty’.

The most significant narrative function of Edward Waverley – that of a ‘reporter’ for the rational world at large in the environment of irrational counter-historical

barbarism – is performed by Alec himself. It is the young Alec who becomes a foreign correspondent for the readers in Britain, writing about Germany in the Thirties as it slides into Nazism and towards the Second World War. Waverley, of course, unlike young Alec, does not have a significant overt contribution to the narration of the text itself. The older Alec, whose perspective is more akin to the narrator of *Waverley*, imposes the sense of narrative direction on the historical events. He records that in Berlin in 1941: ‘The reality of the [Nazi] movement is still only, for him [young Alec], a distant drumming deep in the forest of unknown Germany.’ (40) Later, however, Berlin itself ‘had a rhythm like a beating of distant drums.’ (46) For someone educated in the traditions of Empire such as Alec, this is a potent image of insurgent irrational barbarism. Furthermore, back in England at that time: ‘It was even possible sometimes to feel that English life was reality, Germany a bad dream.’ (79)

Massie plays with the intertextual engagement represented by Alec as an Edward Waverley figure, implying the parallels but constantly denying them absolute fulfilment, just as the old Dallas, old Alec (127) and Professor Liebknecht (50) sceptically deny the ability of any form of lucid totalization to reflect reality. All three characters understand the paradox that such intellectual scepticism is no physical protection against the potential physical violence of the other: ‘even scepticism would not have protected my old bones from the blow that lout could have delivered.’ (51) Professor Liebknecht has written a study on Sir Walter Scott, (37) but shares his name with a little Jewish child in Czechoslovakia in Sartre’s *The Reprieve* (6) who will be sacrificed by the appeasement of Hitler.

Prof. Liebknecht is something of a Baron Bradwardine intellectual, but Massie doesn't 'save' him. The Professor's daughter, Trude, is one of Alec's love interests, but she represents the sex appeal of the unattainable and the idealistic Flora and she lives in the geographical region identified with an eruption of the counter-historical: Nazi Germany. Her idealism leads to death: her beauty is 'like a field of poppies'. (68) Towards the end, in an echo of Flora's dismissal to a convent, she declares that she will inure herself within a loveless marriage to a Nazi financier as a penance for the sins of the German people: 'I have no religious faith. Yet, this is a duty to which I must consecrate my life.' (303) Alec later learns that the couple have separated and Trude is 'inured' within the bad faith of alcoholism. (304)

At one stage in the novel, Alec, like *Waverley*, is torn between two women, Trude and Van:

They were serious about such different things. Together they might form my ideal woman, except that it was inconceivable they should be put together. Perhaps life would be more endurable if we were allowed two wives – and excused domesticity, except at rare moments like the present.

Trude and I had been, I saw, so young, so very young, caught in a moment of adolescence, that period of life when it is natural to believe in perfection – when it is natural too to be introspective. Van perhaps had never been adolescent. She had moved straight from a (corrupt?) childhood to adulthood without illusions. Was that what Trude was now aiming for? Was Van already ahead of her in being like Nietzsche's idea of Thucydides, in control of herself, consequently in control of things. I saw Trude tossed on the waves through which Van determinedly cut. (175)

It seems to the reader of this passage that just as, in *Waverley*, Flora's involvement with ideological causes renders her vulnerable to their effects on society, whereas the more pragmatic, personal life represented by Rose allows her to save *Waverley*; Trude is vulnerable where Van is not. Van is the 'Rose' figure of an attainable

relationship which is founded on the anti-ideological world of personal, domestic life. Van has a 'Jacobite' sympathy in that she can see the irrational attraction of fascism but does not act. (170) She and Alec have a daughter, whom, significantly, they name 'Rose'. (198) Both Van and Rose are destroyed by a German bomb after leaving Alec for another man, however. (244) When the force of the irrational is unleashed in physical violence, the valorisation of the sphere of the personal, like abstract intellectualism, is no protection. Because of the engagement with Scott, the pervasive horror of the conflict portrayed by Massie clarifies the extent of 'Romantic' order imposed by Scott's narrative act.

In this novel the pervasive power of the forces unleashed by Nazism expose the romanticism of young Alec's belief in Van's lack of illusions. Van had originally been attracted to Alec's fascist-sympathising brother Alastair. (170) In the novel, Toby Macrae analyses Alastair's ideological view as put forth in a radio broadcast:

[I]t was very logical. It was argued out perfectly. If you accepted its premise, which was essentially the common-place on that the Nazis were the defenders of European civilisation against the destructive nihilistic force of Bolshevism, then it made excellent sense. The trouble was it was divorced from reality, because it was so bloody lucid. And reality's never lucid – not sane reality and not in that way. Madmen are always intellectuals, you know, in a manner of speaking; they've lost the sympathetic connection between intellect and feeling.
(242)

In this novel Alastair's fascism is a form of 'Jacobitism'. It is the intellectual 'flipside' of the same coin as Nazism and Jacobitism in the sense that those two 'causes' appeal to feeling rather than thought. Alastair's intellectual premise, on the other hand, bears no relation to the horrific physical reality of the effects Nazi

ideology.⁵³ Those who believe they are facing reality, who believe they have succeeded in creating a totalization of reality which explains the world around them in a consistent fashion, are, in this novel, deluding themselves precisely because of the lucidity which they demand, as indeed does any intellectualisation of the 'real' world. The error is compounded if one believes that a retreat from such intellectualisations is a retreat from their dangers: to believe that it is possible to retreat completely from the 'grand' and personal narratives of historical events is itself delusional. The extent to which this narrative, for the individual, is threatened by Nazism, is acknowledged within the text: Alec leaves his diary behind when the war reaches Paris and only gets it back in 1946. (217) Yet, ultimately, the counter-historicism of Nazism is enclosed within the narrative of history, like a painting on the wall, and within Alec's ordering narrative with its dates for chapter headings.

The continuing belief in the British Empire itself, for Alec in the mid-Twentieth century, is a form of Jacobitism which denies the transition of British society within the global historical narrative. Massie has stated: 'It was the conflict between different modes of life which [Scott] examined in *Waverley*'.⁵⁴ Alec lays out the transition from the Imperial society of Scott's era to that established in Britain in the wake of the two world wars. This is explicit within the text. Alec writes:

I am conscious that what I am really attempting is the anatomy of a moral failure. It is not the failure of an individual. Indeed the failures of particular individuals are, it seems, determined by the wider failure of a class. [. . .] Put simply, it is:

⁵³ Here Massie implicitly criticises Muir's claim that Scott was ultimately betrayed by the separation of thinking and feeling within the culture. Jacobitism was always defeated in Scott's novels, but not necessarily by physical means. In *Redgauntlet*, this is accomplished by Gen. Campbell initiating a reconnection of the historical 'reality' with an understanding of the feelings of loyalty, within the minds of the Jacobite sympathisers. Their 'feelings' are 'defeated' without recourse to physicality. 'Common sense' is re-established.

⁵⁴ Massie, Allan 'Introduction' to Buchan, John *Midwinter* *ibid.*, p. v.

what caused the demoralisation of the British Establishment? That puts it perhaps too simply. It might be better to ask: what causes led to us, as the century advanced – and that ‘us’, be it noted, includes me among those charged with failure – what causes then led us to develop a disinclination to look reality in the face?

I come back, inevitably, to that passage from Nietzsche which Trude quoted: to his preference for Thucydides over Plato, on the grounds that Plato is ‘a coward in the face of reality’.

And wasn’t that our situation precisely? Hadn’t it been that, at least since the moment when we turned away from the reality of the dictators into dreams of a gentler future? Could one, to take an extreme example, imagine Wellington behaving as Chamberlain did?

[. . .] if Churchill faced one reality, he could not bring himself to confront the other: which was that his policy – necessary as it no doubt was and certainly seemed to be – was itself evasive. He did not come to power to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire! Oh, no!

(190-1)

In *Shadows of Empire*, four generations of Alec’s family represent the rise and fall of the self-confidence and commercial vitality to which Massie appears to attribute the trajectory of ‘Empire’ within British society. Alec states that he has to use a foreign word ‘entrepreneur’ to describe a concept foreign to his Britain.⁵⁵(7) This word is of course from the culture which dealt with Imperial decline before Britain did. French existentialism urges a fresh personal vitality and engagement with the ‘outside’ world. The three generations of patriarchs preceding Alec are a ‘shipbuilder’, a minister, and a failed politician who is a successful author. Alec himself is a journalist. The very success, power and energy of the Imperial shipbuilder, of course, puts the rest of the succeeding generations in his shadow. This image is exploited by Sartre in *Loser Wins (The Sequestered of Altona)*.⁵⁶

In *Shadows of Empire* Clydeside is shown to be this century’s Jacobite theme. The full extent of the shift between his great-grandfather’s generation and Alec’s – the

⁵⁵ In this context it is *British* society: ‘Scots, English, it’s all the same. You’re part of the same Imperialist racket.’ (55)

⁵⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Loser Wins (Les Séquestrés d’Altona): A Play in Five Acts* (Leeson, George and Leeson, Sylvia (trans.)) (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960).

vitality and self-confidence of an Imperial expansionist phase degenerating to the alienated desolation of Alec's own senescence: the image of a ruined castle on an empty hillside – is shown by the intertextual discourse with *Waverley* which I noted in my introduction. Alec's great-grandfather is a shipping magnate whose Clydeside yards generated the power of the 'Allan' line – literally and metaphorically. This figure was born during the reign of George IV (Massie draws the reader's attention to Scott's involvement with that monarch (15)) but survives into Alec's lifetime.

The ships for which Alec's forebear was 'responsible' clearly symbolise the strength and power (13) of the British 'ship of state' drawn from the 'all conquering' vitality of its individuals: 'the Great Exhibition set the Victorian age under sail.' (6) The same image is exploited by Massie when the impending collapse of the old order (in 1931) is compared to a shipwreck. (32) It is Alec's great-grandfather who urges him to 'make things' and more significantly, is against Protectionism: 'Glasgow was built on Free Trade. So was the Empire.' 'But now,' he states, 'they don't want to make things and so there's this talk of Protection. Well, they may be right. If you're weak you need Protection. We were strong when I made that ship'. (13) The ship to which he refers is depicted in a painting hanging on his wall – as in *Waverley*, disruptive vitality has been safely framed by history.

The role of religion in this process is also shown to be ambiguous. Part of the 'will to Empire' involved an evangelical mission. Further, Calvinistic Protestantism may have sown the seeds of the industrial revolution – the shipbuilder's father was from 'Protestant Ulster' (6) – and Alec's great-grandfather has been educated in the belief

that 'man's chief end is to glorify God'. (6) Yet the 'shipbuilder' explicitly rejects the Christian God (15) as he had rejected other forms of 'Protectionism': Alec's great-grandfather declares himself to be a pagan. He is over-flowing with the proto-Nietzschean life-force but he seeks to be constructive in intent, not destructive like the Nazis – yet the subjugation of others is endemic to the Imperialism in which such self-confident vitality found an outlet.

His son, Alec's grandfather, becomes a minister, much to the disgust of his father: 'There are better sermons in iron and steel than ever came from a pulpit.' (13) After the death of his minister grandfather Alec can see the Eildon hills from the manse window. (80) Clearly there is a connection between the seductive delusion of Elfland for True Thomas and the 'escapist Protectionism' of the minister-grandfather's religious beliefs. Christianity has become – if it was ever in doubt – counter-historical, but particularly so for Alec's generation. For Alec himself, it is no longer even a brand of Calvinism which allows engagement between the City of God and the earthly city, as it was for his great-grandfather:

The parson took his text, 'The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed', and told us about the quiet working of God's purpose for the world. He had been a field chaplain on the Somme, but his faith was Early Victorian. The same sermon, if somewhat longer, might, I thought, have been preached from the same pulpit a century earlier, twenty years before Darwin published *Origin of Species* and called the idea of an anthropomorphic deity into question.
(181-2)

This brand of Christianity appears to Alec to have insulated itself from both the 'death of God' and the reality of the horror endured by the parson himself. It is Christianity as attacked by both Sartre and Nietzsche in which the disempowerment

of the individual is valorised; Christianity as an opiate as attacked by Marx. Christianity, for Alec, is a 'Jacobite' denial of historical reality.

The next generation, Alec's father, is the generation of John Buchan, and Alec's father is a clear portrayal of that author – though his first name is Walter. Like Buchan, he views himself as a professional 'statesman' and part-time author (1) who writes fictions involving the Empire. His is the generation that fought in the First World War, whose fate in that conflict, Alec feels, was partly responsible for the death of the Empire since it sapped the will-power and self-confidence of later generations. (1) The novel of Empire for which Alec receives a royalty cheque at the opening of the novel is called *Corners of Foreign Fields* which implies both glory and death in connection with Empire – a 'Jacobite' sense of 'Empire'. Alec's father has a streak of Calvinism to offset his Romanticism (3) like Scott and Stevenson (155) to whom he is devoted (3): 'He was – as perhaps we have all been – a divided man, and, if he strove for worldly glory, he was half in love with failure as well.' (3) It is this form of duality which leads Alec's father to declare that every Scot is 'a Jacobite at heart.' (82)

'Blankets', the house which Alec's father buys outside Oxford after World War I (20) echoes Buchan's purchase of the similarly located Elsfield.⁵⁷ Massie has noted that it was in this house that Buchan had felt 'the past came so close to the present.'⁵⁸ This is reflected in the timeless essentiality of 'Old England' which is in sympathy

⁵⁷ Massie, Allan 'Introduction' to Buchan, John *Midwinter* *ibid.*, p. vi.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

with the Jacobites in Buchan's *Midwinter*. As the name suggests, the house allows Alec's father to hide from the world under the 'Blankets': 'His absorption in life there seemed a retreat from life.' (20) In 1926, World War One 'might never have happened'. (20) The 'Jacobitism' which manifests itself as a sentimental denial of reality, then, is not just a Scottish, but a British problem. Later in the novel when confronted with the wayward behaviour of his favourite son, Alastair (whose 'Jacobitism' manifests itself as fascism), Alec's father realises the 'Jacobitism' of his own love of such a retreat 'where it seemed I could deny *what I knew* of the mischief and knaveries of the world.' (241) (my italics)

In *Shadows of Empire*, two forms of 'solipsism' – British Imperialism and fascism – collide with one another with mutually destructive effects. Massie has written:

Buchan sees human life as something precarious and arduous, civilisation as a fragile protection. For him, man is mischievous and destructive, a divided creature, with instincts and desires that often conflict. Buchan's view of man is Hobbesian rather than existential since he sees civilisation as beneficial and enlarging; not as fetters. In fact, of course, this is a religious view of man.⁵⁹

The twisted existentialism of Nazism and the destructive power it unlocks show this character's self-deluding valorisation of a world-view which leaves the civilisation he would save dangerously exposed in the face of the eruption of atavistic violence.

Massie's 'Buchan' – Alec's father – states:

'Europe [. . .] dismays me. When I survey the continent I see a combination of a loss of nerve and a surrender to threats and promises – promises which are inherently false for there is no reverence in them – of ignorant and arrogant demagogues. [sic] It is profoundly unhealthy, for the European tradition, which sought the *via media*, has been corrupted by men with no understanding of the estate they have annexed. There is, everywhere, an ugly pathological savour. It is as if a mature society has been invaded and dominated by diseased and vicious children.'

'So war is inevitable,' one of the young officers said.
Father shook his head

⁵⁹ *London Magazine* Dec. 75/Jan. 76, p. 112.

'How can we contemplate another war when we know its destructive nature? The Great War poisoned the rich stream of European civilisation lovingly constructed over the long centuries. [. . .] What is to be done? We must place Europe in quarantine, leave the diseased continent to its fate.
(154-5)

The need to valorise European civilisation – a Classical, Imperial civilisation – leads Alec's father to a quasi-solipsism which asserts the possibility that denying the logic of the conflict could enable a successful denial of its reality. Solipsism is dangerous whether it is existential or not.

Such a view of the world is clearly attached to the delusion of a 'timeless' – counter-historical – enduring 'Empire' by Massie. Alec's father goes on to state: 'we must devote ourselves to those parts of the world where sanity still maintains its hold: the United States of America, the Dominions of that great Empire for which we have assumed the noble role of trustee.' (155) Alec's father's view of the 'current' power of Britain within the wider world, and the enduring power of the British Empire partakes of his 'Jacobitism'. Just as the Clydeside-built ships of Alec's great-grandfather are now only paintings, so for his father the world can be viewed at the safe distance of a text or a theatrical performance: 'There is poetry too in the romance of politics, the march of events the great decisions, the drama.' (21) But in *Shadows of Empire*, the texts which symbolised that myth are moribund. Alec's father 'bowed his head to what he called "Kipling's gnomic wisdom"'. (199) Alec, who as a schoolboy under the influence of his father's insularity in 1926 had noted the summer for the Test match rather than the social unrest, (20) notes later that 'I had long outgrown my love of Kipling's verse, and had learned in the manner of my generation to disparage him' as either 'comically inapposite or repulsive.' (199) In

this novel Kipling himself is ‘getting very frail’ and his ‘Empire’s gone all to pot.’

(99)

Buchan had his characters reading *Redgauntlet* as they sought, ‘heroically’ an escape from the world of Imperial politics in a manufactured reductive ‘conflict’ in *John Macnab*.⁶⁰ Buchan’s *Midwinter* has been compared to *Redgauntlet* by Massie.⁶¹ In *Shadows of Empire* Massie’s Buchan-character relates – as ‘authentic’ history – an anecdote featuring Alastair Maclean, the central character from Buchan’s *Midwinter*:

‘During the ’45, [Sir Benjamin Holland] was visited by one Alastair Maclean, an officer in the French service who was sounding out English Jacobites. He promised he would join the Prince if the Jacobite army won a victory in England or reached London, but – he pointed out – his was a peaceful country, he couldn’t bring any fighting-men, for the use of weapons had been long forgotten in this quiet land, and his obligations to family and tenants were such that he couldn’t undertake to lend support to a still doubtful cause. And so, of course, he sent Captain Maclean away, with the same answer that so many English Jacobites gave: our hearts are yours but we dare not commit ourselves. I think there’s a lesson for our own times there.’

[. . .] there were, I thought, two lessons; and they contradicted each other. Either you devoted yourself, body and soul, to a cause, for better or worse; or you recognised that you had other personal loyalties that deserved priority. And I had no idea which lesson Father approved.

(*SoE* 23-24)

For Alec’s father, the son of a minister, where ideology threatens the fabric of society, it is society that must triumph: that is the lesson for his time. The problem with this is that it intrinsically denies the ideological nature of its own view. For Alec’s father, an older generation, the ‘cause’ of Empire had been consistent with the idea of British society; a society that had avoided major internecine armed conflict (since 1746) partly as a result of that ethos of Imperial expansionism. The

⁶⁰ Buchan, John *John Macnab* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Chap. X, p. 132.

lesson his father intends is contradictory for Alec because his view is of a British society that has divorced itself from a realistic view of its own power to defeat any threat to its continuity, and is no longer compatible with the ethos of Empire: ‘the war would leave us impoverished and weak, but, more importantly [. . .] we were losing, had perhaps already lost, the will to exercise authority over other races [. . .]’ (309-10)

Buchan’s view of the importance of society provides an accurate mirror of the secular version presented by Massie in his novels and non-fictional writings. *Shadows of Empire* seems to suggest the importance of engaging with existentialism and understanding the need for personal engagement which it urges, even while one accepts the reality which existentialism seems to deny. Sartre’s existentialism valorises the importance of the individual and ostensibly rejects all forms of deterministic ‘ideology’. In the shadow of a conflict such as the Second World War (and indeed the Cold War) which had its roots in an ideological manipulation of the masses and grew in the lee of an Imperialist kailyard, Sartrean existentialism is, for Massie, wilfully blind to the inevitable yet fundamental mismatch at its heart between ideology and private, domestic life. Conversely, if existentialism – whether Nietzschean or Sartrean – seems to invite the individual to ‘stop thinking’ and to deny the reality of the outside world, it betrays its own intent by rendering the individual vulnerable.

⁶¹ ‘[It was] the conflict between attachment to an old cause and the demands made by a new and settled prosperity which [Scott] explored in *Redgauntlet*. It is this [. . .] aspect that concerns Buchan in *Midwinter* [. . .]’ Massie, Allan ‘Introduction’ to Buchan, John *Midwinter* *ibid.*, p. v.

There are no lucid solutions to the world which Massie presents through Alec's eyes in *Shadows of Empire*. Like the act of narrative itself, all constructions of ideology are inherently flawed by their attempt to impose lucidity on a reality which resists it. The individual is faced with the choice to accommodate him/herself to the indefinable line between free will and determinism in order merely to continue living – as in *One Night in Winter* – or abandon all hope and withdraw from the world as it seems Alec has done in his own senescence by the end of *Shadows of Empire*. The problem, once again, seems to be other people, but one must engage with these Others in order to continue in life.

Chapter 4: Sartre and Scott's Cultural Inheritance

Massie has stated that Scott 'makes a fruitful synthesis of his cultural heritage and experience.'¹ In the two novels examined in this chapter, *The Ragged Lion* and *The Hanging Tree*, Massie examines the full implications of that statement. *The Ragged Lion* allows Massie to examine the imagination of Scott and his cultural heritage set against his 'real life' existence in a rational 'present'. Massie shows how Scott's lived experience generated a store of memories – both conscious and unconscious – on which he drew to create his novels. For Massie, Scott's 'cultural heritage' is gleaned through his experience in collecting ballads for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.² In *The Ragged Lion* Massie shows how this heritage coalesces with Scott's eclectic reading within Scott's unconscious memory to generate a series of 'complexes' which haunt Scott's 'personal unconscious' and invade his imagination beyond the control of his conscious mind. This idea of a powerful 'unconscious' which is outwith the determination of the conscious mind takes direct issue with Sartre's philosophy which denies that the unconscious can operate independently and against the will of the conscious individual. The growing disorder of Scott's conscious mind which Massie portrays in *The Ragged Lion* allows Massie metafictionally to interrogate the act of narrative itself as an act which imposes a false order on the world portrayed.

For Massie, Scott's cultural heritage represents a 'collective cultural unconscious' of 'archetypes' which parallel the archetypes within the Jungian 'collective

¹ Introduction to Muir *ibid.*, p.xvii.

unconscious'. Massie has stated that 'Jung reveals us to ourselves',³ and clearly exploits Jungian psychology in both *The Ragged Lion* and *The Hanging Tree*. *The Hanging Tree* examines not only the creation of the ballads themselves in this light, but the various aspects of Scott's 'inherited' character. Massie re-enacts Scott's technique of creating a historical romance involving an imaginative evocation the writer's own surroundings and cultural inheritance.⁴

In *The Hanging Tree* Massie further interrogates Sartrean existentialism on the grounds of both originality and solipsism. He sets an example of 'good' existentialist creative action against the destruction occasioned by the untrammelled individual ego. Both aspects of existentialism are found to offer their own form of delusion. Massie takes the opportunity to underline his insistence that any separation of thinking and feeling is a Western European phenomenon rather than one unique to Scotland.

***The Hanging Tree: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (1990)**

In *The Hanging Tree* Massie echoes the technique of Sir Walter Scott in terms of setting a historical novel in his own surroundings and portraying the effect of the belief in the supernatural on the people of that time. Massie uses the situation to generate a discussion of free will and predetermination. The consideration of such concerns is more pervasive here than in the majority of Scott's work, however.

² Scott, Sir Walter *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (West Yorkshire: EP Publishing Limited, 1975; 1802-3).

³ *The Scotsman* 16/4/77.

⁴ This issue is complicated by Massie's status as an 'incomer' to the Borders, since Massie is a child of Empire, being born in Singapore and brought up in the North-East of Scotland.

Massie shows where the concerns of atheistic existentialism may appear in literature which precedes Sartre and indeed Nietzsche. Having attacked the originality of existential ideas – and thereby implied the importance and influence of history – Massie again undermines the idea of absolute freedom.

In *The Hanging Tree*, the individual must find a way to exist amidst the melee of contesting determinisms represented by history, the will of others, institutionalised Catholicism, the ‘old religion’ and the fading chivalric code. In this novel, however, as elsewhere within Massie’s oeuvre, the assertion of ‘being’ of the individual must not be accompanied by a systematic denial of the value or ‘reality’ of others. Such a form of solipsism represents the unacceptable contingency of existential thought. In *The Hanging Tree* legends and folk cultures in general, represent an acknowledgement of cultural society and thereby imply a connection with other people, though they do not accurately reflect ‘reality’. Such aspects of a culture which are not ‘formally’ institutionalised within society provide a set of narratives which create a form of ‘collective cultural unconscious’⁵ to set alongside the cultural ‘conscious’ of written history. As the narrator shows, legend and the oral tradition are frequently inaccurate, yet they provide scraps of truth that are denied to history, (305) in the same way that fiction can tell truths denied to non-fictional literature. Another of Massie’s narrators, Dallas, notes: successful novels ‘carry an inward

⁵ I use the term ‘collective cultural unconscious’ to indicate those ‘archetypal’ narratives, symbolisms and figures which recur in a culture and influence the creative imagination – though not necessarily at a conscious level – of an individual exploiting that cultural heritage. It is such archetypes that are identified with the archetypes held within the Jungian ‘collective unconscious’ to form the individual schematic of complexes. An explanation of the Jungian aspect of this argument can be found in ‘The Concept of the Collective Unconscious’, in Jung, C.G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (2nd. ed.) (Hull, R. F. C. (trans.)) (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 42.

truth' because 'they can take wing beyond the particular;' (*ONIW* 18) as Rob Laidlaw does in death. In creating the 'life' of Rob, Massie suggests that within fiction even characters who exhibit the 'positive' traits of Sartrean existentialism must ultimately betray – or be betrayed by – a philosophy which is predicated on a fundamental inconsistency: the absolute freedom which Sartre claims may be asserted by the individual in 'situation' within a wider society.

Massie's deliberate echoing of Scott's practice and the tradition which Scott influenced so heavily is strongly implied by his choice of the first epigraph for *The Hanging Tree*, taken from *Huntingtower* by John Buchan:

Mr McCunn sought in literature for one thing only. Sir Walter Scott had been his first guide, but he read the novels not for their insight into human character or for their historical pageantry, but because they gave him material wherewith to construct fantastic journeys.⁶

This is slightly disingenuous given the extent of discussion of the 'human character' which the novel contains. Nevertheless, Massie is populating the area around his own home near Selkirk with historical characters and deeds. He is constructing local 'fantasies' which occur on the fringes of wider historical movements in the manner of Sir Walter Scott.

The connections with Scott pervade the novel, and as the second epigraph suggests, *The Hanging Tree* may be read as an investigation of the geographical and cultural environment which sparked Scott's imagination in the first place: "Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain

⁶ Buchan, John *Huntingtower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 14.

coasts are set aside for shipwreck.” Stevenson’.⁷ This also has the effect of elucidating the order which is imposed by narrative, operating as a form of creative imperative. In choosing such an epigraph – if it is safe to assume that an epigraph is intended to give a perspective to the work it precedes – Massie is in alignment with Sartre, who wrote:

In nature, the tree and the sky harmonise only by chance; if, on the contrary, in the novel, the protagonists find themselves in a *certain* tower, in a *certain* prison, if they stroll in a *certain* garden, it is a matter of the restitution of independent causal series (the character had a certain state of mind which was due to a succession of psychological and social events; on the other hand, he betook himself to a determined place and the layout of the city required him to cross a certain park) and of the expression of a deeper finality, for the park came into existence only *in order to* harmonize with a certain state of mind, to express it by means of things or to put it into relief by a vivid contrast, and the state of mind itself was conceived in connection with the landscape. Here is causality which is appearance and which might be called ‘causality without cause’, and it is the finality which is the profound reality. But if I can thus in all confidence put the order of ends under the order of causes, it is because by opening the book I am asserting that the object has its source in human freedom.
(*WL?* 38-9)

In *The Hanging Tree* the murder of two men by hanging takes place in ‘Hangingshaws’. ‘Hangingshaw’ exists in the ‘real’ Borders. Massie draws attention to the ‘coincidence’ of the name: ‘Weel is he called Nick o’ the Hangingshaws. We’ll hang him high’. (17) If Hangingshaw cries out for a hanging it is only because of the imperative to impose ‘order’, and that order is a function of artifice. Sartre implies that the assertion of human freedom should result in order, but for Massie, as for Scott, order is maintained only by the constant struggle between the rational conscious and the conflicting, delusional alternative ‘order’ within the unconscious.

⁷ Stevenson, R. L. ‘A Gossip on Romance’ in Norquay, Glenda (ed.) *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 54-55.

Massie's choice of epigraph suggests that the novel should be read in the light of the Border area and the inspiration which the topography and place names provide, but this is inextricably linked to the conscious ordering power of all forms of narrative. The book opens with Rob Laidlaw on the old Roman road into Scotland. (3) Massie's Scott observes that the narrative of progressive history begins 'from the day when the Roman legions first forced their way through the passes of the Cheviots'. (TRL 43) History, as an artificially constructed 'road', leads the reader into the novel. This sets up the shift to the counter-historical which is the shape of Rob's life. He enters the narrative through progressive history and exits through the ballads.

The Hanging Tree focuses on one family: the Laidlaws of Clartyshaws. This place name offers obvious parallels with 'Clarty Hole' which Scott turned into Abbotsford, though the location of the two is not identical. The shaws (or 'woods') of the name suggest – within Massie's oeuvre – the significance of the unconscious (as expressed through mythology) for the Laidlaws. Most significantly, one of their number, young Clym, receives the Aikwood tower and takes to calling himself 'Scott of Aikwood'. (214) The Scotts of Harden, from whom Walter Scott was descended, (SoE 5) occupied the Tower of Aikwood. The repeated Laidlaw family first name of Walter is thus given added significance. The clear implication is that these are Scott's ancestors. The male members of the central family therefore may be approached as representations of different aspects of Scott's psychological and cultural

inheritance.⁸ There is old Walter, the border reiver, and his four sons Clym, Maurie, Will and Rob. Further to these are Rob's son Wattie, Clym's son, also Clym, and their sister's illegitimate son Dandy.

Old Clym is 'a man born to be a farmer but cheated by circumstance.' (109) With his final words he asserts (with, in his historical and particular circumstances, futility) the importance of the 'laws of God and the laws of man and the laws of honour.' (91) Young Clym is of a similar cast of mind in asserting the importance of law and order so that he may fulfil his own conception of his 'primary duty', which is to himself, his family and his property. (219-20) Echoing Scott's technique of showing how different psychological types prosper or decline in certain historical situations,⁹ young Clym gains revenge for his father's death and prospers, old Clym is killed in attempting to obtain justice for his sister. Nevertheless, they represent the order-loving aspect of Walter Scott, and indeed his acquisitive nature. Will, a character of lesser importance, indicates the part of Scott that longed to be a soldier. Dandy represents the love of chivalry, but since Scott's love of chivalry is not blind to the capability for cruelty possessed by 'chivalric' individuals, so Dandy is capable of vicious and cruel acts. Wattie, by this reading, represents Scott's compassion, creativity and his cant-rejecting religiosity; Wattie is a 'minstrel' whose portrayal owes a debt to St Francis of Assisi.

⁸ For the purposes of the present discussion, the female characters are of lesser significance in the novel.

⁹ Cockshut, A. O. J. *The Achievement of Walter Scott* (London: Collins, 1969), p. 80.

The most significant two characters in the novel, however, are Maurie and Rob. Maurie represents avarice and the destructive side of the will to power. By the end of the novel, Maurie has become ‘a mere point without personality, on which the whole evil force of History and the lust for power had concentrated itself. [. . .] The horror of his whole life swelled up in each of them and choked their throats.’ (345) Maurie may thus be considered to represent ‘the beast within all of us shrieking for release’¹⁰ and omnipresent throughout history. He is destructive egotism made flesh and acting with little constraint within his society. The abstract concepts with which he is identified cause a physical reaction not dissimilar to the nausea caused by a recognition of existential being in Sartre’s work.

Rob becomes a minstrel who wanders the Borders collecting and creating verses, like the young Scott. Furthermore, Rob is cited as the source of at least one version of the Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, (109) just as Scott created a third part to the ballad in his *Minstrelsy*. Rob thus appears to be a forebear to Scott in terms of his creativity, but he also participates in the tradition within which Scott himself worked and on which he drew to fuel his imagination. Rob and Maurie appear to represent the twin poles of Good and Evil in man:

There is such a thing as evil, and it rejects the claims of humanity. The untrammelled ego will prove destructive, while the Good in man, the highest Good of which he is capable, is creative.¹¹

If the Laidlaws represent facets of Scott’s psychological and cultural inheritance, in *The Hanging Tree* attitudes towards the supernatural are represented by the oral

¹⁰ Massie, Allan *III Met by Gaslight* *ibid.*, p. 2.

tradition which operates as a form of collective cultural unconscious, though as in Scott's oeuvre, is determinative only in so far as the individual will allow it to be so. In Sartrean terms, the ballads – through 'reciprocity' – theoretically allow all preceding human knowledge within that culture to be available to the individual. Nevertheless, the irrationality on which many of the ballads are premised undermines Sartre's rationalism and his insistence on the sole importance of the individual and the specific present or 'situation'.

Early in *The Hanging Tree* the commonly experienced irrational childhood fears are shown to give way in adulthood to 'other fantasies' transmitted by oral culture:

[. . .] memories of winter tales by the fireside, of how the Queen of Elfland rade through the same hills in the same mirk night with Thomas of Ercildoune, the pair of them wading in blood to their horses' knee. It was the hour and place of enchantment; the great wizard Michael Scott might still lurk in the Eildon Hills that he had cut in three, those hills where Arthur rested with his knights waiting the hour of recall. And there were other spirits abroad, goblins and brownies and the ghosts of those killed in unjust quarrels.

(4)

The above passage demonstrates how both Scott and Massie take up and extend the tradition of the ballads, both consciously and unconsciously. The ballads, folk tales and legends described above are geographically specific, though not all exclusive, to the area just outside Selkirk where Clartyshaws is located within the novel, and where Rob is at that point in the novel. These tales are intrinsically linked with the landscape. In fact, they are a statement of cultural possession of the landscape, since the story of the splitting of the Eildon Hills is 'demanded/controlled' by the topography, but attributes the landscape itself to the artifice of a member of the same culture. By exploiting such tales within the novel, Massie is drawing attention to

¹¹ Ibid., p. 8.

The Hanging Tree as a continuity of practice with the ballads and legends of the area where the novel is set. Within the present context, the reproduction of such a tale in such a place is in keeping with Sartre's views on the novel, but also appears almost to parody Sartre's avowal that 'the final goal of art' should be 'to recover this world by giving it to be seen as it is, but as if it had its source in human freedom.' (*WL?* 41)

It was Scott's practice to rename his properties in line with the cultural history of the area, hence Clarty Hole became Abbotsford and the estate of Tofthills was renamed as 'Huntly Burn': (*TRL* 143) the ostensible scene of Thomas of Ercildoune's seduction by the Queen of Elfland. The landscape thus becomes 'owned' and labelled by the human freedom of creativity, a form of 'order' is superimposed upon it. For Scott, the history of such creative freedom is what makes a culture unique. His practice of renaming locations to reflect that culture appears to have been a means of resisting the 'smoothing away' of the 'peculiar features' of Scottish culture, as Massie puts it. The cultural encroachment is shown, with oblique reference to Scott, in the transformation of Aikwood to Oakwood in a single paragraph of *The Hanging Tree*. (219) Scott's practice is thus shown to be 'counter-historical', though the expression of Scott's 'freedom' as landowner is merely the substitution of one cultural determinism (the traditions and history of the Borders) for another (the progressive 'anglification'.)

As a 'collective cultural unconscious', the stories referred to are simultaneously specific and general, since the culture itself contains elements which are not consciously recognised from outwith its geographical area. In this novel Scotland is

a political state whose people are deeply involved with those of England and in the wider conflicts across Europe. Michael Scott is a figure who played on the European stage of power yet he is supposed (in *The Hanging Tree* and local legend) to have lived in the tower of Aikwood. (214) The Arthurian legends are sufficiently powerful to provide a mythology which recurs in localised form in many areas of Britain; a myth which was taken up and related across Western Europe.¹²

Rob is further connected to the ballads by having an experience which mirrors that presented in ‘Young Tamlane’ in Scott’s *Minstrelsy*.

‘Why pu’s the rose, Rob, and why does your hand break the wand it holds? And why have you come here, Rob, to Carterhaugh withouten I send you word?’
[. . .] He swallowed and choked out the words, ‘I’m free to come by Carterhaugh, and dinna need speir leave . . .’

As he spoke, the silence deepened as if an attendant spirit had withdrawn. He found he was wet with sweat, and Brownie [his dog] crept out from under a briar bush, her tail between her legs and her whole body curving in abasement.

Rob told no one of what had happened, but he could not leave off thinking that if he had answered differently he would have been spirited away, for he had no doubt it was the queen of Elfland who had spoken to him; and her voice caressed his dreams.

(*THH* 57-8)

The seduction by the Queen of Elfland relates to the ‘Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer’, but the parallels with ‘Young Tamlane’ are clear:

Says—‘Why pu’s the rose, Janet?
What gars ye break the tree?
Or why come ye to Carterhaugh,
Withouten leave o’ me?’

[. . .] ‘I’ll come and gang to Carterhaugh,
and ask nae leave o’ thee.’¹³

¹² ‘Thomas [the Rhymer] is the reputed author of the [Arthurian] romance of *Sir Tristrem*, which Sir Walter Scott believed to be not only genuine but the oldest specimen of Scots poetry.’ Massie, Allan *101 Great Scots* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1987), p. 17.

¹³ Scott, Sir Walter *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* *ibid.*, p. 98.

The parallel is repeated, with a further echo of Scott's practice of providing a plausible rationalisation of the events:

[. . .] On the seventh night he lay near sunset by the same rose bush. Again he picked a rose and let its petals fall between his fingers. Again the voice came to him in the same words: 'Why pu's the rose, Rob and why does your hand break the wand? And why do you come here, Rob, to Carterhaugh withouten I send you word?'

This time he steeled himself and replied, as the valley darkened and the mist closed round.

'Whae is it that speaks? Are you wife or Spirit?'

But the only answer was a soft laugh as of a mocking music; a thin tune sounded and he heard horses hooves in the long wet grass, and then the sudden silence. This time he advanced beyond the bush but the grass had not been trampled and the branches were neither broken nor bent. His own pony trembled when he mounted it and Brownie skulked right under its hooves til they were clear of Carterhaugh. But this time Rob felt no fear and the thin music still sang its mournful enticement in his ear.

At Clartyshaws he found a horse standing by the well. It glistened milk white in the moon [. . .]

(58)

Rob's lover, Jean, is involved in the 'old religion' but she also knows the stories and could exploit them. She had been, Rob discovers, in the area, on horseback, and he had heard hooves. It is also dark and misty so the physical signs may be obscured. The supernatural explanation of a visit by the Queen of Elfland, however, is also consistent with the evidence – given a belief in the irrational – and the fear of the animals suggests that there is something beyond human perception present.

The milk white steed features as the mount of the supernatural lover in both 'Thomas the Rhymer' and 'Young Tamlane'. Massie makes no explicit mention of 'Young Tamlane', however. The reader is left to wonder if Rob may have created verses of that ballad, too, or whether his imagination is drawing on some unconscious memory of it. Ultimately, it seems, the source of the ballad in relation to Rob doesn't matter since the orally transmitted ballads resist commodification and therefore direct attribution: they are 'owned' by the culture across history, as well as the individual.

The incident illustrates the extent to which Rob's being is interwoven with this culture in an indeterminate manner. He is simultaneously both the subject and object of the ballads. When Rob makes up his version of 'Thomas the Rhymer and his encounter with the Queen of Elfland' he thinks of Jean. (109) Rob *is*, or at least becomes, Thomas the Rhymer, despite living some two hundred years later.

Within *The Hanging Tree* the creative acts of multiple individuals are shown to be attributed to Thomas the Rhymer. This suggests that that figure himself has come to be a conceptualisation of the oral tradition: the creativity of an entire culture in the form of an individual. Thomas the Rhymer symbolises an alternative order to the model of historical progress with an equivalent level of artifice. Furthermore, in this novel 'Thomas the Rhymer' is a meta-myth: a myth about the creation of mythologies.

As Cairns Craig notes, Scott 'remained deeply sceptical of the truths of the historical. The power of narrative to compose an order would, for Scott, always cast in doubt any assertion that it has thereby uncovered an equivalently composed reality.'¹⁴ The narrator of *The Hanging Tree* states: 'History begins where legend leaves off, but for a generation or more the two are intertwined.' (173) This separation of legend and history echoes the linguistic split between talking and writing identified by Sartre, and by Muir in relation to Scott, but both legend and history perform similar functions since both are themselves narrative acts. The narrator of this novel clearly implies their functional similarity.

Massie shows how 'predestination' can be a function of the artificial assertion of power in the face of external deterministic forces operating on the individual (and retrospectively perceived as the historical narrative) and the 'narrative-free', 'chaotic' moment of the present. Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Storer states that it is the apparent disorganisation of the world which contributes to Sartre's rejection of radical predestination.¹⁵ Sartre, of course, rejected the determinism of 'history'. It is the prophetic stanza of the 'Ballad of Otterburn' which is attributed to Rob: Rob is creating 'predictions' after the event. At a mythical level, this symbolises the power of the past over the present. Yet Massie is also showing the process whereby figures such as 'True Thomas' can come to be credited with the prediction of historical events.

In accepting or repeating the ballads, one stands in an ambiguous relationship to human freedom which mirrors the paradox of Sartrean existentialism which Massie consistently elucidates: the personal assertion of freedom is often made at the expense of the freedom of others. Massie is demonstrating the process of mythologising as the attempt in the present to assert human control over the influence of the past through the expression of creative freedom (in the manner of Virgil's *Aeneid*), which is consistent with the practise of any teleologically constructed narrative linking historical events. Such an assertion of creative freedom acknowledges the world as it is – or rather as it has been – but *denies* the freedoms

¹⁴ Craig, Cairns *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* *ibid.*, p. 69.

of the participants in any actual event in favour of the creative freedom of the balladeer/historian.

The same process of retrospective 'prediction' is present in the narration of *The Hanging Tree*. The narrator is familiar with historical documents such as the rent rolls and charters of the period (215) and the text is consciously portrayed as a historical novel throughout. The narrator makes proleptic intrusions into the internal chronological structure, such as 'He was never to forget [. . .]'; (9) 'All his life he would [. . .]'; (203) and 'the long wars that Scots would come to call Wars of Independence.' (28) The narrator is thus colluding in the artificial teleological process of empowering the present over the past. But in turn, this suggests that the process of narration itself involves an ultimate denial of the existence of radical freedom within any given present (depicted by the narrative) where the characters interact with any 'known' event.

To describe a character in a 'present' which corresponds to a known reality is intrinsically to acknowledge that such an actual moment is already historical at the moment of writing. All individual 'presents' are fleeting and quickly fade into the nebulous past.¹⁵ Sartre's assertion of freedom in such a concept of the present is reduced to a fleeting moment of choice, as indeed it is in Sartre's novels. However, for Massie, each action performed within such fleeting moments of freedom

¹⁵ Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul *Les Jeux Sont Faits* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1956; 1947), p. viii.

¹⁶ Massie's consciousness of this is shown by his statement that the first thing that can be learned from history is that 'the present becomes the past.' Public discussion: 'What can we learn from History?' Edinburgh Book Festival, 22/8/00.

constrains the future scope for freedom in the next moment: past actions determine the extent of freedom in the 'present' for individuals and for societies. Sartre's attempt to assert the freedom of the individual by asserting a contemporaneous narratorial position which implies the power of the individual within any 'present' is thus shown to be disingenuous, at best. Of course in the case of Sartre, as both a philosopher and writer, the issue is even more acute.

Massie is portraying pre-Reformation Scotland in *The Hanging Tree* – the events begin a few years before 1436 (72) and end just after 1460. (293) The supposed antiszygy of the 'rational' recorded events¹⁷ and the irrational stories of the oral folk tradition shown here is therefore one that may be applicable anywhere across Catholic – or pre-Reformation – Europe rather than being a unique production of the Reformation in Scotland. In this way Massie locates his novel, and those of Scott, within the Western European literary tradition.

Just as Scott's novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* is presided over by a fictitious prophesy which is attributed within that novel to Thomas the Rhymer,¹⁸ so Massie's novel is woven around the curse of a woman who has watched the four Laidlaw brothers murder her husband. (23-24) In his introduction to *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Massie states:

It is true that the chilling prophesy concerning the last Laird of Ravenswood appears to be fulfilled. There is a perfectly rational explanation, but it is one

¹⁷ The practice of rationalism, of course, does not preclude the use of the imagination, indeed within the Hume scheme of thought, it demands it. Within the field of historiography, this does not cast doubt on the occurrence of events, but rather on the artificial patterns which are imposed upon collections of such events by the historian.

¹⁸ Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, p. 152-3.

which few readers will find satisfactory. There certainly is a sense in which it is easier, and curiously more satisfying, really to believe that the master is the prisoner of an ineluctable fate, that the tragedy has been determined in advance.

Philosophy, drama and fiction are all rightly concerned with the question of free will and determinism, and it is a question which Scots reared in the Calvinist theology can rarely escape. In no other of his novels does Scott bring it quite so prominently to the centre of his narrative. Lucy and the Master appear to be caught in a web of circumstance, condemned to a destiny which they cannot escape. They are surrounded by croaking voices foretelling their determined fate. Yet the Master is in reality the victim of his own character and of political misfortunes, while Lucy is destroyed by her mother's intensity of will rather than by ominous warnings. Scott shows us a society where superstition is credible, but where the true destiny is character.¹⁹

In *The Hanging Tree* there is frequent discussion of the curse by those on whom it was delivered, but the curse is not entirely fulfilled: it is not a prophesy – uttered and enacted – in the manner of the verse ‘by Thomas the Rhymer’ in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Rob disappears, his fate is not determined within the novel, and he is not alone, as the curse had predicted. Will is a solitary drunkard but very much alive by the end of the book. Clym and Maurie do indeed suffer the fate predicted for them but for very different reasons: they have very different personal reactions to such a deterministic ‘force’. Clym despairs in the face of the curse and the will of others and is therefore renders himself incapable of taking action to save himself. Maurie is hanged because of his poor judgement married to his greed and ambition.

The ‘curse’ in *The Hanging Tree* is the will of an individual expressed as the *desired* destiny of others. The brothers, however, *do* have a limited power to choose their fate – or exercise their will – should they be prepared to do so. As in Darsie's argument with Redgauntlet about the clash of desired destinies only being resolved by the events that come to pass, so the (in)effectiveness of the curse is only finally ‘determined’ by the events of the lives concerned. But since *The Hanging Tree* is

¹⁹ Introduction to Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

crammed with an ongoing discourse (from earlier novels such as *One Night in Winter*) concerning the indeterminate boundaries of free will and predestination, created by the discussion of the curse between the characters, it clear that the curse is not entirely without power. As in Scott's novels, it is the perception of the curse as either powerful determining prophesy or ineffectual expression of desire that is important. This is relatively consistent with Sartre's view, but the extent to which the individuals may *choose* to believe or dismiss the curse is determined by their character, and in this novel character need not be entirely the product of personal will.

'True destiny', in this novel, 'is character'. Young Clym's mother is 'schooling the boy in hatred and revenge' (108) perceiving Maurie to be responsible for the death of old Clym. Young Clym fulfils this 'destiny' on the final page of the book by taking the opportunity to hang Maurie. In *The Hanging Tree* it is at least *possible* to mould the character so that the 'destiny' desired for the individual becomes a powerful force, though not necessarily a determinative force.

The motivation behind Massie's choice of this particular historical setting, from the many centuries which preceded the Reformation, can be understood in the light of a comment which Massie places within Scott's 'manuscript' in *The Ragged Lion*:

I had long felt a peculiar interest in those periods of History which appear to serve as a bridge between two distinct epochs; and the fifteenth century afforded me an admirable example. It was a time when the principles of chivalry, more honoured admittedly in word than deed, were all but abandoned. These principles, however often flouted, had contrived to moderate the temper of and selfishness of a largely unlettered age. Rude and cruel men were disposed by them to act, on occasion at least, more gently than their natures might have urged them to, but in the dark fifteenth century this softening influence was lost, and men acted with an egotism

that seemed all too often to deny even the possibility of generosity and self-denial
[. . .]
(*TRL* 124)

The English aristocrat to whom Maurie first attaches himself is Edward des Moulins. The name suggests that such chivalry has been Quixotically reduced to tilting at windmills, and indeed: ‘des Moulins found himself lost in a world which contradicted his instinctive trust that things would never change: that he could not lose his position of honour.’ (292) Since the code of chivalry was not confined to Scotland or England, this again places the discourse concerning free will within the wider context of European development. Earl James Douglas is known as ‘the last knight in Christendom’, (274) rather than ‘the last knight in Scotland’. By the end of the novel, however, this remnant of international chivalry is reduced to using a set of dice to predict his future. (323)

Within the central family of the novel, the figure of Dandy embodies the transition towards rising egotism from the deterministic ‘code’ of chivalry. Dandy’s father is Edward des Moulins. He is the illegitimate child of failing ‘chivalry’; born from his father’s aristocratic disregard of consequences for his more lowly mother. Dandy’s name suggests the seductive nature of the trappings and appearances of the chivalric code; yet that very code denies him access by his illegitimacy. Dandy is attracted by the chivalric trappings and ideology yet he must independently assert his being to gain any form of recognition. He is therefore a mixture of egotistical cruelty and the nobility of intention which he recognises as the value which underpinned and initiated the now crumbling code.

The positive side of the end of chivalry is evident in Dandy's marriage to Nell. Only when he declares his rejection of the deterministic and exclusive code which had rejected him – 'Muckle I care for knightly codes.' (279) – can he perform the most humanely compassionate act of his life within the novel in marrying a girl he hardly knows, 'as lang as the lass is truly willing', (280) in order to protect her after the death of her father. Nell is the illegitimate daughter of a priest, she is therefore rejected by the dogma of the Catholicism in the same way that Dandy is rejected by the code of chivalry. The chivalric code had of course been heavily influenced by the teachings of the Catholic Church, for good and ill. Here, again, Massie, attacks this tendency of all cant to nullify individual humanity.

It is the Catholic Church which will profit most obviously by an increase in power on the substitution of a pseudo-Christian warrior code by a morality which is exclusively controlled by the Church. In the novel, the Catholic Church seeks out and destroys the individuals who are involved in the 'old religion'. (161) It is clear that they represent a threat to the moral hegemony of Catholicism. The frequent descriptions of 'crow priests'(109) and monks who are 'sleek ravens'(69) within the novel implies that the ballads reflect or 'predict' this process at a symbolic level. In Scott's *Minstrelsy* the eponymous 'Twa Corbies' grow sleek and 'feather' their nest from picking over the bones of the dead knight.²⁰

²⁰ Scott, Sir Walter *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* *ibid.*, p. 15.

Against this background of fluidity of power Massie presents the unadulterated egotism of Maurie. He believes in the 'freedom of the will.' (134) He is ignorant of shame and scruples (132) and does not require power to be bestowed upon him by others, but rather seizes it by his actions: he is 'Lord in deed, if not lord in name, and feared throughout the country for his cruelty and vice.' (148) It is in Maurie's struggle to assert his freedom and being that the determinism of character is most eloquently presented by Massie. Existentially, as an act of self-assertion in the face of the 'oppression' of society, it is logical that Maurie's first target should be the surviving pan-European deterministic power: the Catholic Church.²¹

The trajectory of the characters is set in motion by Maurie's action of stabbing a monk,(6) not by the curse. Maurie later hangs the brother of his intended revenge victim and this action, too, is outwith the bounds of any conceivable definition of justice. Had he confined his violence to the man who had betrayed his father, then since 'revenge [. . .] is a kind of justice' (283) within the novel, he would not have 'condemned' himself. But this is not how Maurie behaves: 'It's Maurie killed the wee monk and Maurie whae brocht about the our feyther's death, and Maurie, naebody else, whae hangit the Gudeman. The rest of us had liefer let him live'. (56) The second murder of an innocent man establishes a consistency within Maurie's character. The 'curse' is therefore the expression of the determinism of his character on himself and others. As the Gudewife of Hangingshaws states: 'ye will rue the weird ye hae *chosen for yourselves* this day.' (23) (my italics)

²¹ Massie has written of 'medieval Europe, which had its own supranational, or transnational, bodies: the Holy Roman Empire and the Church of Rome which claimed authority, and tried to exercise power,

The acts which set in motion the determinism of the narrative itself are gratuitous. Massie is again hitting at the underbelly of existential theory in showing the gratuitous act of self-assertion causing needless suffering to others. Maurie is a portrayal of the problems inherent to existentialism. 'He is eaten up with ambition and the lust for power.' (199) He is threatened by the very being of others: 'What have you done, you ask. You are. Is that no' enough?' (92) In order to maintain his own free will, he must deny the reality of others' existence in deed if not in theory: 'He who forms an attachment is lost,' he writes. (227) Maurie represents the dangerous side of the Nietzschean will to power, he is the assertion of self which destroys other people, just like Sartre's Mathieu in the church tower or indeed Camus' Meursault on the beach. It may be that none of these authors intended that such actions should seem to be endorsed by their philosophy, or still less that the behaviour of characters which they portrayed should be taken as expressions of personal endorsement, but it is hard to escape the conclusion that such behaviour is a very real contingency of existentialism.

In *The Hanging Tree* Massie attacks the originality of certain principles of Nietzschean – and the later Sartrean – existentialism. He undermines the idea that either Sartrean or Nietzschean existentialism were entirely original philosophies which could provide unique answers to a set of questions which were themselves unique to the specific periods concerned. Massie has stated:

across political frontiers.' *The Scotsman* 31/7/96.

Chesterton, in an essay on Nietzsche [. . .] remarks that it is a mistake to think that the old writers didn't think of these ideas; on the contrary, he says, they not only thought of them, they didn't think much of them; and he shows where Shakespeare puts the ideas of Nietzsche and Sade – in the mouth of a half-demented cripple, Richard III, on the point of defeat.²²

Massie exploits this point rigorously in the character of Maurie. Maurie himself is a 'crookback' who becomes the role model and political mentor for the young man who would become Richard III – 'one crookback to another'. (296) Shakespeare's Richard claims that whatever else he has dishonoured, he has not dishonoured his 'self'. (Act 4, sc. iv, l. 374) This an expression of proto-Nietzschean personal authenticity. Massie nods towards Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III on several occasions within the text. Just as Clym states that Maurie sins against the laws of God, man and honour, (91) and shows no capacity to love another individual throughout the book, so it is clear that Shakespeare's Richard has offended against God, law, honour and love. (Act 4, sc. iv, l. 341)²³

Shakespeare's 'half-demented cripple on the point of defeat' treats the offer of escape with contempt: 'Slave, I have set my life upon a cast / And I will withstand the hazard of the die.' (Act 5, sc. iv, ll. 9-10) This is an example of what would become the existentially heroic figure of the gambler. Maurie reflects this when he states: 'Chance rules all, rules the world and controls our destinies.' (29) Later: 'the game moves my way'. (326) But as circumstances begin to overwhelm him: 'The game was all but in his hands. Yet events which he could not control swirled about him.[. . .] He would wager all on a single cast.' (328)

²² *The Scotsman* 19/3/77 Weekend Supplement, p. 2.

²³ Shakespeare, William *The Complete Works* (Alexander, Peter (ed.)) (Glasgow: Collins, 1991).

Scott uses the same comparison to the character of Richard III to clarify the manipulative malevolence of Rashleigh Osbaldistone in *Rob Roy*.²⁴ Rashleigh Osbaldistone dies screaming his hatred and uttering curses on the living. Shakespeare's Richard urges his troops to fight the final battle bravely; to go 'If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.' (Act 5, sc. 3, l. 313) At his final rendezvous, sentries are 'posted at Maurie's order to wait his own entry into hell.' (343) In all three cases there is a final act of 'heroic' (proto-)existential defiance, yet all three characters are clearly only 'heroic' in a very limited philosophical sense. They are meant to be condemned for their evil, and the narratives enact this condemnation in their destruction. By implication, Scott was also aware of the ideas of existentialism and 'didn't think much of them'.²⁵

For Maurie, the power of the Church does not lie in spiritual truth but in the reality of its capacity to destroy or grant personal power to individuals. He is quite capable of manipulating that power to ensure the destruction of his second wife on charges of witchcraft when her existence ceases to be politically expedient for him. Similarly he attaches himself to the power of the Church when it is useful: becoming a servant of the 'Cardinal Bishop' (174) when it serves his ambition.

Maurie's attitude towards the Catholic Church is extant in his choice of 'saints'. In the early stages of the book he clutches the medal of 'St Pandulf' (19) and swears to

²⁴ Scott, Sir Walter *Rob Roy* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1995; 1817), Chap. XI, p. 142.

destroy those who would flout his ambition 'by St Pandulf' (138) But there is no *Saint* Pandulf. Pandulf was an Italian churchman who was repeatedly sent to England as Papal legate in the Thirteenth Century: 'He exerted great political power becoming, in effect, regent (1219-21) in the minority of Henry III.'²⁶ Maurie's 'faith' is his personal ambition and will to power. This faith does not require the due process of canonisation by the power of the Catholic Church. When he feels his own will to be threatened by the external determinants of historical events and the will of others, however, he turns to St Aidan. (289) It was St Aidan of Lindisfarne who founded the abbey of Melrose. Maurie's first gratuitous act was committed to assert his individual will against the power of the Church in the person of the monk from Melrose Abbey.

The will to power, 'whose moral concomitant is the personal authenticity of man'²⁷ is the governing factor over Maurie's behaviour. Maurie's switch to St Aidan reflects his declining powers in that he can no longer bear the accumulation of personal responsibility for unjustifiable actions. The apparent repentance which this implies indicates that Maurie no longer has personal authenticity and cannot therefore survive within his own 'existential' mindset.

The full extent to which personal authenticity is important to Maurie is shown in the most overt personal statement of his twisted existentialism in the novel. Characteristically, Allan Massie does not seek to hide the anachronism, but rather

²⁵ Sartre refers to Shakespeare's character Richard III as one of the 'archetypal' literary characters that offer consolation to the living from dead books and are therefore a source of 'bad faith'. (*WL?* 18)

exploits it as part of the metafictional intent of the novel. He pushes the artifice of the imposed narrative order of events to the surface of the text and questions its validity. When Maurie is holding Rob prisoner he states:

'I could ask why any action is undertaken. I could ask why you pursued me in this mad fashion. But I have an answer. You are my past, you pursue me as the ghosts of dead actions and a dead life. Is that not answer enough? In your mind, you wonder what I seek. I seek freedom, to be myself, untrammelled, my will free as the wind on the hills, and you come, with your demands and memories and cries of responsibility, and I will not have it. Oh your offence against laws, your insolence, these are excuses, serviceable and fortunate excuses. But I must destroy you to be myself, you and Clym, always you and Clym with your memories standing between me and myself.'

He had started quietly and spoken more and more quickly and loudly till the final cry of 'me and myself' rattled around the cell, howling his expression of a self-consciousness that was something new to both of them, and would be new to anyone who had heard it, like a wounded beast crying its lonely pain.
(98-99)

Maurie's goal is the radical freedom of which Sartre was the key proponent, but like Fraser, his obsession with this goal has turned him away from his common humanity: he has become as dangerous and unsympathetic as a wounded beast. He is howling his anguish in a cell, but it is a cell in which he has imprisoned others in order to achieve his own freedom.

The representation of Maurie is by no means an attack on all principles of existentialism, however, since Maurie is denying responsibility for what he has done and for what he has been, which for Sartre is an act of bad faith. (B&N 58) Maurie's bad faith in his struggle for authenticity is clear in Rob's observation: 'Maurie merely acted out what he was and he never forgot his father's words 'cripples hae a richt to be cankered'. (72) In the 'Bad Faith' section of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre described how the waiter can only be a waiter in the same sense that the actor

²⁶ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/P/Pandulf.asp>.

²⁷ Stern, J. P. *Nietzsche* (Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978), p. 76.

can be Hamlet, but that in doing so the waiter intrinsically obscures the fact that he has made a choice to be a waiter in the first place. (*B&N* 59-60) As the quotation shows, Maurie is acting out what he perceives himself to be, but has grown up in an environment which never challenged his choice to be a 'justified malevolent' because of his disfigurement. He did not have any personal authenticity in the first place since he himself never challenged the determinism of the look of the other on his behaviour.

Rob's own form of existentialism in the assertion of his human creative freedom is juxtaposed with Maurie's destructive assertion of self. Rob acknowledges the massive array of deterministic forces which act upon him and his family, but his sense of his connection to other individuals is profound:

[H]e knew they were caught in a singular and single drama, that the life trying to force itself out of Isobel's body and that other he could imagine when he laid his hand on Jean's belly were both part of him, part of old Walter too, already actors in the chain of circumstance and happening that had been formed even at the moment when Maurie, riding in high fury in the Abbey fields, had thrust his sword into the monk's belly; he saw them all bound together and helpless, and he lifted his head, his eye meeting Isobel's frightful and frightened gaze, gave a great cry, and charged into the storm.

(63)

The symbolism of his cry and charge into the storm is an assertion of existential courage in the face of such deterministic forces, but he is not howling 'like a wounded beast'. The act of procreation which follows the above passage is represented as the need to 'accept the dark, but still deny death and assert life'. (63) This takes place in the barn, but in the context appears as an affirmation of humanity, not its denial. At times during the narrative Rob despairs and this is reflected in existential terms: 'he had suffered such harsh experience that he had lost

the capacity to act.’ (109) Yet he asserts his freedom through love of Jean and creativity: his ‘writing’ of ballads. Writing, as both Sartre and Massie²⁸ have stated, exists as a form of freedom, yet Rob’s form of existential ‘action’, though not destructive to others, is also flawed.

Maurie’s Self is ultimately denied, he is reduced to contempt as a single point without personality in the gaze of the other. He merely represents a focus for the concept of evil; his essence has overtaken his existence before his death. Rob escapes this fate and continues to assert his freedom until his death – a death which is only symbolised and assumed within the narrative. But equally, Rob’s ‘projected’ future existence within the oral ballad tradition suggests that he has failed to define his essence by his life. He has ‘escaped’ the deterministic narratives of the novel and history, yet he has ceded control of his essence by his retreat into the delusional order represented by the ballads. Rob’s story: ‘shapes itself, or was shaped, through many tellings, till at last the figure of Rob is released from all fact that can be ascertained, and flies free in the imagination.’ (173)

Thomas the Rhymer (as the representative of the oral tradition), Rob, the narrator of *The Hanging Tree* (who represents Massie at some level) and Scott (whose practice is echoed within the novel) all appear to collude in the creation and sustenance of the localised mythological ‘irrationalism’ of the culture of the area. The latter two are involved in managing its transition into the ‘conscious’ of the written word. All of this may be seen to involve a tradition of rationalism in a discourse with the

²⁸ Introduction to Muir *Scott and Scotland* *ibid.*, p. xiii.

irrational. *The Hanging Tree* is set in Pre-Reformation Scotland; this discourse therefore takes place within an environment which has distinct common factors with the rest of Fifteenth Century Catholic Europe, and is part of a tradition in which Walter Scott is firmly ensconced. The full extent and implication of this concept of the ballad tradition and its implications for the perception of Scott are dealt with in *The Ragged Lion*.

***The Ragged Lion* (1994)**

In *The Ragged Lion* Massie's portrayal of Scott shows a rational, post-Enlightenment mind being plagued by the irrationality of the unconscious. The law, as part of the process of progressive history – representing the shift from barbarity to civilisation (57) – is juxtaposed with the counter-historical force within Scott's imagination. Within the text Massie brings out the duality of Scott's inheritance by emphasising and polarising that duality insofar as it was represented by Scott's parents. His father represents the progressive rationality of the law, and his religion is 'Calvinism of the dourest kind'. (*TRL* 11) His mother is 'less devout' (11) and it is with her that he learns of the ballads, and reads Homer and Shakespeare, (11) as well as more 'recent' literature.

The familiar imagery of the 'Caledonian antisyzygy' pervades the book: the irrationality of the Jacobite cause (178) is defeated by historical progress – 'the despotism of fact' (179); the 'divided city of Edinburgh' (1) is exploited, and both Hogg (128) and Byron (89) are described in terms of the internal oppositions which make up their characters. Byron's description – 'his profile was that of an angel, but

there was ever an element of mischief in it' (89) – bears a particularly close resemblance to that presented by Gregory Smith which so influenced MacDiarmid: 'a gargoyle's grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint.'²⁹ For Massie's Scott 'Don Juan' reflects Byron's dualities (86) and indeed his 'genius' is 'more characteristically Scotch than English.' (81)

Given Massie's belief that both our perceptions of Scottishness and what it means to be a Scottish writer are filtered through Scott, it is clear that *The Ragged Lion* may be seen as the overt acknowledgement of Scott's cultural influence. In the novel Massie offers a commentary on the duality which is so often a part of Scottish culture and creates his characters through the voice and experiences of Scott. The process of creating the character of Scott is portrayed in the introduction. It is through the indirect influence of a 'Miss MacIvor' that Massie gains access to the 'manuscript': the access to Scott's internal thoughts is provided in part through the influence of the characters he created. The reference to a 'real' character being descended from a fictional one is not a unique occurrence as Massie points out when he refers the reader to Greene's *Monsieur Quixote*. (vii-viii) Given the implication of Cervantes and the significance of that writer to Scott it is clear that Massie is revelling in metafictional playfulness whilst incorporating European and English influences, as Scott did.

²⁹ As quoted in Buthlay, Kenneth 'Introduction' to MacDiarmid, Hugh *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987; 1926), p. xxiii.

For all the self-reflexive games and intertextual references, however, it is clear that there is no escape from the level of text itself. In Edinburgh ‘Scott’ may be a monument or even a railway station,³⁰ in the Borders he is represented by a house-turned-museum, but the ‘Scott’ who generated all this, and who is still capable of ‘living’ – through Sartre’s ‘generous freedom’ of the reader – is a metonym for a body of text. Massie’s Scott describes himself as a ‘ragged lion’ (126) and the ‘manuscript’ as ‘this ragged memoir’. (166) Scott’s being is inseparable from the being of the text. His ‘real’ life is mysterious by comparison, having existed at a separate level of reality. As a writer, then, Massie’s engagement with Scott must take place within the Barthesian ‘Text’ which they both inhabit, with all the imperfections and vying subjectivities which that implies.

Massie appears in the novel as a ‘real’ writer mentioning one of his ‘real’ books: *A Question of Loyalties*. By appearing in the text of his own novel *The Ragged Lion*, Massie stands in a similar relationship to Scott as Etienne does to his father Lucien in *A Question of Loyalties*.³¹ Within the text, Massie constructs an inner self for Scott from the texts which already exist. Massie is not the ‘father’ of the text, he inhabits the textual space created by both himself and others. The individual thus participates in the creation of the textual space but is by no means the sole originator. The textual space which Scott inhabits clearly contains elements of many other

³⁰ In this, Scott perfectly conforms to Sartre’s definition of a great writer: ‘foreigners would cross the seas to pay homage to him; his countrymen, after his death, would subscribe to build him a monument; in his native town, and sometimes in the capital of his country, streets would be named after him.’ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Words* *ibid.*, p. 106.

³¹ The ‘de Balafre’ family name in *A Question of Loyalties* further implies a descent from Scott’s own character ‘le Balafre’ in Scott, Sir Walter *Quentin Durward* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.; 1823).

writers as well as ballads and folklore – he frequently quotes from such sources throughout his novels and his *Journal*. The fragmented nature of the creative forces which moulded the ballads have been established by Massie in *The Hanging Tree*.

According to Cairns Craig, a metafictional superstructure was employed by Scott to reflect his scepticism over the order produced by narrative reflecting a similar order in the ‘real’ world.³² Massie’s exploitation of this technique similarly highlights his narratorial imposition of order over the psychological disorder of Scott’s final years. Scott frequently exploited ‘nested’ narratives such as those found in his ‘Tales of my Landlord’ series, where the text of the novel is offered to the reader at second hand within the text itself, having been created by Peter Pattieson, and edited/annotated and presented by Jedidiah Cleishbotham. Massie has described this as a ‘self-indulgent apparatus’³³ but he exploits the technique in many of his own novels, though it is a persona of Allan Massie undergoing fictitious meetings and performing imaginary actions which he presents. In *The Ragged Lion* this pattern is followed with the manuscript ostensibly written by Sir Walter Scott being enclosed by a note from ‘Allan Massie’ giving an account of how the manuscript came into his hands, and a note ‘by Charles Scott’ (Scott’s son) – through whom the manuscript had, supposedly, passed – being located at the end. The artificial distance between the psychological ‘reality’ of Scott’s mind and the narrative order of the manuscript is further emphasised by the assertion that the manuscript is only a copy of the original.

(x)

³² Craig, Cairns *Out of History* *ibid.*, p. 69.

³³ Introduction to Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, p. xvi.

Scott's narrative, the end note suggests, is the product of a mind being taken over by the 'counter-historical' unconscious. The superstructure employed by Massie to present the text itself elucidates the struggle between the ordering conscious creativity of Massie-the-editor and the disorder created by the uncontrolled intrusion of Scott's unconscious within the text. This intrusion creates disorder within the consciousness (Scott's) which is being represented, and therefore within the text. Massie-the-editor intrudes into the main text in a footnote (218) in which he overtly acknowledges the confused chronology of the 'manuscript' and acts to re-introduce the threatened order of the historical narrative. Massie-the-editor states that he has imposed chapter headings and *probable* dates – of composition, or of the events described. (xvi) The narrative 'written by Scott' leaps around through time and undermines Massie-the-editor's power to establish historical order as the chapter headings demonstrate. Chapter XVIII, for instance is 'Waterloo and Paris , 1815 (written 1830)', but may have been written later. The end note (by 'Charles Scott') deliberately casts the 'editor's' attempt to impose 'order' further into question. (229)

Massie's Charles Scott points out the minor errors in chronology within the text asserting that it may all have been written near the very end of Scott's life when the psychological disorder was at its greatest. Massie (in his role as the author of the novel) inserts some other less overt indications that this may be the case. In the 'earliest' chapter of *The Ragged Lion*, for instance, the reader is told that a Mr Thompson accosts Scott at the Court during one morning in 1826, to discuss the repayment plan of his debts, (4) whereas the identical discussion in the *Journal*

involves a Mr Gibson and takes place at Scott's house after dinner in the evening.³⁴ Such minor 'errors' are psychologically consistent with a fading memory, and tend to indicate that the 'manuscript' has indeed been written late in Scott's life and is not written simultaneously with the *Journal*. This further destabilises the historical narrative within the text.

According to Massie-the-editor, however, the 'creation' of the manuscript begins in 1826 just after the financial ruin. Scott has refused bankruptcy proceedings and determined to write his way out of debt. The novel ends after Scott's death when he has discharged his financial obligations. The choice of this particular period in Scott's life and the imposition of a chronology on the various chapters enables Massie to enact twin narrative trajectories within *The Ragged Lion*, which echo Scott's 'two antithetical modes – the historical and the counter-historical'.³⁵ Massie-the-editor of course, by imposing a chronology on the 'counter-historical', resists it.

Within the chronology of production imposed by Massie-the-editor in *The Ragged Lion*, the 'conscious' trajectory of rational progressive history shows Scott working his way out of the 'chaos' of his personal financial collapse until after the point where he has put his financial affairs in 'order': a position of financial stability that will allow his children to inherit his possessions and a stable progressive future. The second narrative trajectory is the disintegration of Scott's control over his imagination with a concomitant rise of the unconscious. It shows the descent from

³⁴ Anderson, W. E. K. (ed.) *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* *ibid.*, 16/2/1826, pp. 106-7.

³⁵ Craig, Cairns *Out of History* *ibid.*, p. 70.

an ordered consciousness into the irrational ‘chaos’ caused of increasingly serious ‘eruptions’ of the unconscious into the conscious mind as the strain of the enforced creativity takes its toll on Scott’s mental and physical well-being.

In the mind of Massie’s Scott corrupted versions of the ballads calling him to ‘Elfland’ are sung to him by mysterious figures. The figures appear only to Scott; (217) some are from his own novels, others are from his life. The figures ‘appear’ with greater frequency as his health deteriorates. In *The Ragged Lion*, then, as with Scott’s fictional oeuvre:

[. . .] the force of the imagination is always present, calling to the modern mind, inviting it into a past where it will be at home – but also inviting it to turn the present, the modern world, into a place where it can be again at home by overthrowing the narrative of rational progress. And that calling of the force of the imagination can never be extirpated, because progressive history itself is an illusion constructed by the imagination through the exigences [sic] of narrative.³⁶

Within *The Ragged Lion* the narrative of historical progress is set against the counter-historical force of the atavistic imagination. In childhood, where Massie implies that Scott’s imagination begins to operate within the cultural field of the ballads, the narrative of progress is irrelevant: ‘childhood is a state, not a narrative.’ (7)

In the context of Massie’s fictional oeuvre the ‘simultaneous’ twin narrative trajectories serve a further purpose: they highlight the inherent romanticism of Sartre’s ideas and, like the portrayal of Rob in *The Hanging Tree*, suggest that a character who is figured as heroic in terms of Sartrean existentialism is highly vulnerable to solipsism.

Sartre dismisses the paradoxical need to acknowledge the omnipresence of chaos to justify the re-imposition of order, as a fantasy from his own childhood. ‘Champion of the established order, I had placed my *raison d’être* in perpetual chaos; I would suffocate Evil in my arms, I would die with its death, recover with its resurrection.’ (*Words* 72) Massie’s Scott insists that the element of atavism within man is self-evidently part of the ‘pre-determination’ of human nature which Sartre resists. Massie’s Scott denies Sartre’s implication that the individual progresses out of this form of ‘reality’, and does so in terms which reflect the Sartrean argument:

What I cannot now deny to myself is what in the days when I trusted myself to my imagination I dared not contemplate, for fear that examination would stifle what was most vital in me; but which, now that it is moribund, I can no longer shrink from facing: the thorough and primitive duality of man. I employ the word ‘primitive’, not as my friend Francis Jeffrey and his troop of Whig reviewers might employ it: to denote a condition from which the progress of civilisation has set us free; but rather as something inescapable, something that is of our necessary and enduring essence.

(3-4)

The question which Massie’s Scott expresses later – ‘Are we to be judged on what we succeed in suppressing?’ (95) – suggests that Sartre’s dismissive attitude towards the irrational concept of human nature and its concomitant aspect of evil represents a romantic denial of the unsavoury in the self. The suggestion is that such a suppression of part of the Self would be necessary if a society based on Sartre’s ideas were not to descend into mutually destructive chaos. Sartre’s existentialism is shown to be founded on romanticism; Sartre himself, as Iris Murdoch suggested, is shown to be a romantic rationalist.

³⁶ Craig, Cairns *Out of History* *ibid.*, p. 72.

In *The Ragged Lion* Massie highlights the existentially heroic aspect of Scott's insistence on taking responsibility for his previous actions and his endeavour to reassert control of his life by his own actions. Massie's Scott praises Byron for possessing 'the rarest kind of courage – the dour cauld kind of courage that hauls fast and says "no".' (87) This form of courage sounds distinctly like Sartre's idea of existential heroism.³⁷ In admiring such courage within the text, Massie's Scott implicitly emphasises the form of his own existential courage. (Of course, for Scott, this 'no' is ultimately affirmative of the capitalist system since his actions are to preserve it from itself.) Scott was not 'oppressed by the gaze of the other': according to both Scott's *Journal* (16/2/1826) and Massie's novel, (5) Scott was ashamed of the *fact* of his huge debt rather than other people's perception of him as a debtor. As Massie shows, Scott refused the assistance of others (either through law courts or by way of financial gifts from friends) vowing to work his own way out of trouble by personal industry: 'My own right hand shall do it.' (148)³⁸

The paradox which Massie exploits within the progressive narrative imposed by Massie-the editor is that as Scott gets closer and closer (within the construct of the historical narrative) to re-establishing control over his 'real' life – his 'freedom' – so his psychological grasp over external reality recedes. The creative effort required by Scott to achieve his freedom, albeit a bourgeois version of freedom, causes him increasingly to court the intrusion of his own irrational imagination on his daily life: 'I maun go where the devil rides, even if I think myself bewitched the while.' (112)

³⁷ Byron was a hero for the young Sartre. (*Words* 110)

From the first pages of the narrative, Massie's Scott repeatedly expresses his concern that he has become increasingly vulnerable to solipsism; that the imaginative effort of creating his fictions will impinge on his consciousness of reality:

For the distinction between what is and what is not is one that has puzzled philosophers at least since Plato, and when Dr Johnson sought to refute Bishop Berkeley's questioning of the reality of matter by giving a dunt with his foot to a stone, the refutation only holds good if you first accept the reality of the boot on the good Doctor's foot. These are strange thoughts for a man such as I perhaps, but then I have set so many beings skipping into a semblance of life from my study here or that at my beloved Abbotsford, that I may be forgiven in my night watches for questioning the nature of reality.

(1-2)

Yet again, Massie implicitly attacks the vulnerability of Sartrean existentialism to solipsism, but it is equally clear from the above that the danger of solipsism is shown to pre-exist Sartrean philosophy. Solipsism does not arise from Existentialism, but that philosophy puts the individual at greater risk.

As Scott becomes increasingly vulnerable to the misperception of 'reality' within his own mind, so it becomes clear that it is the romanticised picture of the past as represented by the ballads which seduces him to his delusory state where the reality of the modern is overcome. Twice during the novel he feels himself to be like the Eildon hills. (149, 216) Thomas the Rhymer, 'True Thomas', is supposed to be inside the Eildon hills and to the first of these comparisons, Scott's confidant replies: 'you speak a true word there.' Scott is 'becoming' Thomas the Rhymer, but Massie's Scott has already clarified the dangers of such a retreat from reality:

I have known many men, too numerous to list, who at some point in the middle of their journey, became weary of success, happiness, worldly ambition,

³⁸ This phrase, provoked by the same incident, occurs in the *Journal*. (Anderson, W. E. K. (ed.) *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* *ibid.*, 22/1/1826, p. 77.)

domesticity, family life, and so committed acts which the world deems folly or worse, by which they destroyed themselves, or at the very least lowered themselves in the estimations of others: and I believe that in each such case, they were lured on by a spirit of dissatisfaction with their own achievements, a feeling that they had imprisoned themselves in what they had made of their life, and by a wish that things could be different. That wish is a sweet cheat. When True Thomas lay on Huntlie Bank, and the Queen of fair Elfland summoned him, was he not yielding to a like temptation; or rather is the ballad not a poetic representation of what I have been trying to describe?
(97)

Massie's Scott loses the ability to prevent himself from 'becoming' True Thomas as the figures from his imagination call him to Elfland using increasingly recognisable verses from the 'Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer'. He loses his *internal* control over the discernment of reality as he gets closer to asserting control over the reality of his external circumstances. The seductive invitation to solipsism is part of human nature, according to Massie's Scott. Within this novel a mode of conduct consistent with the tenets of Sartrean existentialism renders the individual at greater risk from such self-delusion.

Massie portrays Scott as a unifier of traditions through his writing. The image of Scott's right hand operates as the key unifying image of *The Ragged Lion*. It is his right hand which Scott will use 'heroically' to write himself out of his position of being beholden to other people and institutions – and therefore within their power, to an extent. His right hand enables him to become Aeneas at a personal level – and for Scottish culture, within this novel. His right hand will save him (36) from the 'yawning jaws of despair. *Facilis descensus Averni*, but the way up is hard, for you must first find and pluck the golden bough.' (35) But his right hand is also the hand at Belshazzar's feast which is responsible for the 'writing on the wall' (93) signalling his own fallibility. For Massie, as has been noted in the *Death of Men* section, every

action contains the seed of its own corruption. It is the left hand with which he brings the death (of the ballad world) to his lips. (172) That death prefigures the death of his own mature creativity and is symbolised by his vision of the crumbling bones of a hand, held within his left hand, as if it were the reduction to dust of his own right hand.

Massie shows the eclecticism of Scott's (conscious and unconscious) memory and its ability to construct proto-Jungian 'archetypes' from the mass of diverse mythological, literary and 'balladic' narratives it contains³⁹. This implies a certain level of determinism in the construction of narratives which Sartre would refute (disingenuously, given his philosophical agenda) but of which Scott was painfully aware. With this central image of 'manual' production, Scott's existential heroism is linked to the creativity which flows from Scott's memory:

It has ever been my belief that any considerable work of art [. . .] derives less from the intellect, though that must exercise a controlling and shaping power, than from some deep well on which the maker draws, ignorant though he must be of the springs which feed it.
(46-7)

³⁹ Massie has praised a similar aspect of the work of another European novelist: 'Mr Calvino illuminates the great European myths, legends, archetypal figures. We have stories from the "Orlando Furioso", from Shakespeare, the Grail legend and the Fisher King (it is often a waste land we move in). Faust and Parsifal come together, so do Saints Jerome and George. What saves this from being merely intellectual fooling is the manner, the intelligence and also something more; that the work springs from the deep wells of the psyche which occasionally through art can offer us glimmerings of another dimension, another scale of values, another world which may contain and yet transcend this, another order of reality.' *The Scotsman* 23/4/77. Massie's novel *The Evening of the World* represents a 'pre-rationalist' tour through the 'archetypal' world of European culture. Massie, Allan *An Evening of the World: A Romance of the Dark Ages being the first volume of the trilogy The Matter of Eternal Rome which is also The Matter of Europe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2001).

Elsewhere, Massie has used the expression ‘a deep well, waiting to be drawn on’⁴⁰ to describe Scott’s extensive reading, memories, and experiences of the people and landscapes of the Scottish Borders.

In *The Ragged Lion* it is clear that such memories need not be held in the conscious mind for their influence to operate on the creative act, but since, equally, they are accrued by Scott within the course of his life, they represent his personal unconscious (a product of the ‘collective cultural unconscious’) which interacts with the collective unconscious.⁴¹ Sartre’s ‘reciprocity’ does not entirely account for the source of creativity in this novel. Within the narrative of *The Ragged Lion*, Scott acknowledges that the products of his imagination built upon his voluntary internalisation of a culture which he was aware of at an early age: ‘I am still the lame bairn that made up stories for himself in the dark to keep the bogles off; and in doing so *invited them in* and made them dance.’ (6) (my italics) This would seem to be in line with Sartrean philosophical theory, but it is the existence of an *a priori* ‘fear of the dark’ that provides the agency for such an internalisation, echoing Jung’s view.

Massie’s Scott holds up *The Bride of Lammermoor*, written in alternate agony and laudanum-induced delirium, as ‘proof’ that creativity comes from the unconscious: ‘the essential work of literary creation derives from some part of the mind to which we do not have conscious access.’ (121) Sartre explicitly rubbishes such claims. In

⁴⁰ Massie, Allan ‘Introduction’ to Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, p. xvii.

⁴¹ ‘While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never

discussing his childhood experiments with 'automatic writing', Sartre states that it was a form of *deliberate* plagiarism rather than an unlocking of the unconscious: 'If, as is commonly held, an inspired author is, deep down, something other than himself, I knew inspiration between the ages of seven and eight.' (*Words* 91) Sartre will not admit the ability to gain direct access to any emotion or thought that exists outwith the conscious mind, but his idea of cultural reciprocity comes close to Jung's concept of the personal unconscious.

According to *The Ragged Lion* and Massie's 'Introduction' to *The Bride of Lammermoor*,⁴² when the *Bride* was read back to him, Scott 'could not recollect a single incident, character, or conversation.' (121) Sartre only admits the possibility of such an objective reading by the 'author' of a work after a long period of time has elapsed since the act of writing. (*WL?* 29) Sartre, however, also states that 'the literary object, though realised *through* language, is never given *in* language. On the contrary it is by nature a silence and an opponent of the word.' (*WL?* 30) Yet it is the author who creates that silence in order that the reader may experience 'directed creation' (*WL?* 30) For Sartre, the author may deliberately create a form of 'textual unconscious' but the creative act demands prior conscious knowledge of that which will be created, even if it is consciousness of a symbolic silence which is 'anterior to language'. (*WL?* 30) For Sartre, the creation of literature is an act which expresses your freedom from all determinants.

been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity.' Jung, C. G. 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious' *ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴² Scott, Sir Walter *The Bride of Lammermoor* *ibid.*, p. xviii.

Scott did not 'write' the *Bride*, though. He dictated it, and it 'has some claims to be the thought best-ordered and best-crafted of all my works.' (121) *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in fact, has the delusory 'completeness' of a world ordered by the irrational of the oral ballad tradition. A. N. Wilson pointed out that the tyranny of the incident on which the plot of the novel is based bothered Scott, in that he regretfully acknowledged that he had 'no choice' but to kill Lucy Ashton⁴³ since the story on which the plot was based demanded it. Memory, therefore, played a part. Interestingly, though, the Master of Ravenswood's death in that novel is an invention of Scott's. It is 'predicted' by Thomas the Rhymer within the novel, that is, 'prophesied' and enacted by Scott. Within Scott's 'personal unconscious' memory the ordering force of the ballad tradition had at least as much importance as the knowledge of the 'known facts' of the case. Even if it were to be argued that the Master's death is deliberately inserted to heighten the melodrama, it would imply that Scott recognised and exploited the existence of narrative archetypes of predetermination in a wider culture. In *The Ragged Lion*, it is the success of the created prophesy to which Massie's Scott points to explain the popularity of the novel in Europe:

The device served well, I believe, to heighten the emotion, and it is perhaps some evidence of my success that no fewer than four different versions of *The Bride* have, I am informed, been staged in the opera-houses of Italy.
(120)

⁴³ '[O]f all the murders I have committed in that way, [. . .] there is none that went to my heart as the poor Bride of Lammermoor; but it could not be helped, it is all true.' As quoted in Wilson, A. N. *The Laird of Abbotsford: A View of Sir Walter Scott* *ibid.*, p. 67.

The image of the right hand is further exploited by Massie to destabilise any form of chronology within the novel which may be exclusively attached to the period of Scott's life. Massie deliberately inserts a much later perspective on Scott's works into the mind of his re-creation of Scott. A. N. Wilson points out Scott's industriousness by reference to a passage from Lockhart's *Life*, in which Scott's right hand is compared to the disembodied hand at Belshazzar's feast,⁴⁴ discomposing the self-satisfaction of the viewer. Massie exploits this image. In a dream, Walter Scott is confronted by a 'devil's advocate' (91) who puts to him Edwin Muir's accusation (in 'Scotland 1941') of being a 'sham bard of a sham nation'. (92) Massie's Scott accuses the devil's advocate (produced by his own imagination) of copying the hand at Belshazzar's feast, having 'weighed me in the balance and found me wanting.'⁴⁵ (94)

By this narrative act, the narrative perspective is firmly located outwith the period of the character involved, and the extent of the influence of Scott's mind on Scottish literature is implied. The devil's advocate is a character generated by Scott's unconscious imagination, just as other products of Scott's imagination influenced Scottish literary culture and therefore in a sense 'produced' Muir's work. The consequences of Scott's 'freedom' are interrogated by the results of that 'freedom'. The 'devil's advocate' is cross-examining the case for Scott's literary 'canonisation'.

⁴⁴ Wilson, A. N. *The Laird of Abbotsford: A View of Sir Walter Scott* *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.' Daniel 5:27

Massie identifies Muir's critique as Scott's false and failed unification of Scottish culture and history. The defence which Massie offers on Scott's behalf admits that Scott reconciled divisions across history within the culture, but states: 'By summoning up memories, however savage, by invocation of what was, I have sought to bind the past to the present and so, I hope, help to form a more intelligent and sympathetic future.' (92) When the devil's advocate accuses Scott of supporting the inhumane behaviour of those whom he had romanticised within his novels and poems, Massie's Scott asserts:

'I defend no inhumanity,' I said again. 'Let the proud sad music of the lilting sound to the valleys and the hills and in men's hearts. If the day should come when we forget it, and abide only in the present and in hopes for the future, then, alas, my poor country, for all that makes Scotland Scotland will be no more. The brave days will be done, and we shall live in the ledger-books and no more in poetry and song. It is that awareness that I have worked to cultivate.'

As I spoke in this manner, the tears ran down my cheeks, for I was sorely moved, but my inquisitor threw back his head and laughed. I can hear that laughter yet, ringing down the corridors of a rational Hell, where indeed at that moment I believed myself to be imprisoned.

(93)

The problem with such sentiment is that Scott himself used the poetry and song of Scotland in an attempt to balance the 'ledger-books'. Within the novel, this is Scott's conscience operating through his unconscious to conceptualise the guilt he feels over reducing the oral tradition to stasis by writing down the ballads. In the final scene in *Hastie's Close*, as has been noted, his hand brings death to his lips. Twice during the novel Scott mentions the famous criticism by Hogg's mother. (20, 44)

Scott is laughed at in the rational Hell because the presentation of such a defiantly sentimental statement of the value of the past has no substance in a progressive 'hell'

where the devil's advocate is the cross-examiner. This is also the infernally rational proleptic court in which Scott faces cross-examination by Sartre. His assertion of the value of all humanity and the importance of the past to an understanding of the present 'echoes' Massie's mitigated critique of Sartre.

Within the context of the novel – as a representation of Scott's thoughts – however, the dream portrays the world of Scott's imagination, where the constructs of legal rationalism vie with the constructs of the ballads. In the courtroom of Scott's creativity where the imposition of the imagined narrative of progress denies the validity of the counter-historical past, Massie's Scott defends the importance of that past to the future. If his argument seems one-sided, Massie implies, it is because the other rationalist case has already been established. Massie's Scott states:

I have often been questioned, of course, about my attitude to the supernatural, and I have generally managed to fob my questioners off with some easy or evasive answer: to the effect, for instance, that such beliefs in demons, brownies, ghosts and bogles, are natural in a primitive state of society, but must, in equally natural fashion, evaporate with the progress of civilisation. [In the story of] Wandering Willie [. . .] I have been careful, even while seeking to give my readers a taste of the macabre, to offer at the same time a rational explanation which does not offend common sense. That has seemed to me the only manner in which someone today can treat such matters, without making himself absurd by a display of credulity. It is quite different, though when a man finds himself assailed in perplexity . . .

(69)

'Wandering Willie's Tale' is a section of prose with most of the narrative functions of a ballad which tells of a journey into hell. That journey is undertaken in order to obtain a legal proof of the payment of a sum of money. The above, of course, refers to the role of the monkey in the tale. Yet it may be surmised that the truth which the ledger-book 'denied' is found in the world of the ballads, but that ballad world has been reduced to performing a corrective function only where the master narrative of progressive fiscal and financial rationalism is inadequate.

Massie shows Scott, like Byron, accepting necessity and the ‘limitations of what was possible’. (87) Ultimately, this is an affirmation of the society which Scott inhabits. *The Aeneid* represents the creation of a quasi-mythical justification for a society/regime which was current at the time of its creation. Massie portrays Scott as the Aeneas figure who constructs a new and vital culture after the destruction of the old. As Anchises tells Aeneas in the Underworld of Book VI: ‘you, Roman, must remember that you have to guide nations by your authority, for this is to be your skill, to graft tradition onto peace, to shew mercy to the conquered [. . .]’⁴⁶ Scott’s defence of his literary oeuvre (93) is an echo of this instruction. On going down into the hell of his imagination, the devil’s advocate, ‘with the voice of posterity’, (92) effectively introduces Scott to a part of the future of the culture he is helping to found. This echoes Aeneas’ journey into the underworld, where he is introduced to his descendants and emerges at the ‘gates of sleep’.

Massie’s Scott is the catalyst for the construction of a new, European ‘Roman Empire’ of Scottish culture from the ashes of Classical knowledge and the medieval ballad tradition – the ‘Troy’ that is destroyed by the ‘Greeks’ of the Reformation. Massie’s Scott still owes ‘fealty’ to the Scotts of Buccleuch. (46) He is confronted by the increasing democratisation of the political culture which, arguably, grew out of the Reformation. This deals a massive blow to the lingering feudal power-base. In

⁴⁶ Virgil *The Aeneid* (Jackson Knight, W. F. (trans.)) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), Bk. VI, p. 173.

response to the crowd's anger at Jedburgh, Scott declares 'Troia Fuit':⁴⁷ (211) 'We Trojans are no more'.⁴⁸ In *The Aeneid*, the immediately preceding line is 'This is the hour which no effort of ours can alter.' In figuring himself as Aeneas, Scott implicitly accepts the limits of action which Sartre could not, in Massie's view.

In his depiction of Scott as Aeneas, Massie also colours the available evidence to suit his intent. On touring near Naples, Massie's Scott points out the Virgilian significance of 'the Lake of Avernus'. (225) Though Lockhart confirms that Scott saw the lake,⁴⁹ Scott himself makes no reference to it in his *Journal*. Massie's Scott notes:

[. . .] the dark lake of Avernus, which reminded me, in the scenery, of Scotland, though Virgil makes it the point of entry into the Underworld: '*facilis descensus Averno . . .*' as, alas, I know all too well. I was recalling the noble Scots version of the old Bishop of Dunkeld, Gavin Douglas: 'Throwout the waste dungeon of Pluto king,' when my attention was alerted by my three familiar figures whom I had not seen since that day in Douglasdale. The old woman sat by the water's edge, spinning, while the fiddler played a melancholy dirge, and the girl danced in a weaving manner as if she would lead me into the water. I knew by now that they were not visible to my companions [. . .]
(225)

These are the figures who 'appeared' to Scott in Hastie's Close. The connection is enhanced by his reference to Dante's *Inferno* – in which Virgil is the poet's 'guide' within the Underworld – after one of the incidents in Hastie's Close. (100)

In the disorder of Scott's mind, the reader can perceive the mythological archetypes which connect the literatures and mythologies of a multiplicity of cultures within Western Europe and the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this novel the boundaries blur

⁴⁷ 'Troja Fuit' in Anderson, W. E. K. (ed.) *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* *ibid.*, 18/5/1831, p. 736.

⁴⁸ Virgil *The Aeneid* *ibid.*, Bk. II, p. 61.

so that the images created are merged into one another. This is Scott's unconscious, in part a collective cultural unconscious, at work. The collectivity on which Scott draws includes Gavin Douglas' Scots translation of *The Aeneid*.

The disembodied voice in Hastie's Close says:

And were you called to Elfland, cuddy,
Where the white lilies bloom,
Or to that mirk, mirk land, cuddy,
The shades ayont the tomb.
(99)

The 'banks of Italie' is the place 'where the white lilies grow' in 'The Daemon-Lover' of Scott's *Minstrelsy*.⁵⁰ Similarly, later verses heard by Scott during the incident highlight the connection between the 'Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer' with the apple of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The rhyme itself is presented within the novel in the context of Hastie's Close and therefore, by the associations established within the text, Book VI of *The Aeneid*. Scott also compares himself to one of the children in the 'Pied Piper' fairy tale, (99) and then quotes Dante: "*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate*". And yet it seemed that for a moment I had been offered hope – was it then a cheat, a sad delusion?' (100) The line is from Canto III of the *Inferno*: 'Abandon every hope, you who enter.' There is a connection (in the ballads, and within the mind of Massie's Scott) between the sexuality of the dancing girl, Original Sin, a German tale about death, and an Italian myth about the Underworld: the 'shades'. This echoes Jung's idea of the collective unconscious, as indeed does Charles Scott's suggestion that in the figure of Green-

⁴⁹ Lockhart, J. G. *The Life of Sir Walter Scott (abridged) (Vol II)* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1898), p. 759.

⁵⁰ Scott, Sir Walter *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* *ibid.*, p. 165.

brecks (the young Goth)⁵¹ his father perceived his 'alter-ego'. (235) Green-brecks is Scott's shadow personality in this novel and appears with the Jungian archetype of the wise old woman.

Green-brecks is the leader of the 'Plebian' faction which opposes Scott's 'Patricians' in a childhood fight which is figured as a conflict in Ancient Rome. (13) Since, within this novel, the progressive narrative of Scottish History begins with the intrusion into Scotland of the Romans, (43) Green-brecks represents the counter-historical culture (the ballads) which is 'generated' by the narrative of progressive history. Scott's admiration of, and the guilt he feels towards, Green-brecks, echoes his relationship with the ballad culture.

In showing Scott consciously portraying himself as a Roman Patrician and 'Roman' Aeneas, Massie, by Sartre's thinking, implies Scott's desire to retreat to the counter-historical. As Sartre stated:

To return to our Romans of 1789, their way of *calling* themselves Cato is their way of *making* themselves bourgeois, members of a class which discovers History and which already wants to stop it, which claims to be universal and which establishes the proud individualism of its members upon a competitive economy—in short, the heirs of a classical culture. Everything is there. It is one and the same thing to declare oneself Roman and attempt to *stop* the Revolution. Or rather, the better one can pose as Brutus or Cato, the better one will be able to stop the Revolution. This thought, obscure even to itself, sets up mystical ends which enclose the confused awareness of the objective ends. Thus we may speak simultaneously of a subjective drama (the simple play of appearances which contains no 'unconscious' element) and of an *objective, intentional* organization of all this by a consciousness or a premeditated will. Very simply, the truth of the imaginary *praxis* is in the real *praxis*, and the real, to the extent that it takes itself as merely imaginary, includes implicit references to the imaginary *praxis* as to its interpretation. The bourgeois of 1789 does not pretend to be Cato in order to stop the revolution by denying History and by substituting virtue for politics;

⁵¹ Massie takes this figure from Scott's third appendix to the General Preface to *Waverley* of 1829: 'Anecdote of Schooldays' in Scott, Sir Walter *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 383-389.

neither does he tell himself that he resembles Brutus in order to give himself a mythical comprehension of an action which he carries out but which escapes him. He does both at the same time.⁵²

In many ways this appears to be an accurate summation of Massie's presentation of Scott's 'self-portrayal', except that for Sartre, it seems that the 'unconscious' element of the act is an inseparable part of the conscious act and is *only* valid insofar as it is revealed through that act. There is nothing in this action which is not 'intentional'.

For Massie, whilst there can be little doubt that the intended implications of showing how Scott figures himself as a Roman do extend to the additional 'unconscious' meaning contained by that conscious act, Sartre's summation does not reflect the eruption of the unconscious which motivates Scott's increasing identification with Thomas the Rhymer. The unconscious as it is displayed in that respect does not coincide with Scott's conscious will in that when his conscious rational mind is lucid he dismisses the 'visions' calling him to Elfland as self-generated fantasies. And the text does indeed suggest that they are manifestations of his personal unconscious. In taking on the role of Thomas the Rhymer he may be expressing an unconscious desire to escape the world but this does not coincide with his conscious will. Sartre's severely limited admission of an 'unconscious' element to the act admits no opposition between the conscious act and the unconscious desire.

Topographically and symbolically, Hastie's Close stands in the same relation to Scott's father's house in College Wynd – the house where Scott spent his first two

⁵² Sartre, Jean-Paul *Search for a Method* *ibid.*, p. 46.

years of life – as the dark alley does to Dr. Jekyll’s townhouse. It may be that ‘memories hang about’ the Cowgate (21) but they include Scott’s own earliest experiences. The location itself is a symbol of the dangerous atavistic personal alter-ego. Jekyll is unwillingly taken over by Hyde but first realises that ‘this, too, was myself’⁵³ when he looks in a mirror; he has a ‘glass’ taken into his room to witness his transformations. Massie’s Scott feels his need to return to Hastie’s Close ‘is the sort of folly that acts upon one like a drug.’ (69) The morning after that visit to Hastie’s Close he grabs a ‘glass’ from his bedside table to reassure himself that he is the same man that went to bed. He confesses that such an action is extraordinary and that ‘I do not know how the glass came to be there’. (70) Within Massie’s own oeuvre, this self-awareness of the beast within is itself a form of literary ‘archetype’: he has referred to ‘the rage of the mirrored Caliban’ in this sense.⁵⁴

In this novel, the question which haunts Scott is whether the translation of ‘unconscious’ (i.e. oral) cultures into the corresponding ‘conscious’ of the written word – the process by which they become tangible (and therefore validated) within the scheme of rationality but are inherently destroyed – is justified in order to ‘save’ them for a wider world which has progressed ‘beyond’ them. To Massie’s Scott, tangible literary ‘products’ created from the Classical mythologies or the tales of Ossian do not seem to have diminished the *value* or enduring influence of the culture which produced the original inspirations, yet his guilt haunts him, since these cultures themselves are dead or dying in the oral form.

⁵³ Stevenson, R. L. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Weir of Hermiston* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 63.

Massie suggests that whilst it may be true that Scott unwittingly betrayed the ballad culture, he also notified the wider Western European culture about aspects of Scottish 'mythology'. In doing so he placed it alongside Classical mythology within the shared textual space of European literature, just as the two are unified at 'Avernus' within Scott's mind. In this he was partially echoing Macpherson's 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry', providing a record of a dying oral culture. But since Scott's *Minstrelsy* is largely based on authentic collected pieces, the possibility that he was hastening demise of the oral culture on which he drew is far greater than in the case of Macpherson. Massie's Scott has far less internal personal conflict over his role as novelist.

Fifteen years after Culloden, and as many before Dr Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, James Macpherson gave 'Ossian' to the world. It was a largely fraudulent production, for while it seems probable that Macpherson drew some of his materials from Gaelic poetry which he received orally, his contention that he had translated an authentic manuscript cannot be sustained, since he defied every attempt to make him produce the original. The case against him cannot be refuted. Yet in some mysterious fashion, Macpherson gave the world what it was longing for; and our national vanity may be flattered by the fact that a remote and almost barbarous corner of Scotland produced a bard who gave a new tone to poetry throughout Europe; [. . .] Now it seems to me that 'Ossian' is the poetic equivalent of Jacobitism and the '45.

This is why I have insisted on its importance for Scotland. We live in a mercantile age, which is rapidly becoming an industrial one. The progress of our manufactories is wonderful, and must add – has already added – to the comfort of the individual life and the wealth of the nation, but if this is all we subscribe to then we shall be diminished.

(180)

Ossian is the poetic equivalent of irrational Jacobitism; the defiant valorisation of that which has been destroyed by the progress (narrative) of the historical. The oral culture from which 'Ossian' is created represents the 'barbarity' which is defeated by the rationalism of progress. Macpherson, like Wandering Willie's forebear, cannot

⁵⁴ Massie, Allan *Ill Met by Gaslight* *ibid.*, p. 2.

produce the proof of his innocence because it is located in a medium which denies the validity of the intangible, yet the importance of the cultures which rely on such a medium is incontestable.

In this novel Scott and Macpherson are shown to be expediting the process of integrating Scottish culture with that of Western Europe begun by figures such as Gavin Douglas in the translation of the *Aeneid* into Scots. Douglas translates one of the grand narratives of European culture into a Scottish context, whilst Macpherson locates an aspect of Scottish culture at the heart of Europe. The operas, plays and translations constructed in Europe from Scott's narratives (which themselves intertwined eclectic influences and locations external to Scotland with the Scottish culture) suggest Scott's participation in this process. As Scott slides closer to his death in *The Ragged Lion* he mixes the cultural referents of his imagination with greater fluidity.

It is this eclectic and inclusive version of Scottish literature within which Massie operates as a writer. In *The Ragged Lion* he portrays Scott as the apex of the construction of that tradition and the point at which a Scottish literary tradition is irrefutably located in the same narrative space as English literature and the literature of Europe and the wider world. It is within such a narrative space that Massie's own fictions can engage with the European philosophy of Sartre and draw influences from other literatures. In *The Ragged Lion* Massie performs a narrative act which brings the order of a clarified, eclectic, inclusive literary tradition to the 'chaos' of diverse influences and discourses which inhabit his fictions.

Conclusion

Massie states that Scottish writers have a predisposition to concern themselves with questions of free will and predetermination due to the influence of Calvinist theology on Scottish culture. In the context of modern, secular Scottish literature, the discourse on free will and predetermination has taken the form of a literary engagement with the ideas of Nietzsche and, after the Second World War, the writings of the French existentialists. The Calvinist aspect of Massie's engagement with existentialism is evident in the co-existence of an element of 'predetermination' (manifested as the acknowledgement of only partial individual freedom) and personal responsibility within the 'revealed reality' of Massie's novels.

Sartre's philosophy, dramas and plays are interrogated within the novels of Allan Massie using both implicit and explicit means to establish an intertextual discourse. Massie's early novels can be seen to engage in an explicit discourse with Sartrean philosophy. The characters in these novels, particularly *One Night in Winter*, debate key points of Sartrean ideas. This is continued, though at a lower level of intensity, within many of Massie's later texts, where the narrators within the texts explicitly quote key 'popular' phrases from Sartre's work such as 'existence precedes essence' and 'hell is other people'. Within the early novels a pervasive parallel implicit interrogation of Sartrean theories and texts is established which is sustained throughout Massie's oeuvre.

Massie endorses Sartre's call for the individual actively to engage with the surrounding world. Massie also elucidates the propensity of Sartrean doctrines to solipsism, however, and establishes – by 'revelation' within the novels – how Sartre's ideas are consequently liable to undermine their own message. A denial of the influence of history in Sartrean existential philosophy is paramount among the dangers which Massie exposes.

Massie emphasises the influence of history on the individual. Massie reveals an awareness that actions performed existentially to establish the Self have been shown to contain the contingency of unleashing an irreversible historical process which has resulted in the destruction of individuals and societies. In the case of the narrators of *A Question of Loyalties* and *Shadows of Empire*, this awareness leads to the bad faith of a praxis-less stasis and concomitant despair. The only 'answer' which Massie offers is the possibility of love which involves an avowal of the equivalent reality of the Other. This 'experienced reality' of human emotion, Massie's novels imply, exposes an omission in Sartrean philosophy. Love of the Other involves an acceptance of the limitation of personal freedom. This, Massie consistently implies, is the only meaningful ('real') way to offset the alienation of the individual consciousness.

In *The Death of Men*, *A Question of Loyalties*, and *One Night in Winter* (overtly), Massie demonstrates his perception that 'reality' reveals the personal responsibility of the individual to be an experienced 'truth' which is not dependent on the extent of free choice available to the individual. Sartre's claim that the individual must accept

absolute responsibility as a concomitant of absolute freedom is thus shown to be 'romantically lucid'. The presence of irrational forces within the 'real' worlds of Massie's novels, whether they be the unconscious of Sir Walter Scott or the thought-precluding barbarity of Nazism in his post-war trilogy, remove any hope that reality may be lucidly 'totalized' or enclosed by a rational philosophy.

For Massie, Sartre's ideas are flawed by Sartre's philosophical refusal to recognise the irrational complexities of the world external to the individual. This represents an inherent denial of reality at the heart of Sartrean philosophy which undermines Sartre's call to engage with the world. For Massie, Sartrean existentialism is constantly in danger of sliding into the solipsistic abstract. This, Massie implies, is exposed most fully in Sartre's novels and plays where the understanding of the 'real' which should be revealed to the reader (of the novels, at least) is undermined by the ideological message of 'right conduct'.

In attempting to urge the value of the individual in a society which seems to be suppressing that value with ever greater efficiency, Sartre's existentialist philosophy, as Nietzsche's before him, contains an unacceptable contingency: the oppression of others. In *The Death of Men*, *One Night in Winter* and *A Question of Loyalties*, Massie enacts an extensive intertextual engagement with Sartre's portrayal of that contingency in *Crime Passionnel* and the *Roads to Freedom* trilogy. Massie shows how Sartre's characters in fact evade the responsibility which, according to Sartre, they ostensibly urge on the individual. Massie's metafictional technique exposes the evasion of historical reality implied by the narrative structure and presentation of the

Roads to Freedom trilogy. In doing so, Massie exposes the influence of history and the historical narrative on Sartre himself, which Sartrean existentialism implicitly denies.

This denial of the conditioning power of history is further undermined by establishing Sartrean existentialism within an ongoing European discourse in which Scott participates. For Massie, the discourse of free will and pre-destination within Scottish literature – as a participant in that European discourse – pre-dates the atheistic existentialism of both Nietzsche and Sartre. This is reflected within Massie's novels by the presence of a further intertextual discourse, engaging with these ideas in Scott's novels such as *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Redgauntlet*. Within the text of *One Night in Winter* Massie overtly compares Sartrean philosophy with the 'revealed reality' represented by Scott's novels.

In *The Hanging Tree* and *The Ragged Lion* Massie exploits an investigation of Scott's creative imagination to expose the inaccurate absolutism of a central tenet of Sartrean existentialism. By implying the presence of a Jungian collective unconscious which can operate independently of the conscious will of the individual, Massie undermines Sartre's assertion that a condition of human individuality is the absolute precedence of existence over essence. This issue is elucidated by Massie's metafictional examination of the narrative act itself – whether historical or fictional.

The Hanging Tree lays out a confrontation between 'Good' creative existentialism and the 'Evil' destructive assertion of the Self. The novel contains a strongly

implied value judgement as to the conduct of the two individuals concerned with an affirmation of the value of the individual life and an attack on the existential 'acte gratuit'. However, since both the characters concerned display behaviours which are contingencies of existentialism, and existentialism itself is fundamentally inconsistent, both are shown to 'fail' in existential terms. Existentialism, Massie suggests, may give rise to great creativity or the destruction of society itself, but within its own scheme, must ultimately betray the individual.

Existentialism, for Massie, can be seen to manifest itself as a 'Jacobite' denial of 'reality', whatever Sartre's original intentions were. Massie condemns all such quasi-solipsisms, whether they be philosophical or ideological, because such an attitude can result in the destruction of the self or others. The novels of Allan Massie show the individual and civil society in a relationship of reciprocal obligation. Society, Massie implies, cannot oppress the human individual without risking a contingent catastrophic assertion of Being on the part of that individual, but equally, civil society – a society of Others – is crucial to the well-being and life of the individual. The individual must take this into account when choosing to exploit his or her limited freedom in action. This 'revealed reality' is of course itself a philosophical view which is influenced by Hume and the Scottish Enlightenment. Massie's view of history shares a common root in the Scottish Enlightenment with that of Sartre and Scott. Where Sartre declares that such a model of history is enabled by the free, politically committed action of the individual, however, Massie's engagement with Scott reveals the helplessness of the individual – beyond a certain point – before the process of history. Within Massie's novels, Sartre's

eternal 'non' to all external determinants is balanced by the tacit bourgeois affirmation of a progressive society and laws as represented by the novels of Scott.

Massie himself stated that a central question for the modern Scottish novelist should be: 'How do you write about a second-hand society?' Massie's own answer has involved the extensive use of metafictional techniques to reflect the power and influence of history and pre-existing texts. This provides a metaphor for the subjection of modern Scottish society by external determinants such as historical events and ideologies, economic pressures, and cultural encroachment. Not all of these pressures are necessarily negative, but then, equally, neither are the individuals within that society entirely powerless. This is an aspect of 'reality' which Massie attempts to reveal within his novels, just as his narrative techniques reveal the essential alienation of the individual consciousness which is only ameliorated by love. That recognition of the other involves a concomitant recognition of the external reality of 'power'. The power of the narrative act, including the metafictional narrative act, must, for Massie, be wielded with an awareness of the paramount importance of 'real' human emotions. Love is helpless against the fact of power, but then as he has said, power may be equally helpless against the fact of love.

The intertextual engagements with both Scott and Sartre reveal Massie's metafictional intent and 'place' him within a European literary discourse. This discourse is itself part of the tradition of Scottish literature through writers such as Gavin Douglas, James Macpherson, Walter Scott, MacDiarmid, the Muirs and

Linklater. In a contemporary context, this discourse has been taken forward by the engagement with French existentialism in the writings of Spark, Kelman, McIlvanney, Greig and others.¹

In terms of the discourse on free will, determinism and alienation, Massie is within a 'main current' of Scottish literature. The prevalence of the view of his exclusion is therefore either an assertion of a 'Scottish literature' which is solipsistic in its denial of the 'reality' of a literary discourse external to Scotland, or is based upon a narrow reading of Massie's novels. The unheralded extent of Massie's metafictional technique entitles the 'slices of life' which he reveals to a further examination than the reading of 'Waugh-esque ennui' allows.

In common with other Scottish authors, Allan Massie negotiates a multiplicity of identities in his fictions. Massie is a Scottish novelist with a Calvinistic inheritance and a British education, writing European novels in a post-Imperial context. Not all aspects of his identity are shared by the entire population of Scotland, but then, for whom could that be said? As he demonstrates in his 'heretically existential' novels, each individual being has his or her own value.

¹ Given the lack of prominent 'Calvinists' in this list, the influence of 'Calvinism' on this discourse is clearly cultural rather than absolutely doctrinal.

Appendix 1: An Interview with Allan Massie 20/4/98*

MP: I've got a long list of questions here, most of which I won't probably get round to.

AM: Well I hope that I can answer some of them. You have to remember two things: one is that you've read the things more recently than I wrote them; and secondly that you don't always know what you meant even when you wrote it.

MP: What made you start writing?

AM: Well the simple thing is: don't know; can't remember—no I mean I wrote stories at any early age and certainly in student times I would say that I was going to write a novel. I am not musical, I can't draw or paint...

MP: You are quite interested in music though: your Bix Beiderbecke references... [In *The Sins of the Father*].

AM: Yes. Yes, but I can't sing. I don't play a musical instrument. It's a curious thing actually: people ask you the question "what made you start writing?", but I don't know if people ask painters "what made you start painting?"; it is just assumed that that's just a natural outlet—or musicians "what made you start making music?". I think it's natural if you've got any sort of artistic ability or inclination that you find a way of...

MP: Yes, the creative urge

AM: Yes.

* Excerpts from this interview were published in *Scottlands* (5.2) 1998.

MP: How do you divide your time between writing journalism and writing longer works?

AM: Haphazardly, is the answer. I wish I could say that I organise it very efficiently you know, three days a week novels and two days a week journalism but it doesn't work out like that. When a novel is going well I tend to do less journalism and when it's going stickily I might do more. But even that is doubtful because I'm not going to—if somebody rings up and says “Can you do a thousand words by four o'clock?” I very rarely say no.

MP: Does that happen very often?

AM: That happens quite often, yeah.

MP: How do you go about writing a novel?

AM: How do I go about writing a novel? Well, the first two or three I went about very tentatively. Beginning and going on, simply. Now because of the way in which the trade works where you sell them ideas before you write them...

MP: This is on the basis of advances rather than royalties?

AM: Yes, exactly. You have to produce an outline at least which gives you a kind of structure, but I have never heard of anyone's novel being refused because it didn't conform to the outline. But that means that I do get a sort of general sense in my mind as to what shape the book will be, usually before I start writing; and whom the main characters will be, but I don't know in detail what is going to happen.

MP: Right, so you don't plan?

AM: No, I don't plan. I very often don't know in detail what is going to happen on any particular day when I start writing.

MP: So, now, you work with a vague plan, but in the first three – up to *The Death of Men* – did you...?

AM: Well, *The Death of Men*. I can't remember properly what was the... I think with *The Death of Men* what I did was I wrote about ten thousand words—because that was one with a given structure (the circumstances around the Aldo Moro case) the main lines of the plot were there from the beginning. I wrote about ten thousand words and sent it to my publisher and said “what do you think of this?” I think the original intention of that—in fact I know this because I came quite recently upon a letter which I wrote to the publisher; I said that originally my intention had been that the novel be presented in some sort of editorial apparatus by the journalist who becomes part of it, and that in the end I'd abandoned this because it didn't seem necessary and also because the antagonism which developed between him and Raimundo made it improbable that Raimundo would even be interested in collaborating with him. (*laughs*). But no—I mean I didn't make him not interested, it just didn't seem necessary. I think the structure of that book meant that it had to be told from different points of view and so either you had an omniscient narrator or you had these different voices. In a sense the dodgy bit in that novel is that there are two first person narratives and one third person one. In some ways I find that unsatisfactory but I suppose I thought at the time that there was no way I could enter into the mind of the boy (“*Tomaso*”—*MP*) Yes, *Tomaso*, in that he had to be seen to some extent from outside.

MP: Is that anything to do with the fact that he kills himself at the end, because he couldn't exactly have been writing...?

AM: Well, there's that too, there's that too. But I am not quite sure when I decided that he was going to kill himself. I think it was that I wanted the reader to

be just that bit distanced from him and, as it were, to *watch* him, whereas the other two you're not watching. You don't see them really. I think it is slightly clumsy in any novel if it's told partly in the first person and partly in the third person – although you have to remember that Dickens got away with it in *Bleak House* (*laughs*).

MP: So, just getting back to that—the first novel that you wrote: *Change and Decay*; did you come up with a plan for that or did you just embark on it?

AM: No, that started as a short story and I found I was having fun writing it and it just went on. Such plot as there is in it is quite ridiculous anyway, I mean it seems fairly episodic. When I wrote that I was doing quite a lot of teaching at the time, so I wrote it in evenings and weekends, and I think the lack of structure of it in fact probably reflects the fear that I wasn't going to finish it anyway. I had quite a few novels started but not finished at around that time, and in that way you can almost stop it when you like.

MP: Why did you stop writing short stories?

AM: I haven't stopped writing short stories, I just haven't had short stories to write! I think it would be probably true to say that journalism gets in the way of short stories in the way it doesn't of novels.

MP: Because they are not a major project?

AM: Yes, but I would like to write more short stories. But if you get out of the habit of writing short stories you don't find short stories, if you are in the habit of writing them you do. Lots of other people would say the same thing. A lot of people start off by writing short stories – which is odd in one sense because they are more difficult in many ways than novels – but the reason why they start off doing them is quite obvious of course because you can write a short story in a couple of days and

so you can keep the whole thing in your head, whereas the novel takes months. Particularly when they're young, writing a novel, the person who finishes the novel has changed quite a lot, perhaps, from the person who started the novel.

MP: To what extent would you describe yourself as a political writer?

AM: Well I think most of the novels, all of them in a sense, are in some way political novels, and one of my subjects – I mean you learn over the years what subjects you can deal with – and one of them obviously is the contrast between public life and private life, and the way in which they intermesh. I've said this quite often, in talks, but putting it simply: private life is far more important than public life, for everybody, almost, except for a few people who are public life junkies I might add. But the condition of having a decent private life is that there should be a relatively decent public life, because it infringes private life and eventually it can corrupt private life.

MP: We'll probably come back to that a bit later if that's okay. You've said that Erik Linklater "concerned himself with questions of what we inherit and of how, in the light of that heredity, we live our lives". How far has this influenced your own choice of themes when writing novels?

AM: I think it probably has. People are, to a great extent, what they have inherited; they're formed by it. Some people manage to break free, which is a subject in itself of course. Others are crushed by the weight of what they've inherited, and I think that the best of my novels probably deal with that: *A Question of Loyalties* obviously does, *Sins of the Father* even more obviously does, if in a slightly more *mechanical* way, perhaps.

MP: What do you mean by a "mechanical" way?

AM: Well, in that the conjunction of the boy and the girl is almost theatrically coincidental. Although that said, the starting point of that novel—that was one novel that was actually suggested to me by Richard Cohen, who had published *A Question of Loyalties* at Hutchinson. He said he'd been carrying around this idea for a novel for years, and that he had taken a clipping, I think from the *Telegraph*, which said that Eichmann had been identified, and this had been passed on to Mossad, when his son fell in love with the daughter of a chap who had been in one of the camps. I think, actually, his memory was wrong; I don't think it was Eichmann, I think it was some other. Richard asked me, "would you like to write this novel?" and I said "Yeah, that sounds a nice idea." So although, as I said, it was almost theatrically coincidental and rather mechanical, the starting point was something in real life.

MP: Sort of like the Evelyn Waugh thing, that if you wrote down all the things that went on, no-one would actually believe you.

AM: Yes, exactly, yes.

MP: I wondered, as well, if the inheritance thing was the reason for the pervasion of antique, sort of heavy, dark furniture in a lot of the rooms of older people in your novels?

AM: Yes, well I think that is probably just almost a sort of nervous tick rather than a reason. (*laughs*) But yes, I mean it obviously does reflect it.

MP: And antique dealerships as well – Dallas and Atwater, briefly? [*One Night in Winter and Change and Decay in All Around I See.*]

AM: Yes, well I think that's more convenience, partly. Dallas—you know if you've got somebody who's rather lost his way in life, setting up as an antique dealer seems to me a credible thing, and Dallas was—well, he wasn't *based* on, but the *shop*: there's a shop in the Fulham Road which was owned by a friend of mine who

was an antique dealer, and who became one actually, in a sense, because he had to. He hadn't lost his way but he had a nervous breakdown and gave up his career and set up as an antique dealer. If you don't have a career, becoming an antique dealer or a novelist is much the same thing!

MP: Okay, can we move on to talk about influences on you? You have said that novelists are products of their times and society [*The Novel Today*]. Which society do you see yourself as being a product of?

AM: Ah, well, *one* society, two? I don't know...

MP: Or "societies", then.

AM: I suppose that... (*pauses*). I can't sum it up in a sentence, but—when I think about it: the North East of Scotland is an important part of it. An inherited Presbyterianism; a *connection* with the empire; an education which was British rather than Scottish; a feeling that I'm a European, but that is combined with a sharp dislike of the European union. I mean, does that answer your question?

MP: Yeah, that's good. I'm interested in this inherited Presbyterianism. A lot of the writers who you seem to admire, and/or be influenced by, are Catholic, like Spark, Waugh, maybe Piers Paul Read as well.

AM: Yes. Well of course, Spark and Waugh are both converts, which is slightly different. Waugh, oddly enough, well Waugh always strikes me as a very Augustinian Catholic, which is not far short of Presbyterianism, theologically speaking. And of course, his own family: he inherited a dose of Presbyterianism there too. Spark is of course Catholic but she was Edinburgh—although neither of her parents were from Scotland, nevertheless the Presbyterian side of Scotland hangs very heavily on her.

MP: I just wondered if you felt there was any significance in that—the Catholic side?

AM: I wouldn't have thought there was, but if there is, it's first of all that Catholicism and Europe, despite the Reformation... There's quite a lot in Belloc's line "The Faith is Europe and Europe is the Faith." And then also I can see the attraction of "the Church" as something which has gone on – changing but remaining the same – for two thousand years or so, but without feeling any temptation to revert to Roman Catholicism, or indeed to go to church at all, actually.

MP: Just picking up on Waugh, then: the influence of Waugh is frequently noted in reviews of your work. Are there any authors who *you* feel have particularly influenced you?

AM: I should think you are always influenced by authors you read. I'm never quite sure how much anyone is, in the end, influenced by another writer—if they're any good. I mean obviously there are... (*pauses*). I think that when reviewers make comparisons it is often a sort of lazy short-hand. I know because I find myself doing it when writing reviews and I know quite well that it's lazy short-hand. Waugh, I suppose, is an influence in the same way that Linklater is; neither of them believed in the novel as being – or *writing* as being – self-expression. Waugh always thought of novels as things that had been made, and I think that's very true. There's obviously a lot of one's self goes into novels, but I think of them as standing outside my self. I think Waugh also said the novel ought to be as well made as a piece of furniture, and I like the idea of that. When I started writing short stories I was certainly influenced by Hemingway, and I think some of Hemingway's influence could have been by inconsequential dialogue that nevertheless means more than it seems to. I think some of that comes through—I hope! I remember after I wrote two or three short stories taken by the London Magazine, Alan Ross telling me to fine myself for any echo of Hemingway.

MP: This is the story “In the Mountains” and others, that appeared in the seventies?

AM: Yeah.

MP: That’s where one of the only pieces of repetition I’ve seen appears: the image of the person living in Geneva and travelling to France to eat, in that, and *A Question of Loyalties*.

AM: Yes, I’d forgotten that came in both of them.

MP: I’m not sure if it was “In the Mountains” but I think it was certainly one of the short stories that was published around that time.

AM: Yes, I think it was the first short story I sold; the one about the chap lying drunk on the bathroom floor [“What are you doing down there?” *London Magazine* December 1972/January 1973]. Well at one time I used to go and – I think it was late sixties or early seventies – a friend lived in Geneva and I used to go and stay with him sometimes. We did actually go across the border to eat lunch, quite often, so...*(laughs)*.

MP: I just wondered if there was any special symbolism?

AM: No, I don’t think there is any symbolism, except it says something about Switzerland and means something about France. So I don’t think there was any symbolism in it, no.

MP: Okay. I don’t want to dwell on influences for too long, because I accept what you’re saying; but it seems to me that your first novel, *Change and Decay in All Around I See*, I think the influences are more apparent than in other works. *(Massie agrees)* It seemed that Conrad was a huge influence on that novel, I thought.

AM: Which one are you meaning?

MP: *The Secret Agent*

AM: Oh? I wouldn't have thought there was an influence there, no. Conrad is one of these novelists whom I admire greatly but don't often read, and when I do, I don't always finish them. The half dozen I have read, I've read some of them more than once. Some of the others I've read a couple of hundred pages of and thought this is terribly good, and then the next day, haven't felt like reading them again.

MP: I wondered because Seth Ngunga and Horridge seem to share so many conglomerated characteristics of the band of revolutionaries in *The Secret Agent*.

AM: Yes, I suppose they might—well if so it was quite unconscious. They're both ridiculous fantasy figures whereas Conrad's are surely intended to be firmly...

MP: They're grotesques, aren't they?

AM: They're grotesques, but they're very serious.

MP: What is your attitude to the Great Man theory of history?

AM: Well, as a novelist it's quite a useful theory isn't it? *(laughs)* I think that, you know, it's absurd to say "history is made by great men", but I don't think it's absurd to say that history, or the course history takes, is often given a nudge, by the existence of individuals of unusual ability. I mean it seems to me that if Augustus had been a lesser man I don't think the Roman Empire would have taken the shape it did. I see no reason why civil wars and so on should not have continued. And on the other hand if Petain had not existed perhaps they would have had to find a substitute. Although it probably wouldn't actually have been that easy to do so, because of what

he symbolised. I can't think that German history would have taken the same course if a chap hadn't pulled Hitler down in the 1923 putsch, and he had actually been shot dead.

MP: Did you see that article recently that said that Hitler and Wittgenstein had been in the same class?

AM: Yes, I think actually Wittgenstein was two classes above him. (*laughs*)

MP: Another example of the theatricality of coincidence.

AM: Exactly, yes.

MP: You draw attention to Tiberius quoting Nietzsche in the editorial prologue, and your author figure in *Change and Decay* quotes Zarathustra. Why is there so much Nietzschean ideology, or philosophy, in your novels?

AM: Well, that's again... He says a lot of interesting things, Nietzsche. He's a bit like Conrad, in that he's someone who has influenced me, but I haven't often been able to read him – well read any of them – right through. But particularly Nietzsche; he's very interesting. It's probably quite pointless to talk about philosophers being *right*; I suppose you could say that Nietzsche, ultimately, is *wrong*, but he says an awful lot of things that ring of truth. I keep sort of going back to him, because he has interesting novelistic ideas as well. He's a sort of novelist manque. He can be quite useful sometimes in moving a novel along. Tiberius of course doesn't know he's quoting Nietzsche!

MP: Prefiguring, then, except in a complicated post-figuring sort of way.

AM: Yes, but Nietzsche's view of life, as you know, is a sort of ethical Darwinism. Makes a lot of sense, really.

MP: It seems to me that a lot of your books are based around the Will to Power.

AM: Yeah, which I find curious because I have no desire for power myself.

MP: It seems to encompass a lot of the ideas, within public and private spheres...

AM: Yes, I think it does. I think the Will to Power is a commonly found, compelling, and also damaging, human characteristic.

MP: Is there a development through history, a point to it, or is it just a melange of power?

AM: I don't think there is a point to history, no. And I don't know if people actually learn from history either, except they might learn something about themselves; but I don't think people draw *lessons* from history, and most of the lessons they try to draw are wrong ones. I'm quite sure that's something that A.J.P. Taylor used to say...

[At this point the tape runs out:

MP: Sorry about this, I hope it's working, otherwise I'm going to have an interesting time trying to reconstruct things from my mind on the way back.

AM: Yes well you'll just have to come back and I'll say something quite different next time!]

MP: Well is there an eternal recurrence aspect to history as well then?

AM: Well lots of people have thought so. Again, I don't think it's as crude as the idea of eternal recurrence suggests, but I do think you come back to the same sort of situations—although, we have reached this very curious position, and I think unprecedented position, in Western Europe, where I think war within Western

Europe has become unthinkable, simply because one can't imagine circumstances in which war could break out. That situation is very unusual.

MP: Do you think that's connected to Fukuyama's idea of the end of history?

AM: No I don't think it is. I think it's a result of a combination of things: the terrible wars there have been; the terrible weapons that exist now; the changed political structures. Despite the sort of "fear of the mob" that people used to have and so on, democracies are much less willing to go to war; and also other technology. The development of—well partly the less deferential society, plus modern communications in that it makes it much more difficult for governments to fool people. You couldn't fight the Western Front today, because you could not keep the reality of what was happening there from the civilian population.

MP: Because when they saw the reality the public wouldn't stand for that?

AM: Yes. I mean that may be too optimistic, but I don't think it is.

MP: So how do you react to that idea: the triumph of liberal capitalism putting an end to history?

AM: I don't think it brings an end to history, I think it just gives history a shunt in a different direction, and I doubt it's permanent, because—well if it was permanent it would be the end of history, but since in the, let's say perhaps in the twelve thousand years of states' history, nothing has proved permanent, I can't see why this should.

MP: You've said that Spark is superb at striking a balance between the novel as aesthetic and the elaboration of discussable themes...

AM: Yeah, I *think* I know what I meant. (*laughs*)

MP: Who would you expect to discuss the themes in your books?

AM: *Who* would I expect to discuss the themes? Well the first thing is of course that unlike her, the characters discuss them quite a lot in some of the books. To that extent they may well be less satisfactory as aesthetic objects than her books. In fact I think they probably are less satisfactory for that reason, and others, but for that reason particularly. There's no doubt that ideas – the discussion of ideas – can weigh heavily on a novel. To take a novelist example, it seems to me that Aldous Huxley is almost unreadable now, although when I was young I read Aldous Huxley. But the long discussions of ideas now seem to me absolutely dead, partly because many of the ideas being discussed are also dead. I remember when Nicholas Mosley resigned from the Booker panel – principally because they wouldn't put *The Sins of the Father* on the short list – and he said that nobody there was interested in a novel of ideas. Michael Fry wrote quite a comical piece in which he said that – I can't remember where he wrote it – that I'd dismissed the novel of ideas at the Edinburgh Book Festival the year before, but that clearly I had too many ideas for Hampstead, or something. I am comfortable with the idea of the novel of ideas, but I do think that if ideas can emerge dramatically, then they can work. I'm not putting it so well, but you know, Huxley's characters tend to sit down around the dinner table, as it were, and they discuss, whatever—the essay question that Huxley is interested in at that moment. Nobody, actually, is better at discussing ideas, I suppose, than Shakespeare, but they're presented dramatically—except for one or two moments in plays which are absolutely dead, like the first act of *Henry V*, when you have these two old bishops discussing the Salic Law and so on; it's absolutely dead. Most of the ideas that Shakespeare discusses arise naturally from the dramatic line of the moment: if you can do that in a novel it's fine. *Who* would discuss the ideas? Well I think that anyone who is interested in the way history works and politics and so on, might find that some of the ideas in some of the novels are worth discussing.

MP: In *Shadows of Empire* it seems to me that a lot of the ideology – or the ideas – are slightly closer to the surface than maybe in *The Sins of the Father* and *A Question of Loyalties*. I wondered if that was growing frustration in your writing?

AM: If that is so it is unconscious, and I think it comes about because of the choice of narrator, really. I mean, some of the ideas are usually close to the surface: there's bits of *A Question of Loyalties* where you've got Lucien's own writings and notebooks and so on, but because it is framed by somebody who is trying to find out about him... Whereas in *Shadows of Empire* Alec is—it's really a sort of mock autobiography in many ways. I think that's why they are nearer the surface. I don't think it's anything about frustration. Perhaps there's more impatience with ideology, but that's the point that he reaches. (*pauses*) Where I think something is wrong in that book is – generally from the responses of the reviewers – is that I think that the part played by the doctor Toby Macrae, probably should have been pointed up a little more, because he really was meant to be the sort of “moral centre” of the book.

MP: With a practice in the poorer areas...?

AM: Yeah, well also because he says, you know, more or less, “To hell with ideology, I believe in ethics.” and I meant that he should be more—well, I thought I'd done enough, actually, to make him simply the moral centre, but I'm not sure that the responses have all convinced me that I did.

MP: He said – Toby said – in that book, that “All the vitality of Scotland is now to be found in what my father would call the lower classes.”

AM: Yes. You must remember that he is – at the time he says that – he is a very young man, and in rebellion against his father. I don't think he's meant to be believed entirely.

MP: I wondered because it fits in with—Cairns Craig made a point about that before, saying that Scotland is in the unusual position that working class literature is almost central in this century.

AM: Yes, well, that shoves *me* to the outside, doesn't it? (*laughs*)

MP: Yeah, well I just wondered if you think that's a valid case, and if so, is it a kind of Procrustean bed for Scottish Literature to lie in?

AM: It would be if it's true, I think, but I don't know. It seems to me the most interesting – of my generation and younger – the most interesting writer is McIlvanney, because he does seem to me to have got what is a very big subject, in that you have this coherent culture in which you grow up; you are educated out of it; how do you find new ways of living which don't betray that culture? I mean *The Kiln*, which I believe is a wonderful novel, is a sort of meditation on this, almost.

MP: I just wondered, because I think to an extent the perception of Scottish Literature is that that is what it's about.

AM: Yes, I think it is. I think that's a narrowing of it, but then I would, wouldn't I? I do think there's some truth in what Toby says there, but I do think it's also actually intended to be not heard as his belief because he doesn't entirely believe it either, so I intended it to be read slightly ironically—but also that just plainly seemed like a natural thing for him to say at that time. He is playing very consciously at that moment the young Stevenson role, and Stevenson as a young man might have said the same thing, although by the time he was forty he wouldn't. There again, the scene later on with him and Jim Milligan's widow, would suggest that to some extent he still thinks so, when he talks about his Italian wife and the Edinburgh ladies, and his Italian wife and Mrs Milligan.

MP: I remember reading that you said – talking about the journalist’s and the novelist’s role – you said that when the Ravenscraig steelworks closed down, as a journalist you would talk about economic necessity, as a novelist you would talk about human suffering. I haven’t noticed you writing any novels about Ravenscraig Steelworkers.

AM: No, I haven’t done. I didn’t say I would have, but that if I wrote a novel about it, I would be on that side. But I couldn’t write a novel about it. I wouldn’t be able to find the right voice to write a novel about that.

MP: Well, getting back to what you do write novels about, then... You do admire Conrad’s political novels. Does the fact that a film of *The Secret Agent* took about fifteen months to secure limited distribution in the UK recently, and *The Free Frenchman* – Piers Paul Read’s book which is another book you’ve praised – is out of print even though apparently there was a TV dramatisation... Do you think that is a reflection of the public’s interest in political writing?

AM: Yes. The novels of mine which have done best are the Ancient Rome ones; which are also political novels, but more disguised ones. *A Question of Loyalties*, *Sins of the Father*, and *Shadows of Empire* have all had what’s described as respectable sales, but the first two are now out of print. You can still find the occasional copy in book shops but the publisher no longer holds copies, so – yeah. If you get a certain reputation you can probably get away with it; I mean Graham Greene, it seems to me, is a good example, but it did take him an awfully long time, and I don’t know that somebody starting out now and writing the novels Greene wrote would necessarily do very well—or starting out twenty years ago. They could be, you know, a success, or esteemed, but not in publishing terms.

MP: And therefore not a financial success either?

AM: No. Mind you *The Secret Agent* is too complicated for a movie.

MP: Yes, it's quite a complicated plot as well. Mind you there was the *Nostramo* thing, and they are filming another of Conrad's short stories, I think.

AM: Yes, well a short story is much easier for movies.

MP: You also said about Piers Paul Read—well, complimented him on his assertion of “the novelist's duty to concern himself with public affairs, affirming the impossibility of writing a truthful novel about the century if the reality of history and ideology were denied or ignored.” It was in *The Novel Today*, I think. To whom does the novelist owe that duty?

AM: Ah. (*pauses*) Some mythical entity, I suppose. Truth, or... truth, really.

MP: Stern, writing about Nietzsche, said that the morality of duty was the follow on from Christian morality. Do you agree with that?

AM: Yes, I think so. Although I don't know because it was pre-Christian; Stoicism had a strong sense of duty, and if you go further back, I think there's a sense of duty found in fifth century Athens probably: Pericles, and so on.

MP: If duty pre and post-dates Christianity, have we moved away from that yet or is it still...?

AM: A strong sense of duty, in a way, is weaker than it was but still there. Because I mean there are changes also to the things to which people feel a duty.

MP: What do you think people do feel a duty towards, then?

AM: I think people always feel a certain duty towards whatever is then encoded “ethics”, and things that are thought “unethical” change. They may change for the better, but I think that is principally what people feel a duty towards.

MP: Can I talk a bit about the public/private thing – we’ll no doubt touch on the duty part a bit later? Getting back to *Shadows of Empire*, Alec quotes his father in two contradictory views: “Either you devoted yourself body and soul to a cause, for better or worse, or you recognised that you had other personal loyalties that deserved priority.” To what extent is this the problem of power which all your characters face?

AM: Well it is one problem of power, yes, although I suppose you could say that it’s not quite the same because the pursuit of power is tied up with egoism, whereas when you devote yourself to a cause, you may feel that you are losing your ego in that. I was there thinking—you remember the Father’s thinking of Jacobite Britain and so on and seeing this through all the twentieth century conflicts. Say, the French Resistance: it’s a cause—if you were in France, it’s a cause which in certain places and certain times in the war if you devoted yourself to it, you could destroy your wife, children and so on.

MP: So that’s public ideologies infringing on personal life?

AM: Yes. Certainly, the pursuit of power and what we can do with power can clash with and destroy the other loyalties we should have. Augustus is a good example of that: Augustus uses his family for reasons of state quite ruthlessly. In one sense it may be justifiable, in another sense it quite obviously isn’t.

MP: Depending on the point of view you’re looking from.

AM: Yes.

MP: Why is it so important for novelists to engage with the problem of power, in your opinion?

AM: Well, the problem of power is a permanent human preoccupation.

MP: Is that why love is helpless against the fact of power, which is something you said in *Tiberius*?

AM: Well it can be. One also must remember, as you know perfectly well, that what characters say is not necessarily what the author thinks. What a character says is a point of view which is dramatically appropriate at that moment. But love often is helpless against power; on the other hand you could equally turn it round and say there are occasions when power is helpless against love, which after all is one of the lines of Christianity.

MP: It was, I suppose, *Tiberius*, because his private life had been mangled by power struggles.

AM: Yes. *Tiberius* remember is also—I have a lot of time for *my* *Tiberius*, anyway. He's one of my favourite characters, but he does rather give way to self-pity, which is not a very admirable quality. I think unfortunately a lot of my characters whom I like do give way, rather, to self-pity. (*laughs*)

MP: With *Antony* being published, you've now written two novels which extensively study the relationship between Augustus and Antony. Why is it so important to you to really concentrate on that particular period?

AM: Well firstly because it's fun. The other thing was that it is a dramatically fascinating clash which to some extent is obscured by the concentration on Antony and Cleopatra, even in Shakespeare. There are two other reasons: one; when I wrote *Augustus*, I think it was Owen Dudley Edwards who pointed out that in many ways Antony was the real hero, but then of course it was seen from Augustus' side, so I thought it was also fair to do it from Antony's side. The other thing is that simply by looking at the same story from different points of view, I do think you deepen and make more interest in the story.

MP: I wondered if it was it was to do with the Nietzschean Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy?

AM: Well there is that, yes. I mean Augustus—Apollo was his god I suppose and Dionysus was Antony's, yes. Perpetual opposites...

MP: Sorry, I'm not trying to tell you what your books are about!

AM: No, that's fine. I'm quite happy with that interpretation.

MP: You were talking about people subsuming their will within ideologies and things like that. You've said that "Human nature is contrary, and its remorseless selfishness always threatens to destroy the fabric which alone will sustain it." [*The Novel Today*] I wonder how that squares with the willingness of individuals to subsume themselves within mass movements, which you deal with quite a lot?

AM: Well yes, but even there, people when they do that are often seeking—they do subsume themselves, but they are also seeking, sometimes, satisfaction of the ego, because it allows them to gain a significance that they don't otherwise have.

MP: It's almost like a manifestation of the will to power?

AM: Yes it is, yeah. Even when you lose yourself in it, it may be that.

MP: Taking that on board then, and looking at the other side of the coin, you have a lot of—well homosexuality features prominently in most of your novels. How do you use it to further the themes that you deal with?

AM: I think it's used, mostly, I mean it's used variously, but mostly, it's because there's a sterility about it. It's a relationship which cannot develop beyond a certain point, or is very unlikely to. It becomes terribly repetitive for that reason. And then

sometimes also it shows an inadequacy, I think. But then there are two or three such relationships which are quite tender ones: the relationship between Alec and Fred in *Shadows*, but it's over when Alec realises that it can only go to a certain point; and Tiberius's; but then there's self-denial in that, because he realises what he would like to do would only damage the person to whom he would like to do it, probably by diminishing them in their own eyes. Does that answer your question?

MP: Yeah, I was wondering actually more about... A lot of the characters who are homosexual in your fiction have insight. Maecenas has it, Kinsky in *Sins of the Fathers* seems to have it, Max in *Shadows of Empire* seems to have it. I wondered if there was any significance in that?

AM: Yes. Yes, well I think probably they... Inasmuch as they have it, all those three do (although of course the person who really has it in *Augustus* is Virgil, who probably was homosexual too (*laughs*), though probably that's not brought out) in a sense partly because they are observers, and also because by being all, to some extent (as a result of their homosexuality) outcasts—even when they would appear to be “in” like Maecenas, they are all to some extent outcasts, therefore they are perhaps more given to self-examination in the first place. They have greater self-knowledge and therefore more knowledge of other people; but it is only when they recognise, and accept, that they can do this.

MP: So it's pragmatism then, pragmatism in acceptance, that gives them their enlightenment? Pragmatism as a result of their sexual preference?

AM: I think so, yes.¹

¹ Additional Note by Allan Massie: There are of course enduring homosexual relationships which both parties find satisfying. But the absence of children means that those committed to homosexuality do not have to take on full responsibility for other people. They think of the future in a different way; and they are detached from many of the most urgent concerns of others.

Even if they are not outcasts, they are still outsiders; as such, I think they may be more conscious of the role they are playing. This can reward them with understanding. But this may be limited. In *Shadows* for instance Alec makes the point that Max only knows one side of Hector—the weaker self-hating side.

MP: Okay, thanks. The Christopher figure in *The Death of Men* (who we talked about before, briefly) who misses major world events due to alcohol binges and has to reconstruct them to relate them to others: to what extent is that a commentary on the general public's perception of global events?

AM: I don't think—well I think you could make your own judgement there. Most of all I think it probably says more about Christopher than about anything else.

MP: If we can move on a bit to talk about the metafictional aspect of your work. You touched on this earlier, actually, when you were talking about furniture—books as furniture. How far do you agree with Josipovici that what is important about the work of the modern artist is not that he makes an object or plays a game, but the sense he conveys of the act of making itself?

AM: I don't think I really know what he means.

MP: Well your own approach to fiction has changed a bit: *Change and Decay* is stylistically, although I don't think thematically, but stylistically, is markedly different from the others. (*Massie agrees*) It's very overtly metafictional in a lot of places, whereas the metafiction seems to be *glossier*, somehow, in the others. I wonder if that reflects a change in your own opinion towards that?

AM: I think it probably does, I think in the middle seventies I was perhaps more interested in the sort of novel as game, or that sort of late modernism, I think, rather than post-modernism... and certainly... partly as a result of being a reviewer I think, I grew more and more tired of that sort of fiction. *Change and Decay*, I still like, because I still find it funny, but an awful lot of that sort of fiction isn't funny, and I wouldn't want to write it. I've become more attached, I suppose, to the traditional

Homosexuals are granted one advantage: a freedom from illusions. (I'm talking about intelligent

novel because you can do more in it. Read an essay by Nathalie Sarraute; she talks about how the traditional novel is always capable of renewing itself, and one has the impression that she rather regrets the kind of direction she took herself.

MP: You still put in quite a lot of metafictional references, it seems to me. Even the way you frame the narratives; it's quite self-conscious.

AM: Yes, but it's very traditional, that. It's also a sort of literal-mindedness. I mean, partly, the framing of *Augustus* and *Tiberius* started as a game, and I got rather tired of it; but I do have this, as I say, it's a literal-minded thing. If something is in the first person, I like to know when it is supposed to have been written, in what circumstances, how, and I don't like the idea that it's just going on in the narrator's head.

MP: Presumably that's why you start off *The Death of Men* with Raimundo's diary?

AM: Yes. If it's in the first person I like it to be some sort of document. In fact I think all the first person novels that I've done are, credibly, documents.

MP: Although you do cast doubt on them in the texts.

AM: Oh yes, yes, but set *that* aside... In fact, if, as I hope, Sceptre bring out an omnibus edition of the Roman novels, then I intend to remove the introductions from *Augustus* and *Tiberius* because there aren't any to *Caesar* and *Antony*.

MP: Well *Caesar*, I mean was it the tiredness of the *Augustus* and *Tiberius* device that led you to tell *Caesar* in the—well although it's still in the first person, it's external?

ones, principally.)

AM: It's external in that yes, it's not *by* Caesar.

MP: Is that, then, purely because of his death in the novel?

AM: No, it's not, no. It's because I don't like Caesar, and although you *can* write in the person of someone you dislike – and the narrator of that is rather a little shit actually; a sympathetic shit, Decimus Brutus, but he's quite an amusing one – I think I could only do Caesar in the first person with a great deal of unconscious irony. Added to that, I didn't really want to live with his mind all that time.

MP: Caesar and Augustus to a certain extent, are almost dandies that become men of power (*Massie agrees*) and yet you have a fascination as well with the dandy who can no longer be bothered to dress—the degenerated dandy, rather than...

AM: Yes, yes. They are more prominent perhaps in earlier fiction.

MP: Well Raimundo and Colonel Beazley...

AM: And Dallas in *One Night in Winter*. I'm not sure what you are...?

MP: What is the significance of the dandy in that kind of context?

AM: I think the significance of the dandy is that he is self-aware to an unusual degree.

MP: And therefore the dandy that can no longer be bothered to dress?

AM: Is even more self-aware. He's sort of gone beyond it; he really has come to a sort of full knowledge, you see.

MP: Getting back to the metafiction thing for just a second, this is going to sound like a bit of a convoluted question, but with the proliferation of metafictional references – and it seems to me there are quite a lot in all your works, really – creating a Text in the Barthesian sense, do you feel that the author becomes a guest within that kind of Text – a Text that extends beyond the single work – rather than the father of the work, as also suggested by Barthes?

AM: I don't know that I really know what he means, sorry.

MP: In the introduction of your book *101 Great Scots*, you spoke about the Unionist tradition of Scottish Historical writing, which accompanies that of the Whig-Presbyterian. You said that “The Union appealed to common sense”. I'm just wondering whether you see your own historical writing within that tradition?

AM: No, I don't know that I do. I mean the interesting thing there is that – I'm going to give a political reply here – that things have swung round. Even fifty years ago the Union appealed to common sense, and Nationalism to a sort of romantic “Aye, it'd be grand but...” and now it seems to me that Nationalism appeals quite well to common sense and those of us who are still attached to the Union are attached to it as much because of sentiment and heart. The Union used to be the head and Nationalism the heart – well Nationalism can still claim to be the heart but may also be the head – but the attachment to Unionism is more heart than head now.

MP: Well, carrying on from that, talking about things turning on their head almost: do you see the late twentieth century Conservative politics as the natural inheritor of the nineteenth century Liberal tradition?

AM: I've always thought that Margaret Thatcher was a Gladstonian Liberal, and not a Tory. She had very little attachment to established institutions—except parliament. She had a respect for parliament which the present liberal government doesn't have.

MP: Do you think there is any way in which your novels represent an escape from late twentieth century Scotland?

AM: (*laughs*) For me or for the reader?

MP: For both.

AM: Well obviously since most of them are not set in late twentieth century Scotland, to some extent they represent an escape, but I wouldn't have thought there was any great need to escape. I mean the problem of late twentieth century Scotland for my sort of novel is that, except in comedy – in *The Last Peacock* and *These Enchanted Woods* – it hasn't provided me with my sort of subjects. That is partly because late twentieth century Scotland is a very comfortable, easy place². MacDiarmid once said that the trouble with Scotland is that there is nobody worth killing. I think that's rather a good thing, but if you want to write the sort of novels that I write – that I want to write and do write – Scotland doesn't provide much of a setting. If I'd lived a different life, somebody like McIlvanney or Kelman, it'd be different – or Welsh – but if I tried to venture into that territory I would be writing purely pastiche, probably.

MP: The sea imagery. Characters end up looking at the sea when they are utterly despairing, especially in the early novels: Beazley goes to Brighton. There's also the recurring image of the sea followed by a stranger singing the song about "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Patee" in *Shadows of Empire* and *Change and Decay*. I wonder if there's any significance to the sea? I mean Tomaso goes to the seaside to kill himself...

AM: If there is, it's unconscious. I have the notion that the sea is one of these properties that novelists wheel on from time to time, like the moon: there may be a

² Additional Note by Allan Massie: Obviously, for many, Scotland today is not all that comfortable or easy. So my observation is, and sounds, complacent. But it is easy and comfortable in comparison to most of the world—in comparison with Northern Ireland, for instance.

sort of banality about it. The sea, I suppose, is vast, it's mysterious, it's unresponsive: it can be whatever you like. It can be desolation. It can be promise of another life. It's a portmanteau of images.

MP: Okay, just a few questions to finish up with. You've written two plays, I believe: *Quintet in October* and *The Minstrel and the Shirra*.

AM: Three: there's one called *First Class Passengers* as well.

MP: Have they been published?

AM: No.

MP: When – or have they been performed?

AM: Yes, well *Quintet in October* was a radio play which was done quite a long time ago now, ten years ago I think—more than that. *The Minstrel and the Shirra* is a play about Scott – a one man play – and it was originally written for the Border Festival. It was done at the Edinburgh Festival just a year later, in 1991, I think. The other one – *First Class Passengers* – was done at Pitlochry a few years ago.

MP: What would you hope the title of a PhD. on your work might be?

AM: (*laughs*) You can think of the title yourself!

MP: Okay. Finally, in *The Novel Today* you said that “Imaginative fiction has been for almost two centuries the principal verbal means of recording and evaluating emotional experience and of delineating the individual in relation to society. Every thinking novelist must wonder if this is still possible.” Have you come to any conclusions yourself, on that?

AM: Well, it's still possible: I don't know if that's terribly well expressed. What one must doubt is if it is still the *principal* way, I mean I think it is certainly still a *possible* way, but you can't help thinking now that film has become, for most people, the principal way of receiving that, if not of doing that, anyway. I think film can do some things that the novel can't, but the novel can do an awful lot that film can't.

MP: Is that why your characters "post-figure" themselves as film characters, almost; they think of themselves in terms of film imagery, some of them?

AM: Well I think of them in terms of film imagery, you see. When I'm writing, I do kind of watch them, and I do see them... A novelist is to some extent a cameraman—this has not persuaded any film people that my novels should be filmed, unfortunately. I remember being struck years ago by Greene saying that when he'd finished a morning's work his eyes were often tired from watching his characters. *But*, I think it probably is true that people do see themselves and each other, sometimes, as would be characters in movies—maybe self-consciously, at any rate. You do see people, sometimes—well for instance if you hold your cigarette like that (*gestures*), that's Bogart, and you do find yourself doing that sort of thing sometimes. I'm sure lots of people walk down the street sometimes in the manner of Clint Eastwood, or Gary Cooper in "High Noon", or whoever.

MP: Okay, well I think that's all the questions I have for just now. Thank you very much.

AM: Not at all.

Appendix 2: The Cultural Context of Allan Massie's Engagement with Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre's first novel *La Nausée* (Nausea) was published in France in 1938. His trilogy of novels – actually an unfinished tetralogy – *Les Chemins de la Liberté* (The Roads to Freedom) appeared in France in 1945 and 1949; the first two volumes appearing at the end of the war and the third four years later. Sartre's first major play, *Les Mouches* (The Flies), was staged during the occupation of France. *Huis Clos* (In Camera) was first performed in 1944.¹ Other dramatic works were published in France soon after the war. Sartre's key philosophical texts were *L'Être at le Néant* (1943) (Being and Nothingness), the short lecture *Existentialism and Humanism*, delivered in 1945, and *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (1960) (Critique of Dialectical Reason). His theoretical work on literary technique *Qu'est-ce que la Littérature?* (What is Literature?) was published in France in 1948.

Iris Murdoch has been described by George Steiner as 'among the very first' to introduce Jean-Paul Sartre to 'British philosophers and readers'.² He refers to Murdoch's radio broadcasts, essays, reviews and lectures from around 1950, and of course, to her first book, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, published in 1953. In 1956, Mary Elizabeth Storer stated (in an introduction in English to a French language publication of *Les Jeux Sont Faits*³) 'the general public is familiar with [Sartre's] existentialism not through these works [his philosophical treatises] but rather through his plays and novels, which effectively illustrate his philosophical ideas.' The English-speaking 'general public', was held by Storer to be familiar with Sartre's literary productions by the mid-Fifties.

By 1950, in fact, much of Sartre's early work was available in translation in Britain. For instance, *The Flies* and *No Exit* (*Huis Clos*) had been published in translation in

¹ North, Robert J. Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul *Les Mouches* *ibid.*, p. 21.

² Foreword to Murdoch, Iris *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus Limited, 1997).

³ Sartre, Jean-Paul *Les Jeux Sont Faits* *ibid.*

1946,⁴ *Crime Passionnel (Les Mains Sales)* in 1949, *Existentialism and Humanism* in 1948 and *Nausea* in 1949. All three volumes of *The Roads to Freedom* had been translated by 1950, as had *What is Literature?*. Iris Murdoch, therefore, may have been instrumental in focusing attention on Sartre's work, but was certainly not alone in recognising its appeal, as the extent of the published translations reveal: publishers do not tend to commission or publish works for which they believe there will be no demand. Her efforts, in fact, may have been more of a catalyst to translating the philosophical work, since *Being and Nothingness* was translated in 1957.

If the production of work for television offers some barometer of the extent of perceived popular appeal, it is interesting to note that in 1959 the BBC's 'Sunday Night Theatre' series produced a version of *Crime Passionnel*. In 1964 *The Room* (scripted from Sartre's short story) was produced in the 'Teletale' series and *In Camera* was produced as a 'Wednesday Play'. A thirteen part adaptation of *The Roads to Freedom* was first broadcast in 1970, being repeated twice during the Seventies.⁵ Even if Storer's pronouncement (quoted above) was over-optimistic, it can be declared with some confidence that Sartre's works certainly seem to have entered the main cultural stream of Great Britain by the mid-Sixties. In 1963, Robert North could write: 'Sartre is one of the most publicised and influential, as well as one of the most controversial, figures in the literary and philosophical world today, outside as much as inside France'.⁶⁷

Sartre is not mentioned at all in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*,⁸ but his fellow French existentialist novelist and playwright Albert Camus is credited with substantial influence over William McIlvanney and James Kelman in that volume. Sartre's only mention in the four volume *History of Scottish Literature* is in relation

⁴ Murdoch, Iris *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵ This information was provided by the British Film Institute.

⁶ North, Robert J. *ibid.*

⁷ In the Eighties, Sartre's *Les Jeux Sont Faits* was still being taught as a set text for Higher French in some Scottish schools.

⁸ Wallace, Gavin and Stevenson, Randall (eds.) *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* *ibid.*

to R.D.Laing's and D.G.Cooper's book-length explication of *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, entitled *Reason and Violence*.

Laing was a professional psychiatrist whose ideas were influenced by Hegelian phenomenology, and, presumably through the phenomenological connection, Sartrean Existentialism. Sartre's philosophical debt to Hegel provides an interesting point in the discussion of the distinction between the influence of existentialism on Scotland and England. Iris Murdoch's review of *Being and Nothingness* in *New Statesman and Nation* in 1957 was entitled 'Hegel in Modern Dress'. She stated that:

It is almost mysterious how little Hegel is esteemed in this country. This philosopher, who, while not being the greatest, contains possibly more truth than any other, is unread and unstudied here. The countrymen of David Hume have, oddly enough, a better record. [. . .] It is scarcely to be expected then that Jean-Paul Sartre's remarkable book *Being and Nothingness*, which has at last been translated, and which can profitably be regarded as a lengthy footnote to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, will make any impact.⁹

Laing and Cooper shared the pessimism about the impact of Sartrean thought on Britain, writing that Sartre's range of activities 'seem to lack any point of contact with the British philosophical scene'.¹⁰ This, on Laing's part at least, appears to be a curious assertion from someone who was influenced by the Hegelian bias which existed in the philosophy department of the University of Glasgow up until the Fifties.¹¹ It reflects the argument of the invasive colonisation of Scottish philosophy departments and thought by the (anglocentric) tradition of analytical philosophy. Nevertheless the fact remains that to call the analytical strain of thought the *only* tradition within British twentieth century philosophy is, as Murdoch suggests, to distort the facts.

⁹ Murdoch, Iris *Existentialists and Mystics* *ibid.* p. 150.

¹⁰ Laing, R. D. and Cooper, D. G. *Reason and Violence* (2nd ed.) (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1971), p. 17.

¹¹ Turnbull, Ronald and Beveridge, Craig 'Recent Scottish Thought' in Craig, Cairns (ed.) *The History of Scottish Literature Vol. 4* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p. 71.

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* Denotes a work of non-fiction.

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