Mrs Engels

Gavin McCrea

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Creative and Critical Writing

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich
NR4 7TJ

Faculty of Arts and Humanities
School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing
Head of School: Professor Peter Womack
Primary Supervisor: Ms Trezza Azzopardi
Secondary Supervisor: Professor Rebecca Stott

May 2013

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that use of any information derived there from must be in accordance with current UK Copyright Law. In addition, any quotation or extract must include full attribution.

Abstract

The creative component of the thesis consists of a novel entitled *Mrs Engels*. *Mrs Engels* is a first-person narrative from the perspective of Lizzie Burns, the Irish lover of the Communist leader Friedrich Engels. The action of the novel is focused on the years 1870-72 when Lizzie and Friedrich move from Manchester to London in order to be close to the Marx's and the active international Communist scene there.

The critical component consists of an essay entitled 'Illusions of Truth'. 'Illusions of Truth' is a meditation on some of the questions raised when we speak of the category of 'historical fiction'. It is a response to the fact that, often, discussions of historical fiction view 'the past' as textual and therefore to some degree unknowable, while taking for granted the knowability of 'the present'. In other words, in order to assert the textuality of the past, many discussions of historical fiction juxtapose it to an immediately knowable present, sometimes called 'direct' or 'present experience'. But is it true that the present is a more solid, knowable form of human experience than the past? Is direct engagement with reality even possible? Does the present exist at all, except as an historical fiction? The essay uses the theory of Michel Foucault, specifically his 'archaeological' and 'genealogical' approaches to history, as lenses through which to examine these questions. Grouping its analyses around the larger themes of time, space and truth, it considers whether anything in human experience can, in fact, be present and non-historical (and therefore entirely knowable and true). Can conscious human experience be anything other than historical and fictional? If indeed it cannot, is 'historical fiction' as a separate literary classification sustainable?

THESIS CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 4

I. NOVEL EXTRACT 5

II. ESSAY 111

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Iñaki Moraza, Trezza Azzopardi and Rebecca Stott for their support and assistance at various points in the writing process.

This thesis would not have been possible without generous financial backing from the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia.

I

NOVEL EXTRACT

Note

The full text of *Mrs Engels* has three parts and runs to 105,000 words. The extract presented here is the first part, around 46,500 words. The contents page of the novel (with the original page numbers) has been included to give an idea of the work's overall length and structure.

MRS ENGELS

A Novel

CONTENTS

PHASE THE NOW 3

PHASE THE NEXT 127

PHASE THE LAST 218

In Paradisum 288

PHASE THE NOW

1870

September

I

Fair Warning

No one understands men better than the women they don't marry, and my own opinion—beknown only to God—is that the difference between one man and another doesn't amount to much. It's no matter what line he's in or which ideas he follows, whether he is sweet-tempered or ready-witted, a dab at one business or the next, for there isn't so much in any of that, and you won't find a man that hasn't something against him. What matters over and above the contents of his character—what makes the difference between sad and happy straits for she who must put her life into his keeping—is the mint that jingles in his pockets. In the final reckoning, the good and bad comes to an even naught, and the only thing left to recommend him is his money.

Young lasses yet afflicted with strong feeling and seeking a likely subject for a tender passion will say that money has no place in their thoughts. They make exceptions of themselves and pass on good matches, for they believe that you must feel a thing, and that this thing can be pure only if it's a poor figure it's felt for. To such lasses I says: take warning. This is a changing world, we don't know today what'll happen tomorrow, and the man you go with will decide where you're put, whether it's on the top or on the bottom or where. The fine feelings love will bring won't match the volume of problems a pauper will create. Odds are, the handsome fella you go spooney on will turn out to be a bad bargain, white-livered and empty of morals; the gospel-grinder is sure to have his own blameworthy past and will drag you to the dogs; the flash charmer will come to act the tightwad, insisting you live on naught a year; the clever wit will loiter away his hours believing others must provide his income, and the happiness you

anticipated will never turn into happiness enjoyed; there'll always be something wanting.

Better—the only honest way—is to put away your hopes of private feeling and search out the company of a man with means, a man who knows the value of brass and is easy enough with it. Make your worth felt to him, woo his protection as he woos your affections, in the good way of business, and the reward will be comfort and ease, and there's naught low or small in that. Is it of any consequence that he isn't a looker, or a rare mind, or a fancy poet, as long as he's his own man and is improving you?

This must be calculated on.

Love is a bygone idea; centuries worn. There's things we can go without, and love is among them, bread and a warm hearth are not. Is it any wonder there's heaps of ladies, real ladies, biding to marry the first decent man who offers them five hundred a year? Aye, young flowers, don't be left behind on the used-up shelf. If you must yearn for things, let those things be feelings, and let your yearning be done in a First-Class carriage like this one rather than in one of those reeking compartments down back, where you'll be on your feet all day and exposed to winds and forever stunned by the difficulty of your life. Establish yourself in a decent situation and put away what you can, that, please God, one day you may need no man's help. Take it and be content, then you'll journey well.

II

On the Threshold

And there's no doubting this carriage is high class. The wood and the brass and the velvet and the trimmings: I see it in bright perspective, and though we've been sat here since early morning, my mind has been so far away, up in the clouds gathering wool, it's like I'm noticing it now for the first time; a sudden letting in of daylight. I reach out to stroke the plush of the drapes. Tickle the fringe of the lace doilies. Rub the polished rail. I twist my boot into the thick meat of the

carpet. I crane my neck to look at the other passengers, so hushed and nice-minded and well got up. None of this is imagination. It is real. It has passed into my hands and I can put a price on it all.

Across the table, on the sofa he shares with his books and papers, Frederick cuts his usual figure: face and fingernails scrubbed to a shine, hair parted in a manly fashion, an upright pose, feet planted and knees wide, snake pushed down one leg of his breeches; a right gorger. He fidgets round and tries to throw off my gander.

'All fine with you, Lizzie?' he says.

'Oh grand,' I says, though I'm slow to take my eyes away. I can't see the crime in it, a lady taking a moment to admire.

'Lizzie, *bitter*,' he says, rustling his newspaper, and slapping it out, and lifting it up to hide himself, 'I'm trying to read.'

I click my tongue off the roof of my mouth and turn to look out the window. For him, naught in the world has worth unless it's written down.

Outside, the country is speeding by, wind and steam, yet not fast enough for my liking. The further we get away, and the further again, the better.

I forbade anyone from coming to the station to see us off, for I didn't want any scenes, but of course Lydia, the rag-arse, disobeyed me.

'Don't let it change you,' she said, gripping my hand and casting anxious glances up at the train as if it were a beast about to swallow me. 'Find a friend as'll listen to you and don't be on your own. It's no fine thing to be alone.'

We embraced and she cried. I squeezed her arm and fixed the hair under her bonnet and told her she was a good friend, the best.

'Find your people, Lizzie,' she said then through her tears. 'I'm told St Giles is where they be. St Giles, do you hear?'

I sat backways in the carriage so I could leave the place looking at it. To go from a familiar thing, however rough-cut, is a matter for nerves, and I suppose that's why so many people don't move. Manchester: leastwise they know the run of it.

At Euston, Frederick stands on the platform, waist-deep in smoke and soot, and takes it all in: heaves it up his nose and sucks it through his teeth and swallows it down as if all these years in Manchester have weakened his bellows and London is the only cure. Around him, around us, a mampus of folk, mixed as to their kind. Men and men and men and men, and here more men hung off by ladies dressed to death and ladies in near dishabbilly and ladies in everything between. By the pillar, an officer in boots. Over there under the hoarding, a line of shoe-blacks. A pair of news vendors. An Italian grinding tunes from a barrel-organ. And passing by now—charging through with sticks and big airs—a tribe of moneymen in toppers and showy chains, chased at heel by beggar boys so begrimed it's impossible to tell if they're Christians or niggers or what.

I stop one of the railway porters and ask him to tell me what time it says on the station wall.

'Ma'am?' he says, unsure whether I'm playing a rig, for the clock is large and plain for all except the stone-blind to read. 'That there says a quarter past two o'clock.'

I nod him my thanks. He bides for the penny. I wave him away; a tone won't win any favours from me.

'On time,' I call to Frederick. And then again to be heard over the music and the patter and the tramp of boots on the pavement: '*I says we're right on time*.'

Frederick takes his watch from his fob and holds it up to the clock, makes sure the one isn't fibbing to the other. 'So it seems,' he says.

I push through to stand in front of him, my arms folded against him. 'Now don't go being slippery, Frederick, and remember what you said. You said if there were no delays we'd be able to go and see the house today. If we got here before three, you said, we wouldn't have to put it off till tomorrow.'

He drops his watch back in and wrestles his hands into his gloves. 'We'll see.'

We bide in the waiting room for our bags to be loaded onto the cab, then we bide in the weather for them to be removed to a second cab, on account of the lame nag that's preventing the first from moving off. These added minutes spent

in the strangeness of this strange place—a smell of drains just like Manchester, only with a special whack to it—has given me a sick headache and has me wanting, more than ever, to get to the new house. To close the doors and be safe behind my own walls. I become impatient. I huff and stamp my foot. And by the time we climb up and are on our way, my tongue is aflame with speeches, even though I've promised not to bring them out again.

'Frederick,' I says. The bump and jolt of the wheels makes my voice tremble. '*Frederick?*'

He sighs. 'What is it?'

'My love, forgive me if I my insistence bores you, but still I don't understand why we must stop with the Marxes. If our house is ready, why don't we go there direct and move ourselves in? Then we could see Jenny and Karl at our leisure, when we're right and settled.'

He lets loose another sigh. Crosses his leg over and lands a sharp elbow on the windowsill. 'Really, Lizzie, I cannot discuss this with you again.'

'I just don't see the need, that's all. Causing trouble for Jenny, when our house is there, biding to be walked into.'

'For blazing sake, Lizzie, you know well it was Jenny's idea to have us for these few days. She desires us there so we can make the final arrangements together. Besides, it's too late to change the plans. We've been kindly invited, we've accepted the kind invitation, and that, if you'll be so kind, is the end of it.'

And though it feels to me like the depths of unkindness, I know this must indeed be the end. When a man's mind is set, there's rot-all you can say to change its direction.

I turn to watch out the window. Soon the giant station hotels give way to workshops and warehouses; now to rows of brick and stone; now to terraces and park. Like Manchester, the whole of human history is here, only more of it. I make to point something out to Frederick—the door of a house on a better kind of street—but he's not looking. He's quiet in his chair. Like a statue he sits stock-still, his gaze on his lap, his mouth pulled down.

'A penny for your thoughts,' I says.

'What's that?' he says, blinking at me like a dazed child.

‘You looked a hundred miles away. Were you thinking anything?’

‘*Nine*, *nine,*’ he brings a fist to his mouth and clears his throat, ‘I wasn’t thinking anything. Nothing at all.’

He says this, and of course I ought to credit it, but his face and manner go for so much; I can tell he’s lying. He’s thinking about *her*, and it makes me sad and envious to know it. Spoken or unspoken, she hangs there between us; an atmosphere.

I arrange the cuffs on my wrists till I’m able to look at him again. When I do, I can tell he has noticed a hurt in me, though I’m sure he doesn’t know what’s caused it. He brightens, his mood freshens and he speaks in the tone of a man who wants to make up for he doesn’t know what.

‘I have always thought it interesting,’ he says, bringing his face close to the glass and squinting through it, ‘I’ve always thought it interesting that the English divide their buildings perpendicularly into houses, whereas we Germans divide them horizontally into apartments.’

I shrug to tell him I’ve never thought to think about it.

‘In England,’ he goes on, ‘every man is master of his hall and stairs and chambers, whereas back home we are obliged to use the hall and stairs in common. I believe it is just as Karl says: the possession of an entire house is desired in this country because it draws a circle round the family and hearth. *This is mine. This is where I keep my joys and my sorrows, and you shan’t touch it.* Which is a natural feeling, I suppose. I dare say universal. But it is stronger here, much stronger, than it is in the Fatherland.’

I make a face—‘Is that so?’—and pull the window down to let the breeze in.

Don’t I deserve to have some days that aren’t about her?

The cab stops outside a detached house of fair style: three up and one down, a good-sized area, a flower garden and a porch. That they live bigger than their means—that they live at the rate of knots and don’t use their allowance wise—isn’t a surprise to me. Even so, I feel called on to speak.

‘It won’t be long now before they have us cleaned out.’

I take the cabby's hand and kick my skirts out so I can land my foot without stepping on my hem. I've bare touched down before the door of the house flies open and two dogs come surging out with Tussy close on their tails: '*There* you are!'

The larger of the dogs runs to Frederick and puts his paws up on his good waistcoat. Frederick bends and allows himself to be licked on the cheek and the ear. For a man so neat he has a queer love for what roots and roves. The other dog, the ratty-looking one, comes to make circles around me. I stand frozen while it sniffs at my privy parts.

'Don't be frightened,' Frederick laughs. 'He's harmless.'

I give him a look that says I'll scream and make an episode if it's the only way.

Snorting, he takes the animal by the collar and shoos it off. 'Come on, Whiskey, come away from that mean woman.'

Tussy kisses Frederick on the lips and tells him he's late getting to London, twenty years late. He laughs and says something in the German, and she tosses her head and speaks back to him in the same, and between them now they release a mighty flow of language, one so foreign that, if you were to judge from their faces and features only, you wouldn't know what they were feeling.

When their business is done, Tussy comes and wraps herself round me, making me feel the child, for she's taller than me now and has a bust bigger. 'At last you're here, Aunt Lizzie, at last.'

'Tussy, my sweet darling, let me see you.' I hold her out and look her up and down. She has her hair in braids and a jewel at the neck and a dress that shows a new slightness of waist. Only a year since her last visit to Manchester—what a prime and drunken affair that was!—and yet, from the look of her, it'd be easy to believe thrice that time has hurtled away. Fifteen and out of her age, never to be a child again; it'd break your heart.

'You've grown all out of knowledge,' I says.

'Have I?' she says, and does a twirl, and curtsies. She sticks out her tongue and winks as she rises from the dip.

I swat her on the arm with my glove. 'You're getting more and more like your father.'

'You mean, more like a Jewess?'

I laugh. She hasn't lost her mouth. 'Mind your father doesn't hear you saying such things.'

Frederick instructs the cabby to take our belongings inside, suitcases first, boxes and gifts last. Tussy takes my arm and walks me up the path to the porch.

'I have missed you so, Aunt Lizzie.'

'And I've missed you, child.'

'And now, finally, we get to be neighbours.'

'Aye, it's been a long time coming.'

'You know, it's only twenty-two minutes away. Your new house, from here. I've been there often and have counted the distance. Door to door, twenty-two minutes on foot.'

'Is that all? A mere a hop and a skip.'

'We shall do all sorts together, shan't we Aunt Lizzie?'

'There'll be time for it all. We'll not lack for things to do, nor time to do them in.'

The rest of them are stood in the hall passage; the family display. Mother, father and eldest daughter, biding to bask in the honour they know we must feel to be connected with them. Frederick walks in and is greeted by more of the German, and more again till the air is full of it. I leave them to have their minute. Lingering on the matting, I marvel at the tree they have in a tub on the porch.

'A tree,' I says, 'in a tub.' I tug on Tussy's sleeve. 'I wouldn't let that grow any further or it'll burst out.'

Giving vent to a howl of laughter, Tussy pulls me up the step and presents me as the ringmaster presents his lioness: hip cocked back, arms stretched out, fingers twinkling, a giant grin. Young Janey comes forward first and she's a winsome sight to see. It's a beauty that might need a little bringing about, true, but it's a beauty all the same, and I wouldn't take it from her. Next comes Karl, his whiskers like bramble on my face, his lips like dried-out sausage.

'*Well coming*, Lizzie,' he says.

And final now, Jenny herself. The changes in her face speak to how long it's been. Five or six years, by my count, though she looks to have been drawn out by a decade and more. Well settled, she is now, into the autumn of her time.

'Welcome to our home, Lizzie,' she says with a bit too much energy. 'Welcome to London.'

I offer a grateful smile and now blush at the falseness of it. We're not used to playing this visiting game with each other. For some reason or another, I always decided to stay at home when Frederick took his trips to the capital; likewise Jenny never joined Karl or Tussy on their visits to Manchester, and no one ever seemed to wonder at it, no excuses were given for us, our absences were taken to be the normal and wanted way, which I suppose they were.

'And Laura?' I says in case I forget to mention her later and am judged thoughtless for it. 'Are there tidings from Laura?'

'Safe,' Jenny says, 'They have moved from Paris to Bordeaux. They will be safe there.'

I open to inquire further but she grips my arm to say there'll be plenty of time for that, I'm not to worry, now is a moment for reunion and celebration.

Behind us, Karl and Frederick start a scuffle over who ought pay off the cabby, as if it made a piddle of difference on earth which pocket it came from: isn't it all water from the same fountain? Jenny can't help but to get involved, and I'm glad of the free moment to take off my bonnet and have a proper look. The hall, I see, is papered gay. There's a table with pottery animals and a bust. A mirror and a line of pictures, and in every wall a door. The carpet is rich and unworn and goes up to the first landing and into the beyonds. The bannisters are painted three coats of white.

Once the cabby has been dealt with, Jenny sends the men into the parlour and out of the way. She smiles a moment through the silence and now she says, 'Nim?' only the once and bare over her breath, almost a sigh.

Miraculous-like the maid comes up from the kitchen. She's wearing a simple dress and a white cap and apron. I've heard so much about her, how good she's supposed to be to look at, I'm relieved to see she's plainer in true life. Fine bones, to be sure, but the work tells upon her.

‘Nim, the cases, please,’ says Jenny. She whispers it, as if the giving of orders hurts her and must be made soft. ‘Into the guestrooms. Thank you.’

Nim nods at her mistress and, as she passes, gives me another as a greeting. I step aside to give her way, but not so far that I can’t measure her up.

Her nose doesn’t reach my shoulder!

The sight of her knocks me out of myself, for when a figure has been made famous to you—when she’s been talked about till her name sounds louder in your ears than Jehovah’s—you expect her to tower over and be massive, and yet here she is now, a tiny thing. As I watch her go up the stairs I’m left in no doubt as to the solidness of her frame, and her limberness—she manages to haul two burdens at a time and not be tripped by the dogs whirling about her—but there’s no getting clear of the fact that, God bless her, she’s but a pip. If you didn’t keep an eye on her you’d lose her.

‘Oh and Nim,’ says Jenny when the maid is already gone round the bend of the stairs, ‘When you’re done with that we’ll have some refreshments in the parlour.’ Jenny now turns to me and makes a gesture to indicate that it’s a relief to be rid of ugly tasks. She takes the bonnet out of my hand and leaves it down on the table. ‘Come,’ she says and puts me on her arm and walks me off for the tour.

I count a parlour, a morning room, a conservatory, a cellar, five bedrooms, three cats and two birds.

Says Jenny: ‘It is indeed a princely dwelling compared with the holes we have lived in before. In fact, to my mind it is far too large and expensive a house. I am forever telling Karl we ought to move, that we live too grandly for our circumstances. I for my part wouldn’t care a damn about living in Whitechapel. But he will not hear of it. He thinks the house is the one means by which the Girls can make connections and relationships that can assure them a future.’ She unfurls a finger and makes circles in the air with it. ‘*Surrounded* as we are by doctors and lawyers.’ The shape of her mouth is supposed to tell me that such people are a necessary unpleasantness to her, like the stink of the slop pail. Pondering a moment, she lets the face fall away. ‘But I dare say Karl is right. A purely proletarian set-up would be unsuitable now, however fine it would be if we were alone, just the two of us, or if the Girls were boys.’

We've stopped outside Karl's study. By the way she puzzles at the half-open door, I can tell she's queasy about whether to venture in or to pass over it. Shamming ignorance of her unease, I unhitch myself and go through.

'It might look like a mess,' she says, following after me, 'But it has its own peculiar method.'

I make my way to a clearing on the rug, a small circle of carpet bordered by piles of books and papers.

'It may not be immediately evident but this room is actually the brightest and airiest in the house.' She picks her way through and draws the curtain back. 'The Heath right there. The air the best in London. One has only to leave the windows open a moment and that cigar smell is killed.'

I'm close enough to the chimney piece to have a proper gander at the things littered on it: the matches, the tobacco boxes, the paperweights, the portraits of Jenny and the Girls.

'Look, here's yours,' she says, pointing at the picture of Frederick.

On the way back out, I take the liberty to push in a file that looks ready to topple from the bookcase.

'He calls them his slaves,' says Jenny, meaning the books.

Back downstairs a tray had been made ready in the parlour. Nim stands beside it, biding our wishes. Frederick and Karl have already been served liberal shorts of gin.

'Lizzie, what shall it be, tea or coffee?' says Jenny.

'Whatever you're having yourself,' I says.

'What do you say to coffee?'

'Nay, I won't have coffee, but thank you.'

'Tea, then.'

'Not much up for tea either, you're very kind.'

Karl slaps his thigh and gives out a good-humoured roar. 'Can't you see it's a drink the woman wants!'

The colour runs up Jenny's neck. She lets out a little laugh, glances at the clock and now down at her hem. 'A drink, Lizzie?'

'Aye, I'll have a nip, if it's going.' To put me into the spirits.

Nim comes to me with a half-measure. She refuses me her eyes when she hands me the glass; keeps them low on the floor.

'Thanks, Nim,' I says, loud and clear so I'm heard. 'You're awful good.'

Her mouth twitches. Someone coughs. She scuttles back to the tray and sets about readying the Girls' tea. Sat in the chair closest to her is Frederick. I watch for his behaviour, but, in actual fact, he bare notices her. More than that, he ignores her. I'd even say rude, if I didn't know Frederick to be so particular about his graces.

From his royal spot on the settee, Karl proposes us. 'To Frederick and Lizzie,' he says. 'After the darkness of Manchester, may you find happiness and rest here in London.'

Tussy rummages in a drawer and comes out with two wrapped gifts. Frederick is served first: a red neckerchief. He ties it on and marches up and down and gives a blast of the *Marseillaise*, and everyone laughs and claps. Mine is a jewellery box, and inside, lying on a bed of velvet, a silver thimble and a pin with a bit of thread already fed into it. I hold up the needle between my fingers, and they all brim over.

Says Karl between his guffaws: 'The revolutionary finally settles down to her fancywork!'

I make as if to pour my drink into the thimble. 'It'll come in handy for measuring my poteen.' And that—easy as falling off a chair—brings the house down.

When the laughter drains, the room settles into a tired silence. The tick of the clock. The sucking at glasses.

'Uncle Frederick,' says Janey after a time, 'Have you finished your history of Ireland?'

This gets Tussy excited. 'Oh yes, Uncle Angel, when do we get to read it?'

‘Oh, oh,’ says Frederick, trifling with a corner of his jacket and frowning, ‘Thank you for your interest, my dear children, but I’m afraid I’ve been distracted of late. It’s all about France now.’

‘Hmm,’ gurgles Karl, ‘Indeed. And speaking of that damned place, we need to take a clear position on the situation. Our initial support of Prussia is proving quite an embarrassment—’

‘Karl, please,’ Jenny interrupts. ‘Can’t you leave this outside talk until you are actually outside?’

Karl puts his hands up in surrender.

Tussy giggles.

Jenny catches my eye and gestures at the tray. ‘Lizzie, there is some tart here,’ she says. ‘But if you are hungry for something more filling I could have Nim fix you up some cold cuts.’

I shake my head, perhaps a little too fierce. ‘Please don’t go to any trouble. We ate on the train.’

Frederick, always liable for a man-faint if he doesn’t have his in-betweens, looks about to contradict me, but he sees the arrangement of my face and checks himself. ‘I fear Lizzie is getting restless. She is anxious to see the house. I promised to bring her to see it today.’ He looks at Karl, as if begging leave.

Karl waves a woman’s wave. ‘Go on, Frederick. Show Lizzie your new home. We’ll have time to catch up later.’

While I’m putting my coat and bonnet back on, Jenny tells me what she’s done to the house. She calls my attention to certain arrangements and wonders if I’d like them altered.

‘When I see them, I’ll tell you, Jenny,’ I says. ‘You’ll be the first to know.’

The air outside runs into me, a respite. I wouldn’t mind walking the twenty-two minutes. ‘Will we foot it?’ I says, thinking Frederick is beside me, but when I turn I see he’s clean gone. ‘Frederick?’

Of a sudden, I feel him behind me, and then I see only black.

‘This way it will be an even bigger surprise!’ he says, bringing forth more laughter and clapping from the family gathered on the threshold, and though I

notice I'm allowing it to happen, I do say to myself, I says, 'Can't I just see the blessed thing? Must it be one of their games?'

He's gone and put his new neckerchief over my face as a blindfold.

III

A Resting Place

A donkey's age, it takes him, to get the wretched thing off. Two, four, six taps of my boot and still he's behind me, fighting with the knot.

'What's keeping you?' I says.

'Patience, Lizzie,' he says, and I know it'd be no use telling him again, at this late stage, that his time in Manchester has turned him into a northern stumpole.

I feel him wiggle his finger underneath the neckerchief; now I hear him bite into it and grind it between his ivories. The cotton presses tight against my nose, which confirms my suspicion that it's not new, this rag. It's one of the old ones from the Club, still smelling of cigars and bear's grease.

With a last wet groan, he gets it free. A curved terrace of houses—dream palaces—unrolls itself in front of me.

'Primrose Hill,' he says and turns me round to face the hill of grass that rises out of the ground where the terrace ends on the opposite side of the road.

'Are those sheep?' I says.

'And this one'—he turns to me again, this time to meet a giant face of plaster and brick—'is ours.'

I have to creak my neck back to see to the top of it. The brightness of the day gleams up its windows. Three floors. Iron railings. An area. A basement.

'Well?' he says.

My heart feels faint, which can happen when you make the acquaintance of a real future to replace the what-might-be.

'Have you nothing to say? Hot and cold water all the way up!'

Dazed by light feeling, I clutch at my throat and dither about stepping over the door-sill. ‘Bless and save us, Frederick, I don’t know. It’s awful grand.’

As I make my way around—the green room already filled with flower and plant, the laundry room fit for an army, the cloak room with hooks for a hundred, the cellar bigger than the one I myself was reared in—I can’t help holding onto the walls and the tables to keep myself on end. I keep expecting a steadying hand from Frederick but it doesn’t come. Something isn’t right with him. A flash temper has come over him. When I point something out, he makes sure to bid his interest the other way. When I open a door on the left, he opens one on the right. When I go to look at a wardrobe, he goes to look at a lamp.

‘She’s done a fine job,’ I says, ‘A fine job.’

But he doesn’t answer. It must be that he doesn’t like what she’s done. And, to be honest, I can see why.

In her book, there’s naught worse than a new house that looks new. She said so just now before we left. ‘So long as the thirst for novelty exists independently of all aesthetic considerations,’ she went, ‘the aim of Manchester and Sheffield and Birmingham will be to produce objects which shall always appear new. And, Lizzie, is there anything more depressing than that lustre of newness?’

And I went to myself, ‘Aye, the smell of decay,’ and took her attitude for a London attitude, set square against sense. But what do I know? She’s the Baroness and knows better about the styles. (How she ended up with a cruster like Karl is anyone’s wager. He must have thought that, because her family tree has as many rebels as it does nobles, she’d have the right opinions about everything, already there in her blood. And *she* must have thought, well, she must have thought he was intellectual and clever, the kind of man they’ll write books about, which only goes to show how little true wisdom there is in young hearts.)

In decorating the house what she’s tried to do, she said, is dull the pristine down and make the place appear longer stood. I said I hope this doesn’t mean there’ll be dirt and dust round the place for I don’t allow it. She said it isn’t a question of cleanliness but of heritage, for olden things can be clean without being

shiny. I said what would I be wanting with heritage? All I need is a couple of chairs that stand upright. She said it isn't hard to give the idea of it, even in recent and modest houses, by buying the necessaries at auctions, such as movables of no modern date and art that's been handled and weathered—*and chipped,* I see now —and by scattering it all about so that two new things don't rub against each other and make a glare.

'Ending the tyranny of novelty,' is what she called it.

'Spending other people's brass,' is what I call it, but only to myself. And it's unkind even to think it, for I wouldn't have been able to do it—the ridding, the arranging, the fixing up—without her.

She's thought of everything. She's had the right fringe put on the draping, and the right frills put on the fringe. The few bits we sent down ourselves, she's had cushioned over. She's had the stores stocked. She's had calling cards made; there they are stacked on the hall table. Everything: first to last, start to end.

'We went a finger over budget,' she said. 'But I believe quality speaks for itself.'

And the rooms do indeed speak. They speak dark and solemn. For in buying the movables—and by all accounts she bid like a mad-body after most of it—she thought not about what was handsome but about what was suitable to Frederick's position. And seeing them now, these hulks of bookcases and cabinets and desks and tables, I find myself wondering has she mistaken him, all along, for a priest.

'Are you thinking what I'm thinking, Frederick?' I says, as a way of cheering him.

But there's no humour to be had from him. He's gone like a brick. Closed like a door. He shrugs and disappears upstairs. I follow him up and find him on the first landing, glowering down at his feet.

'Lizzie, I wish you to favour me by showing me which room you would like to have as your boudoir. I'd rather have these matters decided for me.'

'All right,' I says, hardening myself now, 'If that's how you want it.'

Jenny has put a cabinet and a toilette table in the large room on the first floor, so she probable expects me to claim that one, on account of its size and

distance from the road. As it happens, I decide to leave that one to Frederick—it's closer to his study after all—and I choose instead the smaller one on the top floor. Here I'll have to share a landing with the maids, and it means an extra flight of steps up and down, and I know people will think I picked it out of a fear of taking too much. But the truth is I much prefer it. They've thought to put a fireplace all the way up here. And there's a nice washstand and a hip bath and the flowers on the wall are so brilliant and colourful they look fresh picked. And the bed: the bed has golden posts and an eiderdown quilt, and the way it's sitting in the light, it's like God shining down over it. I sit on it and know immediate that it's mine. 'That's it with the moving,' it makes me think. 'We'll not budge from here. This is the place that'll see me out. This is the bed that on my last day I won't get up from.'

'This is the one I want,' I says.

'Fine,' he says and goes to look out the little window that gives over garden and the roofs of the other houses.

There's a terrible quiet. His back is a wall blocking out the lovely bit of sun, and the shiver in his limbs makes me think he's going to put his fist out through the glass. For what reason, it's beyond me to say.

'Is everything all right with you, Frederick?'

Slow, he turns round. He doesn't look at me and heeds only the wringing of his hands. 'I am sorry, Lizzie'—he shakes his head in a sorrowful way—'I am sorry that you judge the house only *awful grand*. You were expecting something more. But this will have to do for now.'

Alarmed, I open to object. I rise to a stand and reach out an arm, but he raises to halt me.

'It is already a risk to take a house this size. A bigger one would be a push too far. Besides, I have already given my word on it. It has been signed to us for three and half years.'

'Frederick, I—'

'Jenny and Karl are waiting for our impressions. They, and especially Jenny, have put a great deal of time and effort into finding us this house and

making it fit to occupy. So what you are going to do, Lizzie, what I'm telling you to do, is to pretend that you think it more, much more, than awful grand.'

A rising laugh makes me push my face into my sleeve. As foreigners go, he's unusual fast at picking things up. His problem—the big noke—is letting go when a thing is long done and over. There's times he'll get his whole fist round a delicate article and won't drop it till he's wrung all the sense out of it, and he holds it still, even if he knows it's crushed or broke or anyhows beyond repair.

'Lizzie, are you laughing?'

Laughter that's sealed only builds and I think I might burst. I plonk back down on the bed and lift my shirts up to hide my face.

'*Ya*, you are laughing! What is so funny? Stop it! I said, stop it!'

'Oh Frederick,' I says, and it all spills out of me, a peel, 'Come here and let me kiss you.'

He lumbers over, confounded, and sits beside me.

'Frederick,' I says, 'The house is much more than *grand*. It's an effin castle!'

He frowns and studies my face for any hidden rigs.

'I'm serious! I just adore it!'

He grins and lets out a sigh and takes tight of me and kisses me. And for a moment, now, it almost doesn't matter that it's her he really wants to be holding, that it's her he'd prefer as his princess, for she isn't here and won't be coming back, and I'm the closest thing to her he can ever hope to get.

'You know something?' he says then, tears in his eyes but laughing too. 'The Queen was right.'

'The Queen? About what?'

'About the Irish.'

'And what, pray tell, did the old hooer say about us?'

'That you're an abominable people, none in the world better at causing distress.'

IV

Imprisoned, they have us, in their hospitality. Already here two days longer than planned. It's my own fault for not being firmer with Frederick. I ought kick up more of a row.

At first I was worried about getting in the way. I didn't want to walk in on top of anyone or trespass on their time. But, as it happens, I keep finding myself alone and lost and off the beaten course, in rooms that go into rooms, up and down and every which direction. My heart goes out to Jenny, having to govern such a monster, and I've come to admire her practice of going away to rest in case she might be tired later in the day, for I've learnt that a mere glance into the parlour is liable to dizzy you, for the depth. It certain can't be *work* that drains her. Since our arrival I haven't caught her doing anything but *make* work with her queer times. She has a joke: 'Better a dry crust and manners at eight than fowl and vulgarity at five,' but in actual fact she wouldn't be content with crusts at any hour, and the maid is left bearing the brunt. Boiling up and bringing in and fettling about, the little creature attends to all of their little wants, and she does it on her own, too, with no others to aid her (for it seems that with servants, if not with any other portion of life, Jenny knows how to make a saving).

Ah, the poor wee puppet! The petty pocket! The pigwidgeon! Nim—I can't deny it!—has succeeded in fascinating my attention. Despite my strict resolve to be cool in her company—'Don't notice her,' I says to myself whenever she comes in—I always find myself flushed and susceptible. Whether it be the quiet show she makes of her modesty, or the delicate manner with which she wields her influence, or her sad-sad-secret (now so-so-public) that cuts a perilous edge around her china figure; whatever it is, she absorbs me, and I'm fain to get her alone. 'I must find a moment,' I think. 'I must separate her and present myself proper to her. I must hold out a hand. I must get an idea. *What is the nature of your powers? What do you do that makes the women bend to your will and the men so heated to mount you?*'

My chance comes now. The a.m. of another empty day. Jenny off for her nap. The Men locked into the study upstairs. The Girls gone to play shuttlecock

in the garden for want of something else going on. I'm supposed to be watching them and learning what's what, only I know my break when it comes and make an excuse of my bladder.

I find her sat on a stool in front of an open cupboard in the storeroom, drooped and snoring over a book that lies on her lap. Her dress is tucked up and the laces of her boots are loosened. She's taking her two minutes, and I'm sorry to have come in on her.

'Can I help you, Mrs Burns?' she says before I can steal away. Her face is bleary but her voice is bright, not a hint of sleep in it.

'Oh, Nim, I—'

Apologise, is what I want to do, for barging in and robbing her leisure. But more than that, I want to apologise for Frederick. There's no excuse for the shabby treatment he's been giving her. It's as if he believes that by overlooking her, by paying no regard to her, by passing orders for her through the rest of us, he'll convince us once and for all that she means naught to him, that not even his words are worthy of her (when in fact there's not a single word he speaks that doesn't fly right at her, that doesn't explode about her like fireworks, that, in the noise and the bright light, doesn't call to our minds that day some twenty years ago when her charms got such a hard handle on him that he decided the only means of release was to lift up her skirts and put his seed inside of her, not a single thought given to the harvest such behaving so unfortunate bears). Aye, that's what I want to do, apologise for all of Frederick's *behaving*. But instead I fumble with my tongue and shrink within myself and end up saying, 'So how do you find it here? Do you go much to the parks?'

With red-shot eyes she pins me, and I hold her stare, and we stay like this for a time: two maids across a storeroom floor.

At last she closes her book and stands. 'It's nearly time for the picnic, Mrs Burns.' She checks the floor around her and rummages in her pockets, looking to see if she's dropped anything. 'We're to gather in the parlour,' she says. And when she unbends and sees me still standing here: 'Perhaps you'd be more comfortable waiting up there?'

Spread out on the couches, fidgeting and yawning and trying to ignore Karl's pacing, we bide for Jenny. After forever has passed, she swishes in and kisses the air about us, a hand busying itself with a button of her coat.

'If we want to make the best of the afternoon we should set off immediately. It could be raining in an hour, and then we would have missed the fine spell, or?'

Behind her, Karl widens his eyes and purses his lips as if to say, 'Don't look at me, I've had a lifetime of it.'

Once outside the gate, Frederick and Karl stride ahead, arm in crook, their heads tilted close so as not to drop anything important between them. The Girls hold hands and swing their arms like children; they each lead a dog by a strap. Jenny lets them gain a bit of distance before drawing me in and sallying forwards. Nim follows with the basket.

'Nothing extravagant,' says Jenny. 'Just some roast veal, some bread and cheese, some ale.'

I turn and smile a weak smile at Nim, the tiny doll straining under the poundage.

The Men bide for us at the Heath's edge. Karl asks whether it's a good idea to go to the usual spot, given the strong breeze. 'Would some place more sheltered be better?'

Jenny suggests under one of the big oaks, and we agree. *Ohing* and *ahing* like she's just solved the National Debt, we agree. And I, for one, must be careful of my mood.

We set off again. The dogs are released onto the grass. Tussy skips after them. A sullen-looking Janey searches for flowers to press. The trees are tossed. The wind is loud in the leaves. The kites in the air fly slanted and set their owners straining. Down in my bad lung there's a pain. Naught to fret over but there. Too much fast air after these long days spent between the dust of the mattress and the smoke of the fireside.

'Karl is so happy to have Frederick nearby again,' says Jenny now. 'It does me good to see him happy, he's been so nervous of late.'

'I'm glad, Jenny. That's nice to hear.'

‘Of course, he hasn’t been alone. My own hair is gone grey thinking about Laura in France. Her second baby lost, and now pregnant again. Caught up in this damned war. It has us all hysterical.’

‘You oughtn’t worry, Jenny. Laura’ll be fine. Doesn’t she have Paul to look after her?’

‘Paul?’ she says, whipping a handkerchief from her sleeve and making a whisk of it at me, ‘Paul is *French*. And a *politics* man.’

‘*Mohme!*’ Tussy is calling from about twenty yards. ‘*Mohme! Mohme!*’

‘What is it?’ Jenny says without slowing her gait.

Tussy runs to catch up with us. She comes round us and, walking backwards, her hem dancing around her boots and liable to trip her up, holds out a feather. ‘Look what I found. Which bird is it from, do you think?’

Sighing, Jenny takes it and runs it through her fingers. ‘A common magpie,’ she says and hands it back.

Tussy looks at it a moment, disdainful, and drops it. Wanders back onto the grass.

‘And it’s not only Laura,’ Jenny says when we’re out of ear-shot again, ‘I also worry for these two. Look at Janey there and tell me she isn’t radiant? And Tussy, perhaps she even more so. But I’m anxious. I’m anxious that, for this same reason, they are all the more out of place and out of time. And with the life we give them, how will they ever meet a good ordinary man?’

‘How will any of us?’ I says.

She squeezes my arm and grants me a smile. ‘Oh Lizzie, you *are* funny. But perhaps I am not expressing myself well. I speak of a subject it is hard for people who do not have children themselves to understand. A mother will look at her children and if she sees that one of them has already been denied the chance of a happy kind of life, she will naturally worry that the others will go the same way. I know I sound like a philistine when I say it, Lizzie, but if they could but find husbands, a German or even an Englishman if he had a solid position, and get themselves comfortably settled; if they could do that, I wouldn’t mind my own losses so much. The last thing I want is that they have the kind of life I have had. Often I think I would like to turn away from politics altogether, or at least be able

to look upon it as a hobby to take up and leave down as I please. But for us, Lizzie, it is a matter of life and death because for our husbands it is so, and I fear it has to be the same for our children. This is our cross to bear.'

I say naught. Thoughts and memories come vivid, of old desires and chances lost, and though there's regret in them, and mourning, it's not unpleasant to have their company. We walk on.

'But we must be optimistic, mustn't we, Lizzie? Rather than dwell, we must look forward to better things. And I do think we are entering a new phase, a happier time for all of us. Your move to London marks a change. I believe great things will happen now that Frederick is here. Karl has been so looking forward to it.'

'Frederick also. He's overjoyed to be out of that job. Only a month wanting till he's fifty, and he's like a young drake again.'

'Ha!' she hugs my shoulder, 'And it is about time. Frederick's talents were wasted in that dusthole. It is true there was pleasure to be gained from taking money out of the enemy's pocket, draining it from the inside, so to speak, but enough is enough, the real work has to begin, and Frederick is essential to it. He really is a genius. Are you following his articles on the war?'

'Not myself, nay.'

'Oh but you must, they explain—' She sucks in her breath. 'Oh I do apologise Lizzie, I wasn't thinking. I'll read them to you one of these days. Or better, I'll have Nim do it. She wouldn't mind. She likes to keep abreast.'

Up ahead, Frederick has stopped at a coster's cart to buy ginger beer for the Girls. I wish he wouldn't. I've seen it done in Manchester, the ginger boiled in the same copper that serves for washing, and it's not healthful. Jenny halts us in order to keep our distance from the others. She bends down and picks some flowers from the verge.

'What are these?' I says when she puts a posy in my buttonhole.

'Snow-in-the-summer,' she says. 'It's rare to see them still blooming this late.'

'They're lovely,' I says.

She gives a vague smile and, seeing that the others have moved off, starts us up once more. 'I realise I have been talking only of myself.'

'That's all right, Jenny.'

'Well, I do not want to talk any more. It is only boring you and upsetting me. And distracting us from the other matter.'

The other matter is, of course, the house. She reminds me that the maid, Camilla Barton, is due to arrive in a fortnight's time, and gives me advice on how to keep her, which is harder than I might think, for things aren't like they used to be, in sixty-eight and the crisis years, when the good families were letting go of their help and the registries were brimming with girls to be had for the asking and for a price much closer to their worth. Nay, things have changed and a girl will walk if she finds a better situation, and it's often not even the mistress's fault, for it's difficult to define in exact terms what's owed a girl and what she herself owes, and not everyone can learn the art of leaving the servants alone.

'I recommend a second girl,' she says. 'Frederick instructed me to find only the one, and I followed those instructions, but my true feeling is that you will need two. Everything works better with two. The girls are happier because they have company and get to sit down in the evening, and you are happier because the work can be divided out and gets done. You do not want to be a slave with your apron never off. London is your retirement. If I could afford it, I would get another.'

'Can't Nim manage? Has she ever threatened to leave?'

'Nim? Oh she's different. We've had her for so long she's like family.'

In the distance, Karl beckons us to a tree where he thinks we ought lay the picnic. Jenny flutters her handkerchief in answer.

'Speaking of family, Lizzie, I would like to say something to you.'

'What's on your mind, Jenny?'

'I'd like to clean the air.'

'Does it need cleaning?'

'About your sister.'

The other matter. The *real* matter.

'Jenny, you don't have to. It's not important.'

'*Nine*, *nine*, it's on my mind, Lizzie, and I'd like to say it out.' She turns into the wind so the loose strands of her hair fly back over her bonnet. 'Mary was your sister, Lizzie, and you loved her as any sister would and should, and I don't think little of you for it.'

'And I'm glad for that Jenny.'

'You already know relations between her and I weren't easy, and I'm not going to insult you by pretending otherwise now.'

'Well, we can't get on with everyone.'

'But there are reasons, Lizzie, good reasons, I did not, as you say, *get on* with your sister, and I want to share some of those with you. I want to tell my side. Not to vindicate myself, you understand, or absolve myself of any wrongdoing, but to let things out in the open, so we can be friends, you and I, honestly and truly.'

I shake my head and keep my gaze on the path ahead. 'What's past is past, Jenny. What's to be gained from walking back over it? Mary is gone, and what spite there was between you has gone to the grave with her. There's no point digging it out and giving it life again.'

She tugs on my arm in an effort to turn my eyes towards her. I don't give into it. 'You are a good person, Lizzie, and I appreciate most deeply your trying to save me the pain. But I must talk on it. Otherwise it shall always be there, haunting me. The only way to put a thing behind one is to put a name on it and to know it, or?'

She goes quiet, leaving just the wind in our ears, and it seems for a moment like her mind has countered itself and decided against naming or knowing anything, but the moment passes and she turns to me now, intent on my face.

'As you well know, Lizzie, anxieties and vexations are the lots of all political wives, but I can say with certainty that few are familiar with the misery and anger I have experienced over the years. With Karl I have lived a gipsy life, forced from place to place, this country to that. I can barely remember a week when I did not have to struggle in some mean way to keep the family healthy and alive in the hovels our poverty pressed us to live in. I often went to pieces and saw Karl weep. Many times I felt I could no longer keep my strength. I became

an expert at composing begging letters. I lost my looks.' She wipes a hand across her cheek as if to remove the pits that the smallpox has left there. 'And through all of this, the only means, the *only means* I had of preventing a total collapse was the show of respectability I was able to maintain. It may sound silly to you now, Lizzie, but I was young and I had certain ideas, and my public face was all that kept them alive. And when Frederick took up with Mary, it threatened to take away even that.' She takes my hand from where it was warm in my skirt pockets, and she holds it. 'Did Mary speak to you of me?'

'Speak, nay. She fumed. Called you all sorts. And she had some right, Jenny. It was no business of yours what she and Frederick did.'

'Yes, I know, Lizzie. And if it was only that they were not married, then it would not have been a problem. Please, I am not a fanatic. But the fact was, they were using each other. Mary was using Frederick to get ahead. And Frederick was using Mary to make a splash. Nothing was real. They were playing each other like a game, and that was all. She took his money and gifts, and lived like a fine lady of society on the back of him. And he showed her about like a prize. He said it himself, she was his *finger-up* to his family and the whole blasted bourgeoisie, and it was clear they both enjoyed it a bit too much, she and he. It was vulgar and intolerable, and it was doing no good for the Movement. People, our comrades, were asking questions. I remember hearing them wondering, out loud to each other, why such an intelligent man was involving himself with one of his workers. They could accept he was a capitalist and a millocrat. That was the family burden he had to carry. But did he also have to behave like one? He was taking advantage of his position. He was no better than the other rich sons of Manchester who used the young girls of the proletariat for their pleasure. Frederick, they said, was an exploiter. They thought he was exploiting the—'

She stops here. She sees my face and is clever enough to know she ought. She gives me back my hand and I put it away again. 'Can you forgive me, Lizzie? Do you think we can be friends?'

I'm far from charmed. It's not in me to offer any softening words. But nor do I push her to the apology she's paining to reach. At bottom she's a good

woman. Her affliction is only that she believes, still, that she has a right to be free from all that's disagreeable. 'Of course,' I says and touch her on the shoulder.

She moves around to allow an embrace but, before anything can happen—before I'm seen stood in this park in this woman's arms—I come away to help Nim with the final bit of carrying.

'Do you need a hand with that, Nim?'

'I can manage, thank you, Mrs Burns.'

October

V

Let Us Hear

I lie under, his whiskers like a broom of twigs and stinking of liquor, till I've come to terms with the dark and my situation in it. 'Angels of grace defend us,' I says, 'What bloody time is it?'

Our first p.m. in the new house and Frederick went out to the Club to celebrate. 'Karl is insisting,' he said. 'There are some people he wants me to meet. I'll be back before ten.' At midnight and no sign of him, I went to bed. Alone among the unfamiliar walls, I slept in a state close to waking. Now—some unholy hour—the weight of man collapses onto me. When God wants to punish you, he answers your prayers.

'My Lizzichen,' he moans, grappling for a grope through sheet and dress, 'Forgive me but I'm in need.'

'You rotten scoundrel,' I says, using my elbows against him, 'Get you to your own chambers.'

'Come now, *mine leebling*, show some mercy.'

'I'll show you more than mercy, Frederick Engels, now skedaddle. Away with you. Can't I put my head down a minute?'

He kneels over me and, mocking-like, clasps his hands together as if to beg. 'Have pity on a rogue,' he says, 'Am I not good to you?' he says, 'Is a moment of comfort too much to ask?' he says, and other such phrases that he thinks will wheedle him in.

'Mary Mother give me patience.' I yank up the linen to stole myself. Knowing neither my own forces nor the degree of his impairment, this sends him rolling—*thump!*—onto the carpet. I sit up and hold my breath. Rain is falling outside and there's a barking of animals off and yonder. Bellows of laughter rise up from under the bed. I fall back and sigh.

Boys kept like monks by their mothers go one of two ways: they turn womanly or they turn wild. Frederick's rearing among the Calvins—kept behind curtains drawn tight and doors too thick for the world's vices to get in—has done naught for him but disease his head with what it's been deprived of, and now look at him: single-minded and seeing no ends that aren't low. He keeps pictures. He makes foreign requests. It's not always the Council he runs off to.

After some scratching about and some fumbling, there's a striking at lucifers and the lamp flares up. I cover my eyes from the sudden light. 'Still in fit shape, I think you'll agree,' he says. I see, when I've come to terms with it, that he has his clothes off and is showing himself. He clasps his hands behind his neck, which makes the skin run up over his bones and the hair jump out from under his arms. He holds this pose as long as the lush in his veins allows it. Now he wobbles and, giggling like a little girl, staggers over to lean on the wall. The lamp shines hard against him.

Growing up, no one sits down and tells you what the man's bit is going to look like. Knowledge is got from the snatches you catch. The hole in your father's combinations. The neighbour man washing at the pump. The surge in the gent's breeches on the bus. The Jew Beloff pissing in the bucket. Frederick's is like none of those. In its vigours, it points up and a bit to the side. Its cover goes all the way over the bell and bunches at the end like a pastry twist. Before he does anything, he spits on his hand and peels this back. Then you know he's right and ready.

Personal, I have my limits with it. There's things I'll not be brought to do. I'll maw it: no harm in that if he doesn't shove too. And I'll let him turn me over: let go of your vanities and there's pleasure to be got there. But the hooer's trick, that's crossing the pale. What's the draw of an act so cruddy? And what's the purpose, anyhows, when the normal carriage road has been clear of courses these past twenty years? 'Keep dreaming, General,' is what I says whenever he starts to rub up that way, 'Not for love nor lush.'

Tonight, though, he wants the usual, and I don't quarrel with that. I bring my hands down his back and put them on his arse, his little arse that hasn't dropped with the years but has stayed upwise and firm. Where it meets the leg is

like the underneath of swollen mammies, and when he pushes, its sides dip in to make dishes smooth enough for your morning milk. It turns heads, the round of it under his breeches. I've seen it with my own eyes. When it's late in the parlour and hot with bodies, and when he himself is sticky from all the hosting, he sometimes takes off his coat and turns to throw it somewhere; that's when they nab their peek.

He puts his arms behind my knees and bends my pins over them. I know he'd like them hooked over his shoulders—my ankles clutching his neck, my toes taking hold of his hair so sleek, his whiskers tickling skin that usual only feels the itch of a stocking—but I'm no longer the young thing I once was, and neither is he, though he likes to think his physical senses are as hale today as when he first fetched a lass.

His eyes are open. He doesn't ever close them doing it. He likes to pin you, pierce you through. I swear with those eyes he'd stare into naught and find something. Even when he's lushed they stay clear and bright, and seem to let you into his head, though this can only be a fancy, for afterwards there remains the mystery of what he thinks when he gets on top of you, whether it's dark or light or what.

I begin to feel it, the quiver down in my cunny, but I've to conjure it up if I don't want it to fade the last lick of oil in a lamp. I help it with my hand like he himself has taught me—a French recipe—and I let out a gasp. Reading this a sign, he comes down bricks on me.

If he says anything now, dear Jesus, I'll credit it.

There's never been anyone like him.

It's rare I sleep the whole night when he stays. I go off easy enough but am woken early by his kicking. For some reason, I can't bear to roll over and see him there grunting and happy. There's others, I'm sure, who lie and watch for the sun to rise up out of him. He'll not get that from me. I stay with my back turned.

In actual fact I ought be up already, doing the round. The maid doesn't get here till Sunday and I've to look after everything myself. The pulling back of the

blinds and curtains. The opening of the shutters. The drawing up of the kitchen fire and the polishing of the range. The checking of the boiler. The putting on of the kettle. The cleaning of the boots and the knives. Then the other fires. And the hearth rug. And the grate. Then the rubbing of the furniture. Then the washing of the mantelpiece and ledges. Then the dusting of the ornaments. Then the scattering of the tea leaves and the sweeping of them up. So many things, and for every one a thought. So many thoughts at a time, for so many things, it's hard to know the ones you ought be hearkening to. By thinking you're forever running behindhand you make things the master of you.

The worst thing, though, will be the answering of the door. I can already see it in their faces: 'Why *her*?' The butcher boy, the shop girl, the milkmaid, the grocer, the letter carrier: 'Can't see what makes her stand out.' Every day of every week, somebody, some way: 'If she can do it, any old beggar can.'

I'll try to turn blind from it. I'll pass them my coins and tell them my orders and make as if I've not remarked a thing. But afterwards, I know, I'll be left with something inside, a prickling feeling like a hair in my collar or a pea in my bodice; a reminder of the fact that, when it comes to my hike to the higher caste, there's no getting away from the chance of it. Would I know what I know, would I have done what I've done, would I be here today, swelling it up, if I'd gone down different alleys, taken up with other souls?

———

Fortune first spins her wheel in my favour in the summer of forty-two. It's the summer the wages are cut and the mills are turned out. The summer the coalpits are shut and the boiler plugs are pulled and the workers gather and the riots flare and the soldiers march. And while all this is happening I'm at home, locked into the basement with Mary. Though I don't know it yet, though it will take me time to understand, my being here, inside away from it all—my sitting it out—will be the chancest thing I ever do.

I *want* to join in. There's rebellion enough in my heart to spark a hundred rallies. But Mary has other plans for me.

'If you go out that door,' she says, 'you'll not be getting back in.'

‘Well, maybe I won’t want to get back in.’

‘You want to be a corner girl, is that it? You want to be a loafer and a beggar till you die? Go out there now and that’s what you’ll be, and that’s what you’ll stay. If anyone from the mill sees you with that crowd, or even a girl who looks like you, you’ll have no hope of a situation when the mill opens again, no hope in hell. And I’ll not support you. I’m over with looking after you and being your mother.’

She touches something with that, the proud bone in me. With Mammy passed over, and now Daddy at the workhouse, I’ve come to depend on Mary for what I can’t beget on my own, and though I’m grateful for her good offices and will live to thank her for them, they come at a dear cost.

‘You want me to be a knobstick, is that it? You’re telling me to break the strike?’

‘I’m telling you to pull your weight. When a girl gets to fifteen, she ought know how to walk for herself and not tug on other people’s sleeves.’

‘The neighbours will make it hard for us. They’ll shut us out.’

‘Let the neighbours act for themselves. They can throw stones at us, for all I’ll cry, as long as we can feed ourselves.’

‘Who wants to work in the mill anyhows. It’s the mill is keeping us down. It’s the mills that’s killing us.’

‘Fine sentiments, sister lady, but I hate to tell you, it’s the clemming that’s killing you right now, and unless you find yourself a swell and marry up quick, it’s the mill or a pauper’s grave for you.’

And true enough, it’s the hunger that eventual brings me round. Weeks, the mills stay closed, the Ermen & Engels the same as the rest, and without Mary’s wage, we’re brought to winking distance of the workhouse ourselves. I feel I’d like to cry, only I don’t have the forces, and I know then I’m in the last ditch and sinking, for I’d like to and I can’t. And in that moment I know that when the gates of the Ermen & Engels are thrown back, I’ll be there in the horde, elbowing and stepping on heads to get to the front.

An animal, that’s what chance makes of me.

On my first day, the girls are already talking about the owner's son. 'Soon he'll be coming,' they says to each other, for there isn't much else to amuse them in the yard, 'Soon he'll be coming from Germany to learn the strings, and one day he'll be the boss man himself.' And they're excited about this idea. They can't wait to slap an eye on him, for they've heard he's quite the looker.

They haven't a good head between them. Most of them are yet young like myself, some of them well under the age, and every morning that he doesn't appear makes the next morning a thing for them to look forward to. Me, I dread the next morning as a plague, for it only promises more of the same: a job that lays you low and saps you. And I can't picture how the owner's son, however dapper, could change it.

I'm unhappy, but more than that, I'm raging. In the place bare a month and I'm already having urges. To scream and shout. To climb on top of the yard wall and from there to get onto the roof so there'd be no one in Manchester who didn't hear me. But actual fact, I do what I'm told. I stay quiet, just as Mary has warned me, and don't let tell of my affairs. I keep my opinions and my illnesses hidden. I put a rag over my mouth to keep from coughing. And I work hard, harder than I've ever worked at anything before, by putting my cholers into it.

'The strikes came at a good time,' we're told at assembly one morning, 'The strikes came at a good time for *you*.' The mill has bought new machines, the latest crop of mules that need but a fraction of the hands to work. They were planning to let go of the people they no longer needed, given the advances. But—luck and behold—the job was done for them, the troublemakers weeded out natural. Leaving us, the new, leaner, better Ermen & Engels family to march with the banner.

Mary is thankful to be given one of the new mules. I think better of reminding her of the people her mule are replacing, people she knew and declared to care for; or of the meanness of her new wage, lower than what they were giving her before. I think better of it because she knows these things well and is choosing not to give them their proper weight, for if she did, they'd crush her.

I'm to follow her on the floor, pick up the new ways, and then take over a mule of my own. 'Be fast,' she says to me, 'Be fast and you'll be seen, and you'll move up,' for it's a fine spinner she wants us to be, a spinner of the Diamond Thread, which she believes to be a situation that can't be robbed by the machines or by the children. 'If we don't learn the fine spinning,' she says, 'We'll go the same way as the men. Out on our backs and not a situation in Manchester to be had.'

Though it makes me bitter to do it, I give in and learn, and what I do well I try to do better and faster, for that's the way to beat the weariness and to sleep at night. I come early and leave late. I join in the talk in the yard. I spend my Sundays with the girls in the halls and the fairs. And when the time comes, in spite of myself, I have to own that he's handsome.

He holds himself slim and erect, and has a good forehead, and—still so young—all the colour is yet in his hair. At assembly he talks quick and short, ashamed, it seems, about the foreign in his patter. He's going to make a tour, he says, and he promises to get to know each and every one of us, which makes everybody giddy. Except Mary. It makes her regular cross. 'When he comes,' she says, 'Keep at it and put on you don't even see him. The last thing he wants is a mill full of girls losing the run of themselves.'

Of course, it's herself, then, who goes and loses herself entire.

His laughter comes into the room before he does, and it's catching. 'Lethal as the consumption,' Mary will say later.

'My lucky day!' he belts from the doorway, stretching out his arms to get the full lung into it. He looks around. Even from a distance I can see his eyes take in the world and see to the bottom of things, and though he keeps his face, I know he's disappointed by us. Fine lookers between us, there aren't many. There's only Adele in the carding room, but she's got very thin and looks to be down with something serious. And Maggie two rows up, I suppose, if that's your dish of tea.

As he moves around, he waves his hand in front of his face to keep off the dust, and I'd like to tell him it's a useless exercise, all that waving, for it only wafts the flyings in, but of course I keep my trap shut. He's nowhere near me yet

anyhows, and I don't know if he'll even get close, for time's ticking on and work hasn't been taken up proper, and he's stopping at every girl and asking them questions—about themselves and where they're from and their work and how they're finding it—and he doesn't seem to be putting on, he appears sincere enough and waits for their answers, though the bulk of them can only stretch to a blush and a curtsy.

Soon Mr Ermen loses patience and hurries him on—something about having to finish the tour before Christmas—and then all he can spare is a flash of his whites as he passes. He doesn't even stretch that far with me, but strolls by without so much as a glance. I see his cheek out of the side of my eye: skin like the back of a babby. He goes past Lydia, too, without a look, I'm glad to see. And Mary. And soon all there's left of him is his little arse, swaggering away out of our lives.

Only what happens then is, he nigh on catches his side against a wheel. Mary rushes over to steady him, for she's the closest. She takes tight of his arm and pulls him away from the danger, and while he's still reeling in his boots, heedless to what's happening to him, she says to his face a curse in the Irish, something our mother used to say when we were being hazards to ourselves.

The room catches its breath. Speaking out of turn costs you sixpence of your wage, and that's on an ordinary day. Mr Ermen makes for Mary and looks ready to handle her, but Frederick, now recovered, waves him away and tells him not to be so jumpy. Can't he see this woman has saved him from an injury? Then, God bless him, he asks her to repeat what she said, for he loves a joke.

'Let us hear it,' he says.

She wipes her brow and looks about at all the faces, and in that moment I wish her looks were doing her better justice, for she's recent taken on a touch of jaundice and isn't as flush as God wants her.

'Come on, do share,' he says, and folds his arms across like someone biding to be impressed.

Mary coughs. 'It's only something Mammy used to say when we were little.'

There's a shuffle of feet as we prepare for the worst.

‘Go on,’ he says, not annoyed but eager-like, fain to be on the inside of things.

‘She used to say it when she’d see us knocking over things,’ she says, and bites her lip and looks down.

He waits for her to look up again before addressing her. ‘Your accent, young lady,’ he says, ‘is most unusual,’ and he asks her where it’s from. She says it’s from Manchester, like herself, but the Irish part. Then he asks was it the Irish-Celtic her mother spoke when she scolded her.

She says, ‘Is that the old language you’d be referring to, Sir?’

And he says he supposes it is.

And she says, ‘Well then, aye, it was.’

Then he asks does she speak the Irish-Celtic herself, and she says she does but only the few phrases she has. And then he asks has she ever been to Ireland, and she says, ‘Nay, though I hope to go before it pleases God to call for me.’

There’s a tense air about the room. He’s spent more time with Mary than anybody else, and in a manner more intimate than most would judge her worth. But it’s to get worse, for instead of calling it a day and leaving it at that; instead of being happy with saving her a fine and taking his leave, he puts a hand on her back and draws her out of her place, as if to make something special out of her, a fine example. The two of them are standing apart now, Mr Ermen several paces back, and he begins to ask her about the firesome spirit of the Irish he’s heard so much talk of, and he wonders if it’s true that we’re more related in character to the Latins—to the French and the Italians and the like—and if, like them, we’re more interested in the body—*the body!*—than in the mind.

There isn’t a sound in the room, and the heat makes it all seem like a feversome dream, and Mary, I can see, is struggling to understand whether she’s being mocked, whether this foreigner is using her for his fun, and it’s all a trap, and these are the last agonies of her situation. So what she does is, she hardens against the doubt and says the only Italians she knows are the organ boys that come into the pub, and they’re only good for making a racket and slipping their dirties up your skirts, and she wouldn’t like to be put in a basket with them.

At this, he roars. So shocked are we by its quickness and its power that at first we don't understand it's laughing he's doing, and we're relieved when we see that it is, and that it's the good kind, not the sneering kind, and then we let ourselves do it too. For we can see he's no longer behaving like one of them—listening from across a fast river—but has dropped his distance and waded in, like a hunter that's lost his fear. His arm reaches further around Mary's waist.

'Where would a man have to go in this town to meet a girl like you?'

I know now that a bold manner goes well with women and impresses men. I've seen it work a hundred times since. But back then I think he's gone too far, crossed over too quick. It isn't the species of thing a mill man ought say—though it is, I know, the truth of what they do without saying—and I'm not prepared for everybody laughing, and Mr Ermen clapping his back and calling him a sly trickster, and the girls turning to measure their disbelief against each other, and Mary giving him a soft elbow and asking him, scut-like, what type of man he is at all. Nay, I'm not prepared for any of it—the fainting and the adoration that no mortal body deserves—so when I see it, it sickens me.

He takes to walking out with her, I believe, because she talks well and he enjoys hearkening to her. And he keeps walking out with her, he doesn't bore of it, I believe, because he doesn't understand her and wants desperate *to* understand her, for it promises so much.

She likes to say it's because of her ankles. They have a peculiar allure, she thinks, that he can't get full of. She takes to flashing them at him in the yard. He'll be up in the office looking down, and she'll be walking with us and putting on not to notice anything but the ground in front, but then, easy as you please, not a whiff of warning, she'll lift up and step one out from under the hem. They aren't bad as ankles go—of the two of us she has the better—and I'm sure they don't put a damper on proceedings, I'm sure he likes them regular enough, but what really keeps him interested, I'm also sure, is her blather.

He's like a young scholar trying to pull truth out of a foreign gospel. If he learns to understand her, and to speak like her, he'll know what it's like to be her,

and by there to be poor. Of course, what he's chasing is a shadow down a passage, for you can't learn that species of thing. To have your wittals today and to know it doesn't depend on you whether you'll have them tomorrow, that's something you've either lived or you haven't.

'What do you talk to him about?' I says to her, for I want her to be ashamed, going around at night with the owner's son.

'Oh everything,' she says.

'Everything?'

'My life. His life.'

'You're telling him our affairs.'

'Arrah, don't be at me, Lizzie. He's not like the others. He wants to learn about how things are for us. To help us.'

'Help? Well, we know what *that* means.'

'It's different.'

'Why is it different? Why would he want to help you? Hasn't he enough to be getting on with? A mill to run.'

'He doesn't like what he sees here, Lizzie. In Manchester and thereabouts. He wants to understand it so he can change it.'

'He has ideas, all right, and for that he's no different than any other man. You'll be ruined.'

Listening to me, you'd think I'd become the eldest and she the youngest. The truth is I'm scared for her. She's gone deaf to her own advice. Isn't it herself who says that the higher-ups only marry their own and if they want your time it's only to lie down with you, and then only for the thrill: it's *you* who pays the final price? Hasn't she gone back on her own words? It's a part of Mary I'm not patient with, this habit of not heeding herself, but I don't punish her with it either, for she punishes herself enough on the days he doesn't call.

No doubt he goes with other women—he's been seen wandering alone down the District—and the thought of it makes her suffer, deep and miserable. He stays away for weeks on end. She sees him in the mill and pours all her hurt into her eyes, but he resists her willing and stays upstairs where he is. Then when it suits him, he appears again, raps his ashplant on the door and goes to the end of

the passage to wait. So strong is her wanting, she throws a shawl around her pain, and runs out.

'What do you do when you go out with him?'

'I show him around.'

'Around where? What's there to be shown?'

'He wants to see where we live.'

'We? We who?'

'We the Irish. We the workers.'

'Jesus.'

'The Holy Name, Lizzie.'

'Well, he's not coming in here, he's not welcome.'

'He'll want to come inside eventual. And I'll not stop him. And you'll not stop him neither.'

She enjoys her new position, any body can see that. It's easy to picture her leading him down the passages and into the courts, choosing the meanest of the doors to knock on, pointing out all the things that are filthy and wrong, speaking to the bodies for him and getting them to show him their children, and their hips and their sores. Oh aye, all that would come to her like breathing. But what it takes a sister to see—and what I can't keep my eyes off once I've seen it—is what she's doing her best to hide: her love illness.

For it's ill she is. Ill and pure struck-blind. The moments when he needs her and wants her—'Precious moments' she calls them—these moments are when she's fullest and happy, and she wishes them to go on and on into forever, for she doesn't want to go back to being empty of him. She wants him to be unable to do without her. And he leads her to believe this is so. Just by looking at her a certain way he leads her down that lane—she herself tells me it's all in his eyes—and she forgets her own person there, gets lost in the maze of his possibilities.

She falls, just as he does, for a promise.

Then comes the night he comes inside and stays for tea. He brings pies and ale, too much for the three of us, so he orders the neighbours out from behind the

curtain and divides it all up. I'm sure I'm not the only one thinking, 'Who in God's name does he think he is?'

He gets the good chair, and the best cup and plate, and a knife and a fork, and everybody watches how he uses them, on a pie. No one dares talk, so he has to do the talking himself, though he leans on Mary for help, there being so much in what he says that's hard to get. He tells us many things, gossip most of it, about the foremen in the mill and their romances, and the practical jokes he likes to play on Mr Ermen. And a whole other heap, too, about growing up in Germany among the Calvins, and hating it because the Calvins credit that all time is God's time and wasting a minute is a sin, and life isn't meant for enjoying but for working only.

As for working, he hates his situation at the mill. He hates the position it puts him in, up there on a pillar, for he's happier down here with us lot. But he judges it good for himself also. 'Because Germans of my particular caste know too little of the real world. It's an education of sorts, and will do me good.'

What he's learnt so far—and he swears to learn more before he leaves for Germany again in a year's time—is that the workers are more human in daily life, less grasping, than the philistines who employ them, and that the philistines are interested only in money and how much it can buy them. The least grasping of all, he thinks, are the Irish. And, as far as he can see, they work just as well as the English.

Says he: 'It's true that to become something skilled like a mechanic, the Irishman would have to take on English customs, and become more English, which would be a formidable task, for he's grown up without civilisation, and is close to the nigger in this regard. But for simpler work which asks for more strength than skill, the Irishman is just as good.'

All this sort of science, he talks, and more besides, but what's stayed with me—what my mind lingers on oftenest—is what he says about the way we talk. At this stage, we've all imbibed a fair amount, and most of the neighbours are already sleeping: Seamus is on the ground away from his straw, the children are in their different spots, only the wife Nan is still with us. It's late, and I'm trying to signal to Mary to put an end to it. We all have work to get us up in the morning.

But she'll not break in on him, not in his stride, and what he's saying is interesting to her, or so it seems from the way she has her chin in her hands and is staring at him, tranced.

What he's talking about is the old language. He says he has heard it spoken in the thickest of the slums, as if this is something to wonder at. From there, he gets to talking about the English as it sounds in the Irish gob.

'I can read and understand twenty-five languages,' he says. 'But I admit to being tested by the English spoken by you and your people.'

Then he gets us to say a few things, and he laughs and repeats what we say, and then we laugh.

'*Grand* this and *grand* that,' he says. 'Everything is always so splendid for you! Through it all, you manage to stay so cheery and optimistic!'

At this, Nan near on falls off her stool for the laughing. 'I'll tell you something for naught, girls,' she says, 'These foreigners are shocking queer!'

Then we all roll around, and Frederick does too, though he's only allowing himself to be taken along, for he doesn't really know what we're laughing at.

Mary takes it on herself to let him in. 'For the Irish,' she says, '*Grand* doesn't mean more than *middling*.'

Nan sees Frederick's muddled arrangement. 'We'll need something strong to get us through this,' she says, and goes to get the bottle she keeps safe for the priest.

Meantime, Mary goes over and sits down on his lap—right there in plain sight—and scratches his whiskers and plucks his cheek. 'Listen now, Foreign Man. If a thing is *grand*, it's holding together. If a situation is *grand*, it's tolerable good. If a body is *grand*, she's alive and likely to do. No more and no less than that.'

Nan can barely get the spirit into the glasses for all her snorting and shaking. I'm just mortified and want the pageant to end so I can face the mill tomorrow with some of my honour intact. Frederick, for his part, takes to pondering what he's been told, and when he's over with that, he looks about our little room.

‘And a house?’ he says, being the type who wants to know the in-and-out of things precise. ‘If a house is *grand*?’

Mary stops smiling then, and puts down playing with his necktie, and turns to us, and takes us in—stunned-like—as if remembering us from a distant past. And then she says, ‘If a house is *grand*, my love, it comes with a rent that will leave you enough to go on.’

———

Now, awake, Frederick gets up and dodders about for his clothes. He’s having another cock-stand. I watch him muffle it into his breeches. In his room he keeps a tin, lozenges meant for sustaining your piss and vinegar, though I can’t see the use of them myself, it being a fine and thirsty animal God’s made of him.

‘Are you well, Lizzie?’

‘Well enough.’

He puts on his shirt, leaves it tucked out to hang over the stubborn article. ‘I’ve missed the morning. Why didn’t you wake me? I’ll have to skip my walk and work late to make up. Can you bring my meals up?’ He picks up his shoes and puts his coat over his arm. ‘Lizzie, did you hear me?’

I nod. I heard you.

I put onto my side, haul the covers up. ‘Frederick?’

‘*Ya*?’

‘Jenny thinks it’s a good idea to get another maid.’

‘There’s one coming on Sunday.’

‘Another one, I mean, over and above her.’

‘Oh? Jenny thinks so? And what do you think?’

‘I think it’d be a good way to get Pumps out of Manchester.’

‘Pumps?’

‘My niece. Half-niece. Thomas’s eldest.’

‘Oh him.’

‘Aye, him. He has her in a bad way. When she’s not locked at home looking after her nine brothers, she’s on a corner selling bloaters till all hours. It’s

only a matter of time before she gets into trouble. She could come down and help me here. It'd be a chance for her.'

'Let me think about it.' He goes for the door.

'Oh and Frederick?'

'What now?'

'Can you open the curtain before you go?'

He looks at me like I've just asked to be fanned.

VI

Capital

Not shy of the curtsies. Round-boned. Clean-cuffed. Plainness of a good human sort. Frederick sits her in the morning room and reads us through her character.

'It says here that you can read and write. That will be helpful. And you can milk a cow. Interesting. *And* make butter. A country girl?'

'Devon, sir.'

'Oh and look, how about that! You can do the scales on the piano.'

Aye, with her feet. Blindfolded.

'Listen here now Miss Barton,' I says, 'Do you know anything?'

'I beg your pardon, ma'am?'

'About keeping a house?'

'Well, as it says there—'

'I don't care a whit for what it says on that bit of paper, I want to you to use your voice and tell me out. Can you cook?'

'I can.'

'Good. Because it's for the kitchen I want you. My niece will be joining us in a few days, and she'll look after the hearths and the upstairs. You're to tend to the cooking.'

'Aye, ma'am.'

'I don't know what you're used to from your last place but here there'll be fish on Fridays.'

‘Course, ma’am.’

‘You’re to keep the counters and pots clean, I won’t stand for mice. And most important you’re to look after the kitchen store. Groceries for the day, the week and the month are to be put in the book. You must keep a check on what’s lacking and you must do the writing yourself, do you hear? I won’t do it for you. I’ll count what comes in and you’ll cross it off the list. Not a penny is to be spent that does not have my approval. Breakages must be mentioned within the day or they’ll be made good from your wages.’

She nods a biddable nod.

‘Now come with me and I’ll introduce you to the kitchen range.’

I lead her downstairs. ‘Don’t be shy now. Get familiar.’

She makes her way around, opening into cupboards and checking for what she’ll need. ‘Naught much to her,’ is what I think. ‘Improvable,’ is what I think. ‘She’ll do, she’ll do.’ But she has another think coming if she thinks I’m going to spend my days calling hoity up the stairs.

Nim. Skim. Spin. Spiv.

‘Spiv,’ I says. ‘We’re going to call you Spiv.’

‘What’s Spiv?’

‘It’s your name from now on.’

‘What does it mean?’

‘Naught only I like the ring of it.’

Once I’ve taken her on the full round, I go up with his middle-p.m. cheese and beer. I come in on him pacing. He freezes and turns from where he’s stood, feet outspread in the centre of the carpet. ‘Lizzie, I must ask you to knock.’

‘Oh I would, Frederick, I would, only I’m holding this’—I nod down at my burden—‘And I would have kicked only I saw the door half-open.’

‘Excuse me, Lizzie, I’m a brute. Come in, come in.’

I put the tray down on the sideboard and take up the old one.

‘Thank you, my love,’ he says, not moving from where he is. Then, as if a brilliant idea has just occurred to him: ‘Why didn’t you let the maid do it?’

‘Sure if I gave it all to her, I’d never see you.’

He laughs. ‘And how is she settling in?’

‘Early yet,’ I says. ‘We’ll see.’

‘*Ya*. Indeed. Good.’ He claps his hands, rubs them together, now strides over to his desk, lifts the moneybox out the drawer. ‘Actually I’m glad you came. I wanted to talk to you. Karl and Jenny are giving a party in our honour.’

‘Oh, aye?’

‘Tomorrow. To celebrate our arrival and to introduce us to some the London-based comrades.’ He rummages in the box and comes out with four sovereigns. ‘I want you to take this and buy yourself something nice to wear. We’re dandying up, making a bit of a fuss.’

I give him a stern look.

‘Come, Lizzie,’ he says, ‘It’s all right to spend a little to look good.’

‘Where would I go?’

‘Well, to the dressmaker’s. Have something pinned that will leave their jaws hanging.’

‘What dressmaker’s would have anything ready for tomorrow?’

‘Go to Barrow’s’—he speaks like a man who knows—‘They will be able to help you, I guarantee it.’

I crinkle my brow on purpose: ‘Barrow’s?’

‘It’s not far, in Camden. You won’t find anything here in Primrose Hill. Get a cab. Give them my name and pay them off a few extra shillings, you’ll see. A new place recently opened opposite them and they’re begging for the business. They’d have it sewn while you waited, if that was what you wanted.’

He comes and puts the coins on the tray by his dirty plates. Seeing them there, twinkling among the pork rind, I feel a fresh lightness in my heart. ‘You might be right, Frederick. I wanted to get abroad of the house anyways, and a run round the shops might be just the ticket.’

‘That’s the spirit, Lizzie.’

‘I’ll go right away.’

‘Ha!’ he laughs. ‘No time to lose.’

‘And I might have something out.’

‘Of course,’ he says and searches his pocket for an extra guinea. ‘Good idea.’

I leave as I am, only a light shawl and a reticule as excitements, and I leave the house as it is too, shambled with unfinished tasks, the new girl with the dinner yet to prepare, and I can’t say I’m bothered about it.

I cross the road to the lamppost at the bottom of the Hill and flag a cab from there. On the journey, I watch out the window and put the roads to memory so I can walk back and save the fare.

The bell in Barrow’s brings two girls beetling out from the back room. They’re got up in identical silk dresses with short sleeves and lace caps, but to look at, they couldn’t be further apart: one tidy and pinched, the other large and dusky-skinned and curled about the face.

‘I need a dress,’ I says.

‘Um, certainly,’ says Pinch, leading me over to a counter so polished you can see yourself in the black. ‘Is it for a special occasion, or do you require something useful?’

‘I suppose you could call it special.’

‘Oh. Well, in that case might I recommend our antique *mwaray*, which we have on special offer at the moment, nearly half price?’ She throws a length of rippled silk over the counter; gold so gold it glows. ‘We have this in a range of shades. Unfortunately one cannot see its full effect here. It’s most becoming at candlelight.’

‘Half price you say?’

‘Half price, Madam.’

‘So how much would a dress of this cost, at half price?’

‘Four pounds, eighteen shillings and sixpence.’

I splutter. ‘You must be barking. I won’t be spending more than a pound.’

She purses. Beside her, Curly laughs an appeasing laugh and whips the gold silk away, replaces it with another, this one a high-shining blue. ‘Am I right to

say the Madam is of the more sensible sort? Less interested in the novelties of fashion than in value for her spend?'

'Well, you wouldn't be wrong anyhows.'

'In that case, we have this plain *glassay* silk in over thirty shades of colour, commencing at only two pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence for the extra full dress.'

I give an impatient cluck. 'Maybe I didn't make myself clear—'

She shakes her curls. 'Madam, you made yourself perfectly clear.' She rolls away the blue silk and puts out a green muslin. I touch it. Stiff as a board. 'This is French organdie, one of last year's designs, which we are giving away at the very reduced price of one pound six shillings and sixpence for the extra full dress.'

I put my hand under my chin and tap my lip with a finger, as if considering. 'Do me one without the frills and I'll give you a pound for it.'

'Without the frills, Madam?'

'None of those ridiculous trimmings you have in the window there. All that unnecessary bib and tucker.'

'We have other models we can—'

'I want it plain, plain as can be.'

'You don't want to see—?'

'Do you understand the word *plain*, young lass?'

'Of course.'

'Well, that's what I want. And I want it for a pound.'

'I shall have to speak to—'

'Speak to whomsoever you like. Mrs Engels is the name. One-two-two Regent's Park Road. I'll bide here.'

Curly curtsies and goes into the back room. Pinch forces a smile into her cramped little face and goes to busy herself with the show dummies. I turn my gander to the carpet to keep from catching myself in the looking glasses that leer from every side.

'All right, Mrs Engels,' says Curly when she comes back, 'That should be fine. If you would like to come this way, we shall get you measured up.'

‘That won’t be needed, I can tell you straight off what I am.’

‘I do not doubt it, Mrs Engels, but at Barrow’s we like to measure all our customers to ensure the best style and fit.’

‘Listen, chicken, do you have a book to write in?’

‘Of course.’

‘Well, put this down.’

Flushing, she picks up her feather. Dips it.

‘Bust thirty-four, hips thirty-six, length-to-foot just as you see me.’ I step back to give her a full view. She frowns at me and scribbles down. ‘I’ll be back at five tomorrow to pick it up.’

‘Tomorrow?’

‘That’s right.’

‘Madam, I’m sorry but we usually need at least three working days. We could have it ready by close of business Monday.’

I pick a sovereign out of my reticule and put down on the page of the book.

She waves her hands over it as if to magic it away. ‘No, Madam, please, you can pay when you come to collect it.’

‘Take it now and be done with it. And I’ll be seeing you tomorrow.’

I find a cookshop a little up the road and order a chop and a pint of Bass’s ale, and now a slice of plum pudding and a cup of ready-made coffee with cream and sugar. I take the table in the window, for I like to look out.

Passing by, streams of people with bags and boxes: gone out for a ribbon and coming home with the stock of an entire silk mercers. These places, they do it on the cheap and make their capital out of pressure and high prices. It takes cleverness and steel for a woman to get her fair portion.

Exhausted, I look into my cup and try not to feel like the only one fighting.

VII

The Party

When it comes to the dangers of a bit of food, the Germans can be as afraid as the English, so I eat before we leave. Spiv heats me up a kidney pudding, and I have a glass of milk with it to line the gut, and after that some cold saveloy and penny loaf.

As it happens, I needn't have ruined my stomach, for there's wittals enough to feed a battalion: tables of meat and fowl and fish and cheese, salvers of delicates and dumplings carried by livery-servants in silk hose, all sorts of strong-tasting aliments smelling up in our noses. 'Who's died?' I think as I marvel the fare.

Tussy appears beside me. 'I've been looking all over, Aunt Lizzie.'

Embarrassed to be the only one grazing, I drop my pastry roll onto the damask. 'Tussy, my sweet darling.'

'Come on, I want to present you.'

She takes a glass of red from a tray, puts it in my hand and pulls me with her into the crush. 'I don't think I have ever been in a room with so many interesting people at once,' she says.

The men have changed the usual shab-and-drab for frilled shirts. The women are in clothes above the ordinary but not showy. I feel in tune, glad to have put my foot down at the dressmaker's. Tussy introduces me to everybody, even to those I've met and know.

'This is Mr Engels's wife, Mrs Burns. An Irishwoman and a true proletarian.'

The strangers bow. The familiars wink and smile along. There's more women than I expected to see. One sitting beside Karl on the couch. A pair by the window, looking foreign and bored. And by the chimneypiece, in a circle around Jenny and Janey, several gathered. Frederick—no surprise—has dug out the one with the lowest neckline.

'I'm not going to remember all these new names,' I whisper to Tussy, mortifying of the fuss.

'Don't worry,' she says, 'What's important is that they remember *yours*.'

From where he's sat, Karl makes a big act of twisting his monocle in to show he has it tied on a new ribbon. Janey's wearing the Celtic cross I sent her.

Jenny has made more of an effort than anyone else to draw attention onto herself: a feather in the hair, yards of a colour not found in the wild.

'Oh ladies, please,' she's saying to her audience, the lush sending her voice up a pitch, 'Before the illness, I had no grey hair and my teeth and figure were good. People used to class me among well-preserved women! But that's all a thing of the past.'

Loud protests.

'Come now, ladies, I am not looking for your reassurance. I speak from a place of solemn awareness. I can see the reality. When I look in the glass now I seem to myself a kind of cross between a rhinoceros and hippopotamus whose place is in Regent's Park Zoo rather than among members of the Caucasian race!'

Reddening for her, I busy myself with the only bow on my bodice.

'Now, Lizzie,' she says when the required objections die down, 'I'd like you to meet some extraordinary women. Mrs Marie Goegg, chairman of the International Women's Association. Mrs Anna Jaclard, writer and communist. Mrs Yelisaveta Tomanowski, thorn in the side of every Bakuninist, real or suspected. And Mrs Elizabeth Dimitrieff, Karl's own private reporter in Paris. Elizabeth is just here for a few days before going back into the *melay.* And what exactly are you going back to do, Elizabeth?'

'Well, I certainly won't be sewing sandbag sacks, that is for sure!'

They cackle and clap and swat the air with their gloves and fans. I drink and look around. Nim is by the door ordering one of the hired men down to the kitchen. Her hair is looped and she's put earrings in, but apart from that, she's the selfsame: sensible petticoat, two pleats in her dress. It's said she's had many suitors and could have made a good match more than once, even with the shame of Frederick's bastard hanging over her, but here she has stayed, devoted and constant, both when the wages have come and when they haven't. She sees me looking and comes over.

'Your glass is empty, Mrs Burns,' she says, taking it from me and replacing it with a full one from a passing salver.

'Thanks Helen,' I says, for that's her real name; I know it to be so.

‘Lizzie!’—Jenny is calling—‘I was just about to give the ladies a tour of the upstairs. Do join us.’

‘Well, thanks Jenny, that sounds nice, only—’

Laughing, Tussy takes my arm. ‘Don’t be such a bore, *Mohme*. Lizzie is going to stay here with me. The band is going to start soon, and the men aren’t nearly drunk enough to dance, so I’m relying on Lizzie to be my partner.’

Tussy leads me to the bay window where the band has set up. ‘Music, please!’ she cries, and they start up. She spins me from one side of the empty floor to the other till, three songs later, I start hacking and I’ve to sit down.

After a time—no sooner do I finish one drink than another is pressured on me—the women come back from upstairs. ‘Finally!’ says a voice, and the men approach with outstretched hands. I refuse the two who ask me up.

‘Maybe the next one,’ I says. ‘I need the rest.’

But the truer truth is I’ve become interested in what’s happening by the second fireplace; to get up now would be to miss it. It appears the woman Dimitrieff is telling something of her life. Sat on an easy chair like it’s a throne, enough space between her legs to fit a violin-cello, she has the place rapt. Frederick, Karl and some others have made a ring round her and are fighting with each other to laugh loudest at her utterings. I strain my ear to catch a scrap.

‘So I said, *I only married you to get a passport,* and he said, *Well, I only married you for your—*’

She widens her eyes in mock horror and peers down at her bust, as if noticing for the first time how smooth and well-looking it is.

Now *there’s* a body to contend with.

Refusing another round of dancing, I rise and make for the empty chair beside her. But Jenny, who must have been watching too, is faster. She slips through the band of men and takes Dimitrieff’s hand.

‘If none of these men are brave enough to ask you up, then you shall have to make do with me.’

Dimitrieff laughs. ‘Oh Mrs Marx, I thought you would never ask!’

The two skip to the floor, and the men look after them, murmuring and scratching and wondering why all women aren’t like them.

Stranded now on a bit of empty carpet, I hasten to the nearest free seat. I watch the array over the lip of my glass: Jenny and Dimitrieff, Karl and Goegg, Frederick and Janey, Tussy and Dalby, Tomanowski and Lessner, Jaclard and Eccarius, Dr Allen and his wife, the Lormiers, and maybe ten others, swaying and reeling. The number dawns on me: thirty or more altogether. A good way to clear off those who are due a visit, but the expense must be—well, it must be effin mighty.

Of course, it's easy to spend when you haven't done a tap to have it. Three hundred and fifty pounds a year, in three instalments, straight from Frederick's accounts, that's what they get. I'm sure they think it's a secret; I'm sure they think I'm oblivious because I'm unable to make out what Frederick writes in the books. But, in our house, having keen ears is just as good as having snooping eyes of your own, for half of the time he's forgetting to speak in the German; half of the time he's shouting through the walls instead of keeping his talk to a whisper; and the other half of the time he's at the street door barking orders to messengers and letter carriers; it was never going to be long before I caught wind. Three hundred and fifty pounds is the digit, and that's before the gifts and the sneaky envelopes; that's before he sweeps in to level the bills and promises-to-pay that they leave to pile up on their desks and dressers and drawers (and not, where they ought be, on their memory and their morals).

Careless charity, is what the world would call it, if it knew. *Helping those who beg and not those who really need the help.* And who needs the help more—can someone please tell me?—than Nim's son? Lord knows what condition of roof that boy is living under, and yet I don't see a single tormented penny leaving the house in his direction. Would Frederick even know where to send it? One day justice will have to be done the poor lad; one day he'll have to be cut his sliver.

'You know, there's a story told about them,' I says, turning to the man sat beside me.

'About whom, Madam?' he says, his breath wafting through his moustache.

'The Marxes.'

'Ah, yes. Such a remarkable family. Stories are bound to be told about them.'

By the fireplace, Karl has taken up the fire blower and is making smutty jokes with it. Watching him brings a smile—like a secret understanding—to the man's face.

'You one of the Party?' I says.

His smile drops. 'The Party?'

'You know, the International.'

'Madam, the International is not a *party*. It is an association. A free association of working men.'

I make a face to say I stand humble and corrected. He accepts it with a nod. Brings his glass under the hair of his lip to suck from it.

'Well, Sir, the story I'm thinking about—'

'Is almost certainly just that, a story. Tittle-tattle from the bread queue.'

'You haven't heard it yet.'

'I don't need to hear it to know that it's false.'

'If it's false I tell it, it's false I got it.'

'Precisely.'

I take a sup and ponder this a moment. 'Only I don't believe this one is false. And if you only listened a minute, I'm sure you'd find you agree.'

He shakes his head and groans.

'The way it goes is, her mother, I mean Jenny's mother, gave them some money for their honeymoon, and they took it with them in a chest.'

'Please, Madam, must we do this?'

'And what they did was, they left the chest open on the table in the different hotel rooms they stayed in, so that any old body who visited them could take as much as he pleased from it. As you can imagine, *empty* the chest soon was!'

The man stares at me. He joins his brows together and frowns. 'That's it?' he says. 'That's your story?'

I push a finger into the soft bit of his arm and whisper into the black of his ear: 'But don't you see, this is the root of it! One generous thing done a lifetime ago, and they think the world is in debt to them since. There's no fairness in it. In the first place, I don't think you can call giving your parents' good money away *generous*. If you can call it anything, it's—'

The blood, now, comes beating to his face. An angry flush overspreads his features. He shifts his chair so he can face away from me. I take my hand back and sigh. These foreigners have no notion of the banter. The Irish, there's not much I can say in their favour, but at least they allow for a woman's words when she's lushed; they know it's only the drop talking.

The music stops and the remaining dancers bow and clap, and now make their way back to the chairs and sofas. A woman rushes in from the hall, as if summoned by the new quiet.

('Where've you been?' rasps her red-headed friend, just two paces from me. 'All this time, I've not seen you.'

'I was in the kitchen playing cards with the hired men. What a lark! I won this.' She opens her palm to show a threepenny bit.)

Jenny walks into the centre of the room and calls for a final applause for the musicians, then orders us up the stairs to the parlour for the performance.

'The moment we've been waiting for!' someone shouts.

Frederick comes to take me up. 'Are you safe?' he says when my foot squeaks on the carpet of the stairs and I have a little wobble.

'Go to blazes, Frederick,' I says.

In the parlour we get seats but the men have to stay on their feet. Jenny comes to stand in front of a counterpane held up as a curtain by two menservants. She gives a little speech about the effort she and Karl have made towards the Girls' education, and how unfortunate it is they couldn't do so much for them in music as they'd have hoped. 'In any case,' she says, 'Their real strength is drama and elocution. And tonight my youngest daughter Eleanor, whom many of you know as Tussy, shall be playing Hamlet. This is apt, for her father used to always say she was more like a boy than a girl.'

A chuckle goes round.

'Good old Tussy!' someone calls out.

'My eldest daughter Janey shall be playing Gertrude, and although she knows not yet the joys and pain of motherhood for herself, I think you shall find she does the role full justice.'

Cheers and claps.

‘The Girls would like to dedicate their performance to their sister Laura and her husband Paul, who are now safe in Bordeaux, thank heavens, and expecting a child.’

Applause.

Jenny bows and the servants let drop the curtain. One of the men has given Tussy a military jacket. Jenny has put Janey in one of her ball gowns.

‘Now mother,’ says Tussy, ‘what’s the matter?’

‘Hamlet,’ says Janey, ‘Thou hast thy father much offended.’

‘Mother, you have *my* father much offended.’

This stirs up such laughter in the crowd that Janey is forced to bide before speaking her next line. ‘Come, come,’ she says once there’s quiet, and the two set off into their theatricals, speeching off and casting their limbs about. I don’t know if it’s the lush or the heat of the room, but I’m finding it hard to stay with the meaning of it. My head pounds. I feel all face. I look around to see if anyone has noticed the wrong with me. Nim, I see, is stood by the door. That’s where I must go.

‘Excuse me, excuse me,’ I says as I make my way down the line.

‘Are you all right, Mrs Burns,’ Nim says when I reach her. She gestures into the room to remind me of what I’ll miss if I leave. I turn back to see Tussy striking a blow at a figure wrapped in the drapes, and now Karl spinning out from behind them and falling onto the floor.

Dizzying, I rush down the stairs and out the street door. I take the air and am thankful for it; it keeps what’s down from coming up. A moment and Nim is outside with me.

‘Here,’ she says, wrapping a shawl around me.

‘You don’t have to worry, Helen. I’m grand.’

‘Shall I fetch you a glass of water?’

‘Nay, nay. Just stay a minute.’

‘Well, all right. But not too long. I must get back.’ She puts the door on the latch. Rubs her arms. ‘It’s getting cold now,’ she says. ‘It will be fully winter before we know it.’

‘Aye, that it will.’

Some minutes pass. The noise from upstairs comes through the windows and out into the night. All down the road, the houses are dark.

'I shall have to leave you now,' Nim says.

'Nay, wait—'

Knowing no way to proper introduce it, I go ahead and bring out the money: the savings from the dressmaker's and a few other morsels I've managed to gather up.

'Here,' I says, 'I want you to have this.'

She takes a step away.

'Take it. It's from Mr Engels. He wants you to have it.'

'Mr Engels? For what?'

For what. For what. She must believe my head emptier than the Saviour's tomb.

'Helen, please. I'm not just another of these silly women. I know how many beans makes five.'

'I'm sure I don't know what you mean.'

'Mr Engels and me, we have so much. More than we can cope with.'

'I'm not going short. I'm looked after.'

'I don't doubt it. This is just an extra bit. You have full claim to it.'

She shakes her head and pushes open the door. 'I have no claims to anything.'

'Your son does. Think of your—'

But she's already gone. Leaving me to hold the whole weight of my purse.

Back upstairs, I find the performance over. Port and sweets are being tendered round. Tussy pushes through to reach me.

'You missed the whole thing, Aunt Lizzie!'

'Not at all, I saw you up there. You were a star. I've never seen such—'

But she'll not be cozened, nor condoled, and she doesn't spare me any of her pouting, and I don't have the force to bring her round, so it comes a relief when, from across the room, the woman Dimitrieff calls her away with the lure of

her smoke. I watch her go, the man's jacket spilling over her shoulders, and it occurs to me now which one *Hamlet* is: it's the one where she marries her husband's brother and, by there, sends it all down-falling to shite.

November

VIII

Inverted World

Pale as royals, the pair of them. Wouldn't know a day's work if it shone on them blazing. Put their backs into nought, far as I can see, except giving me gob.

Only this morning Spiv says to me, she says, 'Don't mind me, Ma'am,' when I find her dangling her feet while she ought be cleaning the slops, 'Don't mind me, I'm only resting up on account of my courses.' Then when I catch her putting the woollens through the mangle: 'But, Mrs Burns, this is how I did them in the last place, this is how the missuses are doing them.'

You come to London, get a nice home about you and—blight your innocence!—you think you're over with the toils and the trouble.

The other one can hear me chiding from two flights up, and comes down in her night-rail. 'Don't stand there, Pumps,' I says to her. And then, 'For the love of Christ, Pumps, don't stand there gawping,' for she'll not hearken to something spoken only the once. 'Make yourself useful and go do the grate, it's a blind disgrace and needs blackening.'

She bobs a curtsy and goes, and I'm left relieved by how easy she's toed, for on your regular day she's the worse of the two, all her energies spent trying to get one over me and prove I'm not up to the dodge. With the passing of the moments, though, my relief turns to suspicion—the lass so yielding is a forecast for bad goings-on—so when I've done with Spiv and sent her into the kitchen to think about lunch, I go to the parlour to give it the once over.

Just as I pictured: the grate still undone, the drapes covered with paw marks, and Pumps herself in front of the mirror rubbing black onto her face. Which is to say, it's worse than I pictured, and we're back to the usual.

'Pumps, what's this?' I says.

‘What’s what?’ she says.

‘This here, on the drapes.’

‘That? Was there when I got here.’

‘Why didn’t you get the benzene to it, then?’

‘Thought you wanted it that way.’

‘And on your face? Did you think I wanted you with whiskers as well?’

‘Oh this? I just thought you could use another man about the place.’

This, for the London missus, is life. Not the fancy ball you might have imagined, but this. Which only goes to show you can’t foreknow the shape of things to come. For if you’d told me this day twelvemonth how it was going to be—that my hours would be spent poking in nooks and sniffing in corners, running the finger and dancing at heels; that every day would be a scrub, and every week a starch, and every year a white; that tomorrow’s coals would turn to yesterday’s ashes, and time would burn my wick both ends—if this day twelvemonth you’d told me the God-glaring truth of it, I’d not have credited you. I’d have thought you unkept in your mind.

‘Get away with you,’ I’d have thought, ‘It can’t be shabbier than Manchester, can it?’

Yet nowadays I oftentimes think we oughtn’t have flown the old kettle at all. I oftentimes think the mill wasn’t so killing as this. Topsy thinking is what this is, but topsy is how it goes up here; topsy and wrongways.

Advice: if you come, leave your senses back where they were common.

IX

Island Dwellers

I like to do the step myself. Which is a lucky thing. For Spiv refuses to be seen out front. And Pumps is too afraid of a bit of exertion to take her shoes and stockings off and get down into the scrub. It’s a task I ought stay away from, on account of the knees, but I’ve learnt it gives me more pain to watch them do it than to do it myself. They’re likely to be content with less than the right white.

And there's no precise measure for the clay, the blue, the size and the whitening; you have to judge the mixture by its look.

I go hard at it—my sleeves rolled, my face lathered—and I don't let off till, out the side of my eye, I light on a crowd of four women coming up the road from the Hill side. They, in return, catch sight of me when they're a few doors away. By my own deeper wisdom, I know they're headed in my direction. I put my attending back on my cleaning, but I'm aware of myself now and don't feel inside the task.

They come to stand in a line over me. I twist my neck to look up at them.

'Might we see the lady of the house?' says the one in the high-boned collar.

I stand. Brush the hair off my brow. Flatten my pinny. 'Come on, Lizzie,' I says to myself, 'Don't be put so easy to the blush.'

When it dawns on one, it passes through the others like electricity. 'Oh!'—they clutch their chests in the spot where the air has been knocked out—'How novel!'

Sat on my sofa, gummed together in a talcumed clump, the committee members of the Primrose Hill Residents' Association tell me what they saw: a woman and a girl viewing the house, and then the same two overseeing the arrival of the furniture and making all the arrangements. They describe both figures in a detail that'd chill the devil: the size and shape of their noses and mouths, the height of their brows, the colour and curl of their hair, the cut of their clothes; it's as if they've painted picture portraits of Jenny and Tussy and hung them in their heads. They expected to be received by them. They look disappointed to have got me.

'Relations of yours?' the woman named Stone asks, pulling out the end of her dress and floating it out over her boots.

'Nay,' I says, 'Just intimates.'

'I've seen her before,' Leech says. 'The woman, I mean. Does she live nearby?'

'Aye, not far. Near the Heath, up that way.'

'Foreign?'

‘A Baroness.’

‘Oh, I see.’

‘And her name?’ says Westpot, jigging her leg in a manner that says she’s unprepared to sit here, in these uncomfortable visiting clothes, and bide for the required particulars to come out of their own accord.

‘Von Westphalen,’ I says, giving Jenny’s maiden name to avoid mention of Karl.

‘Von Westphalen. Let’s see. German?’

‘Aye.’

Westpot ponders a moment. ‘Doesn’t ring any bells. Does she go much into society?’

‘I’m not sure, you’d have to ask her.’

‘And yourself?’

‘Me? Oh, well, I’m not the outsy-aboutsy sort.’

I ring for tea and sandwiches and cake. Pumps bites the side of her finger and glares at the women through squinted eyes.

‘Go on, girl,’ I says. ‘Don’t be dallying.’

While we’re biding I bring the talk round to the house—that’s what they’re here for, isn’t it?—and mention the hidden costs of living in a new area: the uncivil distances, the bad roads, construction everywhere, hoarding blocking the paths. It’s a speech I’ve heard Jenny give on several occasions and it’s always been well received. Here, now, I’m met with a row of faces longer than a day with no bread.

Pumps brings in the tray and I give out the tea.

‘And you are Mrs Burns,’ says Mrs Westpot. ‘Isn’t that what you said?’

‘That or thereabouts,’ I says.

Leech look about for signs of children. Halls sighs into the emptiness.

Sensing an edge to our nerves, Stone says I’m not to be embarrassed, there’ll always be duties the householder will reserve for herself. She, for instance, makes the beds of her own choice, for the servants aren’t to be depended upon to put down the same number of blankets every night. Leech looks shocked that Stone would let go of her home secrets to a stranger; she tries to turn our

minds away from the blunder by lashing herself into an enthusiasm about my draping. I ought keep the windows open as much as possible, she says, so the smoke doesn't linger on them. This prods Halls to air her loath for women who insist on smoking, especial out in the public.

'It can only be taken as a kind of challenge.'

Leech tut-tuts and says she heard there were women smoking at the funeral of Mr Miller, a man who used to live down by the Canal. Fifty people for breakfast, there were, a table covered in cakes and biscuits and oranges and nuts, and all species of wine and exotics, and though Leech herself didn't attend—she wouldn't dream of it, for it wasn't her place—she was told there were women there, attending; women with flowers in their bonnets and fags in their mouths, and it had the atmosphere of a wedding more than anything else.

'It's hard to imagine a grieving widow having to serve delights to such a rabble, but that's exactly what Mrs Miller had to do, as it was ordered in the will. Then, after all of that, he didn't leave her enough to get by on her own.'

There's a pause to allow the shaking of heads. I pass the plate of sandwiches around. 'Thank you, but no,' they each say in turn, for they don't want to ruin their appetites; they're on route to other engagements.

Saucers under their chins, as if to catch every precious thing that might fall out, they take it upon themselves to explain the area to me. It's best, they say, to think of Primrose Hill as an island, with the railway forming the northern boundary and the Canal the southern one. The better sort of residents live this side of St George's Road. This is because, here, one escapes the murky results of the railway activities, thanks to a benevolent wind that blows the smoke and dust eastways over the Chalk Farm Road and Camden. On the opposite side of St George's Road, running towards Gloucester Avenue, the residents are working types, three families or more to each of the houses. It is, they say, like a little northern town, dominated by the railway and with a strong bond between the bodies living here. The houses are impossible to keep clean, of course, due to the flakes of soot that float about and settle everywhere. But the people are happy and tend to their own. Nevertheless, it's best not to walk there at night, for the roads can be rough, with families of boys patrolling about. And the railway

bridge is to be avoided at all costs, and at all times, for it provides dry arches for the congregation and accommodation of street Arabs and gutter children.

Their speech causes me a twinge, to be sure, but, if I'm honest, I don't despise them in my heart. Perhaps this is because I don't feel beneath them. I'm no great lady and I don't know the fashion of the months, but I'm aware of my new position, in the middle class of life, and I don't think I'm fairing so shabby.

Once satisfied that I'm a woman with the right information, they allow their talk to move to other subjects. It comes to rest on the banks. They're thankful the crisis years have passed.

'Dreadful, was it not, ladies?' says Stone.

'Dreadful, dreadful,' the heads nod.

'When I heard that Overend and Gurney had gone under, well, I got such a shock I called my husband in and I said to him, *Gregory, take all our money out of the banks immediately, our savings would be safer under a board here at home*.'

Halls laughs. 'Did he do as you commanded?'

'Are you mad? He just snickered and told me to not to worry my head over affairs which aren't mine. They can be such rotters, can't they?'

A chuckle passes round.

'Speaking of rotters,' says Leech, 'Have you heard about Mr Wagner?'

At this, they all sigh together and say it's a shocking and terrible thing. Such a disappointment, they say, when a genius fails his public with immoral private doings.

It's clear they've talked about this Wagner character before. He might even be someone they regular use to take the corners off a meeting, to make it feel rounder and sister-like. I take him to be another neighbour and am glad I don't ask further about him—that instead I sigh along in my ignorant stead—for it soon becomes clear to me that it's a musician he is, not a neighbour, and, by the sounds of it, a bit of a hound too. Once I know the facts, I'm resolved to tell them some true and shocking stories about musicians, stories that will go all the way to their cores: about the Manchester halls and what the singers and fiddlers got up to there, the fiddling they did in the dressing rooms, and not only with the loose women from the boxes but with the higher-ups too, who would bribe their way

down the corridors and hide themselves between the costumes. But my chance doesn't come, their fast manner of talking to themselves makes it hard to break in, and when the subject passes on, it irks me that there's things I could have said on my own side, about musicians.

'You're not from London, are you Mrs Burns?' Westpot says, impatient to be getting on.

'Nay, from down Manchester way. But my kin, they're from across the water.'

'France?' says Leech, making Stone and Halls giggle.

'The other way.'

'Ah, of course.' She looks at the other three. They twitch their faces back at her.

'So you and your family,' Westpot says, 'You are, um, shoppy people then?' She talks to her nails, as if abashed by having to bleed this personal vein.

'We were in the cotton, if that's what you mean. But we've stopped with that. Now we're in something else entire.'

'Well, that's a relief,' says Stone.

'A relief indeed,' says Halls.

'Shoppy people are bad enough,' says Leech, 'But the Manchester ones are supposed to be a whole grade down, if that's possible.'

'Always behind the counter, even when they're not,' says Stone.

I can't gainsay what they're saying about Manchester and the rest, but I don't like how they're saying it, so I says, 'If the Manchester men have a bad name, it's their own doing and they deserve it, but they're not all the same, there's good eggs between them.'

'Good eggs?' says Westpot, 'Like Mr Burns, you mean?'

'Mr who?'

'Why Mr Burns, woman! Your husband!'

When you're called a missus, oftentimes you forget yourself, and it's a good idea to have a story to tell, to cover over. But I have no such story ready. 'There's no Mr Burns,' I says.

'Oh my dear woman.'

‘Oh Lord.’

‘No Mr Burns?’

‘Where is he?’

I clear my throat. Scratch an itch that takes hold of the scalp under my bun. ‘He’s in his grave,’ I says, undressing the lie by thinking of my father.

Stone allows herself a gasp. Leech takes a napkin from the tray and offers it to me. Halls gives me a Protestant ‘Bless you’ and looks down, virtuous-like, at her clasped hands.

I nod my thanks and reach once more for the sandwiches, happy to be off the hook as light as that. But Westpot has drawn back her lips and is thirsty for the truth. For that’s how they bite you: smiling.

‘But I’ve seen a man,’ she says, ‘I’ve seen a man coming in and out.’

‘You have?’

‘Yes, Mrs Burns, a man.’

‘Oh, aye. Now that I think of it, there’s a man who lives here.’

‘But he’s not Mr Burns?’

‘Nay, he’s not Mr Burns.’

‘Oh?’

‘Oh!’

‘Oh.’

‘Who is he then?’

‘He’s Mr Engels.’

‘Mr *Angles*?’

‘Engels. Mr Engels.’

‘Is he here now, this Mr Engels?’

‘Nay, he’s away from the house on business.’

‘And who is he? A lodger?’

‘Nay, not a bit of a lodger.’

Westpot simpers, understanding. ‘You’re not married, are you Mrs Burns?’

‘He’s my husband, I just haven’t taken his name.’

‘You can’t take a man’s name unless you’re wedded to him.’ She turns to the others. ‘She’s not married.’

‘I’m his helpmeet is what, Mrs Westpot.’

‘You’re his—?’

‘She said *helpmeet*.’

‘Shh, ladies, let’s try not to be rude.’

They suck themselves in. Leech’s stays creak. Halls, so fascinated by the proceedings, forgets herself and takes up a slice of cake. Her eyes darting around for the next move, she feeds the whole thing in.

‘Mrs Burns,’ says Westpot, ‘If you don’t mind me asking—’ She hesitates.

I meet her gander full force. I’ve naught to hide from no one. ‘Aye, Mrs Westpot?’

‘What I was going ask was, what business is Mr—?’

‘Ah!’ Halls lets out a splutter, and now a gullet-bursting cough, and now the contents of her gob drops out—*pat!*—onto her lap. ‘Pepper!’ she yelps, ‘There’s pepper on the cake!’

Pumps—I could hear her ear scratch against the door the whole time and now I know why—shimmies in, calm as a cucumber. ‘You all right, ma’am?’ she says, ‘Can I help you there.’ She walks around, positions herself behind Halls and serves out four slugs to her back.

Stunned, I watch the scene, the perfect horror of it. And I’m still sat here, unable to move, while the women file out, crinolines crumpled, bunches bounced; and still now while Pumps fettles up the tea things.

‘Those were some bitches,’ she murmurs to herself as she makes a pile of the plates. ‘They got what was coming.’

Her behaviour is a credit to those who brought her up. For she was raised in thoughtlessness. Reared to be someone who’d have none of the advantages. Just one more of the poor tattery children of Little Ireland. Like all of us, she would’ve seen much brutality within the circle. A crooked look would’ve caught her a larruping at the hands of her slack-spined father and rag-and-scram brothers. Her face and the bent of her back bear the marks of this ill-usage. I can’t blame

her for feeling angry and wanting to defy the laws of the wide world. I've been her. I *am* her.

My punishment, so, is not the belt or the starvation. Nor is it the water pump or the locked door. Rather, it's the needle.

'Come and help me with the stitching,' I says to her. 'Come, please, and salvage my efforts.'

And she comes. And she looks at my work: a bundle of botched and broken thread like a wild shrub. And she bursts out. And I can't help but join her. We hang off each other, now, and laugh till we're sick.

X

A Free Education

I'm not clever with the needle. I can't keep my mind full on it. When it comes time for it—this hour after lunch is the usual, though I'm told some ladies can't stop and have to have it torn from them at bedtime as a babby from the breast—but, aye, when the lunch is cleared and way is made for the buttons and patches, I'm hindered from settling into it by a draught that, no matter what the weather outside, comes under the door and cuts into me like a knife.

Over my shoulder, it does blow, and into my ear. Then, whirling in my head, it swings my weathercock round and points it backwards and northwards, and sets me to believing that because I've done my time spinning cotton, I ought be handy at this fancywork too. 'Lord bless us and save us, Lizzie Burns,' the wind roars, 'All those years at the mill and you can't do a simple cross-stitch?'

I know it's only the devil trying to make me pucker a seam or prick my finger; it's only himself trying for my soul before the Lord calls for it. So I try to pay no heed. Though it gives me an ache to have to listen to him, speeching off like one of the mill men—'What we do today, London does tomorrow!'—or whistling the sound of the mule, dandier to him than a lark, I make as if I'm taken up with the feeding of thread and the making of loops, for I don't need to answer for myself.

That's just how it went in Manchester. The way it was, we were the ones who went out to earn the fire and candle, and it was the men who sat home and did the darning. That was the custom of the place, on account of our wages being the lower. I can't be faulted for that.

———

Mr McDermot down Parliament Passage, he even does it for the mint, like he's a seamstress. You pass your clothes into him in the morning—he has a basket set out under the window, so all you have to do is drop them through and shout in your name—and he sews them up grand while you're at work, and has them ready for collecting the same p.m. Mrs McDermott is a spinner like the rest of us, but at one of the shabbier mills that doesn't let you out till nine or ten, so when you pass by and gander in, you see her man there, pinny-tied and stool-sat, sewing panels and fixing hems and putting strings in caps, looking all alone only for the bits of clothes and children spread about him. You only ever see him getting up to stir the supper.

They wouldn't believe you in London, if you told them.

Nor would they understand—though it's a simple thing to grasp—that when you're out working all day, you don't learn how to knit or to mend, or to have any of the home virtues other missuses might have. Indeed, if today I've any skills to boast of at all, it's only thanks to the Jew, Mr Beloff, from up Ancoats Street way.

I run in with Beloff during my second year at the Ermen & Engels. Having served out his year at the mill, Frederick has gone back to Germany, leaving Mary with a head full of dangerous notions. She thinks he's coming back. She believes that, one day soon, when he's done with his business on the continent, he'll ride back into Manchester and carry her off to the good life, the foreign life. It's a bad moment. When she's not demented with high feeling, she's sitting in the dark and letting the blue demons waste her. And on those frightening occasions when she's neither up nor down but normal, she's entertaining men, one after the other, in an effort to forget. I often fear she is near to downbreak. But I don't know how to reach her. My words she screams over. My attempts at embrace she throws off and resents. 'You don't understand,' she says, 'and you never will.'

It's not long before I feel worn away by it all, and I begin to spend my evenings from home, and my Sundays too, in the dramshops and the pubs. Soon enough I'm getting thick with a boy called Sully from Spinning Field, who takes to walking me over to where the Medlock meets the Irwell, and to kissing me, and to putting his hands inside my dress, and to telling me that Manchester is in England, and England is in London, and as soon as he's saved a bit of money, he'll quit the whole damn place and boat it back to Ireland, make a big family there. Sully has no regular situation. He spends his days collecting bits of smoked cigars from the gutter, which he then dries out and sells back to the tobacconists for a price. And when there's no cigar butts to be had, he looks over the streets for sticks and handkerchiefs and shawls that have been dropped in the night. Or he digs out the cracks between the paving stones with rusty nails to find a penny. Or he collects dried out dog-dirt for the tanning yards, and bones for the glue makers. And he never sticks to anything. Spends most of his time wandering about, looking for a bit of amusement. And when I'm finished my day at the mill and have no desire to go home to Mary and her wailing, I join him, for I like his way of living outside.

Push to shove, we fall in with the mud larks, and we fare grand with them. We sit by the Medlock, Sully and his gang and me, waiting for the tide's retiring, throwing stones and shouting oaths at the old women who make a head start by wading straight into the water and fishing down to their elbows, not minding what they stand on for their feet have long gone to leather. We wrap scraps around our own to keep them safe, but we're young and still have imaginations about what we can't see, so we decide it better to bide for the mud. What we find in it, we sell. Bits of coal, we knock off to the neighbours at a penny a pot. A pound of bones gets you a farthing at the rag-shop. Dry rope is worth more than wet. But copper nails are the real treasure: fourpence, you get, for a pound. You get naught for the blood worms, their having no use or value, but we collect them anyhows, fill our pockets with them and then take them out in fistfuls to show the fine ladies on Deansgate.

The worms are all the wildlife there is in Manchester, apart from the pigs in the courts. But oddtimes—it's true—a wind comes down the Medlock and brings

a seagull with it. You don't remark on it hanging there till one of the others points it out to you. Then you're not able to stop remarking on it, the way it stays up without moving a limb, and you go all envious, like a fool.

Mary's livid about my larking. 'When you sink so low,' she says, 'It isn't easy to pick yourself up again. What if the mill people find out what you're doing? What if one of the foremen sees you running about like Miss Jim Crow, all torn and covered in muck? What would Frederick think? You're going to ruin everything!'

And eventual things do go Mary's way. I get a nail in the foot, and in the same unlucky week, a bit of glass in the other, which leaves me lame. I can't get up from crawling and have to go about the place like a dog. I'm still suffering for it in the knees.

'Serves you right,' Mary says, 'That'll learn you.'

All the same, she makes sure to put a word in for me at the mill, and she gets a promise—it's no secret how—that I'll get my job back once I'm healed.

I spend most of the days pent up in our room. But if the weather's nice, I sit on the step outside and watch the course of the passing day. Sully from Spinning Field doesn't find his way to me—he must be a dullard or just a laggard, for I told him precise how to get here—but as chance has it, the Jew Beloff passes by regular to visit the boghole, his own court having none. And one day, when he gives me a farthing for no more than a salute, I get to speaking with him.

'See you about the place, Sir,' I says, for he's hard to miss, as tall as he is, all long and black, and with very little whisker on him; not a bit like Karl. 'I see you about but I'm not familiar with your people. Is it Irish you are?'

He enjoys that, he does. He stops and gives me his gums and leans on the wall beside me and tells me his kin isn't a bit of Irish but comes from the other direction, far out East.

'Out Ardwich way?' I says.

'Further,' he says.

The way he explains it, the Jews live in England like a people apart: private rites and holidays, and a separate parish to give out relief. Most of them work as clothesman, like himself and his own father before him, buying and selling. Hats,

he says, are valuable and always will be, as long as there's heads to put them on. He opens out his bag and shows me his wares, and I'm surprised how quality they are, fit for a different caste altogether.

From now on, every time he comes by, he stops to talk, and when I'm not on my step but inside, he takes it on himself to knock on the door and ask for me, much to the fright of Mary, who sees no good reason for a Jew to be calling, and wants him sent away. I do no such thing, of course, for I'm fain to go out to him, and we get to knowing each other well.

When we're together I even forget he's a Jew, for it isn't like when you see a nigger musician in the halls or a stray Chinaman off the Liverpool boats and your heart falls to thumping and you don't want to get close. With Beloff you can pass the day beside him and not think about it, for he's skin-coloured and doesn't appear that queer when you check him over proper, and you can laugh with him just the same as with one of us. Like the time he tells me he gave me that first farthing because he thought I was a cripple, and a cripple is as good as a corpse in his book, no good to the living except as a weight to carry around, and there's something about that—the picture of the living carrying around the dead—that makes us buckle.

From my blather, he gets intimate with our affairs. Mary warns me about talking to strangers and letting on how hard things are for us, and dragging us through the muck that way.

'The less people who know our worries the better,' she says. 'No name is a good name.'

But the way I see it, Beloff knows anyhows that we're down a wage on account of my wounds, and he can hear the bang and clatter of Mary inside, and can see for himself how hard it is to be cooped up with it all day, obeying rules made by an ill woman. He isn't blind to the thin stick of my arm either. 'It won't do me harm to play it up a portion,' is what I think.

And sure enough one day he says to me, he says, 'As soon as your feet are better and you can get around again you should come and work for me.'

And in that moment I come to the knowledge that a man can indeed help you rise in the world. All you have to do is pick him out right and play him well.

A matter of weeks and I'm going to Beloff's house every Friday p.m. after the mill, and again on Saturday till nightfall, for that's when the Jews keep their Sabbath and won't touch anything, so he gives me my wittals and a couple of bob to do it for him. Snuffing the candles, is what I do, and poking the fire and scrubbing his collars and doing the dishing-up, and he says if I ever get good at it, I'll one day be able to do the sewing too: the sewing of all the clothes that come to him broken. What he gives me in return isn't enough to get a room of my own, but at least it gives me time away from Mary, with the added thrill of a regular lot to eat: supper on Friday and fried fish on Saturday, and dinner then, and tea, and supper after that, and that suits me.

A one-room back-to-back in a court same as our own, is all he has, but he has the luck to live alone, his wife being passed over and his children gone to try their chances in London and such fields. This means it's only ever the two of us: me going about my business and him at the table or on his mattress, rolling cigarettes and calling out his orders. 'Do it with two hands is better.' 'It's not going to come out, Lizzie, if you don't bend down into it.' 'You'll take your eye out like that. The needle needs to come at you and over your shoulder, not away from you like you're doing.'

I don't see it yet but what I'll eventual realise is that he's training me for home service, for that's the only way out of the mills.

'You're ignorant on the fundaments,' he says. 'It's best not to show you know anything, they'll not stand for a know-all, but for the sake of your mind and the mind of your people, you should know the fundaments, every one should know the fundaments,' and then he starts pumping me on subjects I feel young yet for grasping.

I don't trust him at first, for there's one thing I do know for myself: there's always someone trying to improve you, especial if you're Irish. But over time I come to understand that Beloff is different from the higher-ups who pity you to the amount of a lecture. Over and above being a Jew, he's a separate species of man and fond of learning, and wants to pass it on, for he thinks that important in itself. He thinks learning alone can smarten you. He even thinks it's better than mint or land.

One day he notices my suspicions and he says to me, ‘What motivates me isn’t charity, Lizzie. Ask anyone who knows me, I don’t have a compassionate bone in my body. Nor am I looking to have power over you by making you a fool to myself. Believe what I say only when it agrees with the dictates of your own common sense. When it doesn’t, I want you to speak up, for perhaps there is intelligence you can give me in return,’ and that gives me pause to consider, and the fears I have of him turning me into a queer body like himself fade, and I begin to hearken proper.

He gives me many lessons. About the earth and the sun, and which goes around which. And about how to speak, like you don’t says ‘worser’ but ‘worse’, and unless you say it a hundred times a day till it comes out natural you’ll be put down as an unread and no notice will ever be taken of you. And about England and how it’s a place where the people spend too much time inside, thinking, and this gives them notions about themselves and sets them to believing they’re masters and can rule over other people who live in other places. And about the difference between the English and the Irish, how one are Protestants and have to choose between High and Broad and Low, and the other are Catholics, plain and simple, and slaves to the English, and will keep on being slaves until the Catholics from other places, Spain and that neighbourhood, come to free them.

A lot of what he says is thick-spread like this and hard to swallow, and I oftentimes feel like telling him that a Jew has no right to be talking about things that don’t concern him, and he’d better shut his trap in case any body hears and slaps it shut for him. The only thing that stops me is a feeling I have, strong and deep down, that liars don’t talk like him.

My last ever lesson with Beloff I remember like I had it yesterday.

‘Stick clear of the religions, Lizzie. There’ll come a time in your world employment when they’ll want to save your soul by making you read passages and live by rules written down. There’ll be little you can do to avoid it, you being the pauper and them being of the conviction that you’re such because you lack faith. You won’t have a say except to listen, but you shouldn’t let it in. Mouth the

words they ask you to speak, but don't put your believing in them, do you understand me? Learn the words but don't credit their meanings.'

It's the sad hour of a Saturday evening. When I finish putting this last bit of polish on the candlesticks, I'll have to cook his tea, then it'll be time to go back. I rub as slow as I can to stretch out the minutes.

'But I already have a religion,' I says. 'I even go to Mass for it.'

He's over by the fire, wrapped in the bed things. 'What matters your religion if it's the wrong one? They'll want to change it, and you should be ready for them.'

'Sounds like you've quarrels with the Protestants, Mr Beloff.'

'Yes and with your kind too. And my own kind most of all, make no mistake about it. Each as bad as the next, thinking they know the secret to living and dying, and fighting each other over it all the while.'

'But you obey the rules. You don't work on a Saturday.'

'Ignoramus girl. You mistake something born of blind conviction and something done out of mere habit.'

'You don't believe at all?'

'It's not a question of believing. It's about suspecting the ideas they're putting into your head. Always look at who is telling you something as much as what he's telling you.'

'What are you saying, Mr Beloff? I oughtn't hearken to someone if I don't like the look of him?'

'No, you should listen *more*. That's how you'll learn to be the good judge.'

I put the sticks I've shone back where he likes them—one on the windowsill, two on the table, the rest on the dresser by the pictures of his family—and put the water on for the potatoes, but low. If he keeps on like this it'll go past the hour for my leavetaking and that'll be grand by me, every minute away from Mary being a minute from the scourges saved. I peel with the blunt knife. Instead of bringing the fork and plate to the table together on the salver, I make trips back and forth.

'You can stay, young Lizzie, if it'll take the stones out of your shoes.'

'Mr Beloff?'

He takes the bite off his pipe, spits into the fire. ‘If it’s such a vexation for you to go back, you can remain.’

‘Where’d I sleep?’

He whirls round, looking horrored. ‘I said nothing about sleeping!’

‘Oh.’

He makes a gesture to say his heart is pierced by my look. ‘All right, all right, I suppose we could find something for you to lie on.’

I smile and put the bacon in to fry and, over the sizzle, try to comprehend my feelings.

I’m put on a mat in front of the fire with a rolled-up rug under my head and a coat thrown over.

‘How’s that?’ he says.

‘Warm enough,’ I says.

All night I keep my eyes closed but am kept alert by the expectation of a snore or a fart or any sign to show Beloff’s gone off into his slumbers so that I can go off myself without fretting about keeping him up with my own noises. But naught comes, bare even a breath. When I open my eye a slit and look through the dark, I can make him out on his back on the mattress, stiff and ironed out like a corpse.

It’s the first time in my life I don’t say my prayers.

As soon as there’s light I get up and make a new fire. I take out the ash and the night soils. Seeing the volume that comes out of the bucket, I realise I must have slept after all, for I didn’t hear Beloff getting up. I spend in the lane myself so as to leave the bucket empty. While I’m haunched over I watch the flapping of the oilskin in the window of the house opposite, which satisfies me and gives me no short measure of peace, it being early and there being no bodies yet risen to distract me.

Back inside, I’m surprised to find Beloff up and waiting for his breakfast.

‘Am I getting something for the extra day?’ I says.

He grumbles something about asking no questions till he’s had his coffee.

‘Where do you go to the Mass?’ he says once served. ‘I want you to take me.’

‘To Mass?’

‘That’s right.’

‘Do the Jews not have their own churches?’

‘They do but I want to go to yours. That’s the humour I’ve woken up to.’

On the road there, he must realise I’m not bringing him to my regular place, for I lead us out of the way, far from the passages and over past the lots. But he doesn’t let on or allow his good mood to change. He whistles through his lips and skips through the puddles, jumps over the lushed-out bodies sleeping on the road. When a scrawn of a cat comes out of a sprung door, he lifts it up and presents it to me for petting.

I’m having trouble finding the church I’m thinking about, for I’ve never stepped inside it but only wandered by. The third or fourth time we circle past the same court, Beloff stops and leans on the pig-pen that takes up most of it. From a window a bit of something is thrown and the animals snort and climb over each other to get it.

‘You know, Lizzie, most of the Jews who don’t eat pork don’t know why it shouldn’t be eaten, only it’s wrong to eat it. Do you see the lunacy of that?’

‘The only lunacy I see, Mr Beloff, is yours for the bacon.’

He laughs. ‘I’m no bigot, Lizzie. I don’t care where I get my meat, so long as I can get it. I often go and buy it without looking at what it is or how they’ve killed it, whether it has a seal or not. And why?’

I shrug.

‘Idiot girl. Because I don’t think it’s wrong. The Chinaman eats cats and doesn’t think *that* wrong. He’d be shocked and appalled if you told him it was. Does that make him bad and evil?’

When eventual I find the church, I’m appalled to see that, despite it being first Mass, it’s squeezed to bursting. Have we come on a feast day without my knowing? I go to stand at the back with the men who, hungover and coughing, have been pulled out of the beds by their women. Beloff is having none of that. He bends his arm out, puts my hand on the inside of his elbow and marches me up

to the top as if giving me away. I don't think my heart has ever beat so fast or my face taken in so much blood.

He genuflects. He kneels. He stands. He bows. The old beggar even clasps his hands and speaks out the prayers, word for effin word, and all I can think is 'Will this ever be over?' Then, just as I begin to see a light shine at the end, he joins the file of bodies going up, and my worst fears come to be.

'You oughtn't of taken the host,' I find the boldness to say on the walk back home.

'Why on earth not?' he says, putting on to be surprised by my displeasure.

'You're not a bit of a Catholic and you oughn't have.'

'Oh but Lizzie'—he's enjoying this, the hooer's donkey—'I was hungry.'

'You were making a mockery.'

'And do you see me burning up for it? Has the lightning come to strike me?'

'You're going to hell.'

'Which hell is that?'

'Whichever one'll have you.'

He shakes his head and chortles. 'Oh child of the Irish benighted—'

'Lizzie's my name. Lizzie Burns.'

'Well, Lizzie, it's time you grew up and climbed out of your swamp.'

Mary is waiting outside his door. She has a shawl dragged over her head and pulled across her nose against the cold. I'm almost glad to see her.

'How long have you been out here?' I says.

'Long enough,' she says, muffling through the cloth. 'Where were you? I was worried sick.'

'It's Sunday, young Mary,' Beloff breaks in. 'Where else would we be but at the Mass?'

Mary's hand comes out from under her coverings to bestow on me an almighty whack. The pain of it rings as far as my toes. Before this violence, I was resolved to leave Beloff, to skivvy no more for him, for he's a man with no respect to show for anything, but now I find myself conflicted.

‘And you, Sir,’ Mary says, pointing a finger at him, ‘You ought be ashamed of yourself.’

Beloff doesn’t look the slightest bit fussed. ‘Sister child, why don’t you come in and we’ll boil up some tea, get the cold out of those limbs?’

‘Tea? Here’s your tea, you dirty Jewish.’

She frees her mouth of its veil and spits on the ground by his feet. Turns on her heel and storms away.

When I leave I know I’ll never be coming back, so I stay a while drinking tea and looking into the fire, and another while frying up the midday dinner.

Says he: ‘Don’t look so hard at it or it’ll turn.’

When it begins to darken he tells me he has a card party to go to and it’s time I faced what I had coming. I hate him then and wish him dead. How dare he send me away when it’s his own hide that ought be tanned? All the same, I know that when Mary comes at me, it will be pleading his honour I’ll be doing.

XI

With Radical Chains

‘Here! Spiv! Pumps!’

Five in the p.m. of another day and I’m feeling compunctions about being over-hard. Five in the p.m. and, again, I decide it’s time for a fresh start. Five in the p.m. and I call them to the morning room.

Pumps arrives, her hand in her mouth as usual, finger rubbing tooth. ‘Are we expecting?’ she says, making sheep’s eyes at the tea things I’ve put out, the cake I’ve cut.

‘Nay,’ I says, ‘I thought we’d have a sneaky tuck-in, the three of us.’ I smile —muster all I can—and spread butter onto the slices and put them onto the plates. ‘With all the running round we do, it’s rare we take the time to sit down and have a chat like us girls ought do together.’

Spiv appears in the doorway. Folds her arms across. ‘I made that cake for Sunday.’

‘You did?’ I take the prize-slice with the cherry for myself. ‘Well, no harm, can’t you make another?’ She opens to give out, but I’m faster: ‘And aren’t there always the shops? The world wouldn’t stop without you.’

I pour. Spiv perches, ready to jump up and gainsay any involvement if it all turns out to be a rig. The more effort she spends keeping the saucer from falling off her knee, the more figetted she gets and the more tea that spills over. Pumps, on the other side, slouches like it was onto cushions she was born. A parish pip warming her hands, she makes, the way she’s holding her cup underneath.

‘Now, girls,’ I says, ‘I’ve been thinking. It’s nigh time we looked at your half day.’

Pumps takes her bit of cake up and bites into it. ‘The half day’s fine as it is,’ she says, wet crumbs flying. ‘Why fix something that isn’t broke?’

‘For goodness sake, child,’ I says, ‘If from time to time you hearkened before you spoke, you might actual learn something. You’ve neither of you to worry. I don’t want to take any of your time away. It’s *more* time I want to give you. An extra hour seems fair to me for all the work you’ve been doing, helping us settle in and the rest. Believe it or not, it’s already two months since we came to live under this roof, and that makes a whole quarter of a year, and it’s not always been roses, I know. There have been high emotions and some bad scenes. I own I’ve not been the easiest, this being a new arrangement for me. But now I want to wash the plate clean. I want us to be friends.’

Glad of myself, I push my cake in and wash it down, press my thumb onto my plate to collect what’s fallen. We all of us ought remember that, though it’s no small task to be large and humble, the pleasures got from it make it worth the trouble.

Spiv clatters her cup down and narrows across at me. ‘Pumps is right, the half day ought stay put as it is.’

‘But—’ My tea goes down the wrong way. ‘But Spiv, *cough cough,* don’t you understand, *cough,* I’m trying to *give* you something? A reward for your services?’

She curls at me. ‘The name’s Camilla, Ma’am.’

Lord have mercy, not this old bone.

‘Your name’s what I call it, Spiv’—how swift a rising ire can gulf the finer feelings—’And it’d do you no harm to remember there’s girls who get only an afternoon a month, if they’re given pause at all.’

As if to remind me of the times, she throws her eyes up. ‘Adding an hour’d be no help, Ma’am. With the lunch, I can’t get out before two, and if I come back after seven there’d be every thing still to do for the morning. It’d make Thursdays unpossible.’

Camilla Barton, Camilla Barton, it’s higher than your hole you’re fartin’.

‘All I want,’ I says, putting the rage into the stirring of a fresh cup, ‘All I want is for us to be a bit closer. I’m not asking us to be bosom familiars or any such thing. I understand you must live according to your age and have your own secrets. I don’t expect you to have older heads than you do, nor give out all their contents. But wouldn’t it be right to share ourselves out a touch, to take our spare time together now and then, to do things more like a family? I’m sure Frederick would like to see it that way. You know how he hates ill-feeling in the house.’

‘Listen, Aunt Liz—’ Pumps puts on that voice she’s learnt from listening to the Men in the parlour, that *reasonable* voice they like to use. If I wasn’t busy with my handkerchief getting a splash of milk off my sleeve, I’d flatten my hand and silence it that way. ‘Aunt Liz, it’s very nice of you to offer, and we love Frederick right well and want him happy in every feature, but I’m telling you, you wouldn’t like what we do. We run about and get up to young tricks, it wouldn’t fit you right. You’re a bit past it, if you don’t mind me saying.’

This brings a new rush of gall to my embittered mood. Lucky, she’d be, at my age, to have hair half as black, not a grey strand on show, and no lady do-naught in London has it so shiny and thick. ‘Mind yourself, Mary Ellen Burns,’ I says. ‘If you’re let out at all it’s because I licence it. And if you’re *here* instead of freezing your *derry-air* on a Manchester street corner, it’s also because I licence it,’ and she knows it good and she knows it well, which is why the colours come up her face and she withers back into her cap.

By now our little Burns dramas must be as familiar to Spiv as any she can recall from her own childhood, but I don’t think it’s in her natural nature to be generous in her comparisons, or to own that her bad feelings towards us might

actual be the flutterings of envy, on account of being so far from her own kind and having so little opportunity to quarrel with them. So she sits through it silent and judgeful, and when it's over and Pumps has begged her pardons, she stands up with a sigh and starts to clear.

'Mrs Burns, if I may,' she says, licking a blot of icing that gets on her finger while scraping.

'What is it, Spiv?'

'Mrs Burns—' She doesn't look at me but between her fingers, in those warm spaces where the mites sometimes gather, for any icing she might have missed. 'Mrs Burns, can't you go out with Mrs Marx and her intimates? Isn't she forever inviting you? And wouldn't you enjoy that much the better?'

'Put those plates down, Spiv.'

She gives me a wary look.

'I said put them down. I'll do them.'

Once free of her burden, she bobs a curtsy.

'Now get out of my sight. You too, Pumps.'

Heads bowed, they hare for the door.

'You both ought be married by now,' I call after them. 'You ought be married and not here bothering me.'

I'm left feeling too much to move. A cruddy humour has come and teased away my goodwill, the hopes I had of refreshing the heavy airs in this wretched house. Of course, the proper thing now would be to turn my affliction to good, to rise and come over it with busyness and tasks. *Trial and emotion strengthen the constitution and ought be cheerful borne*, is how the saying goes. But to look at the half-eaten cake and the pool of tea in Spiv's saucer—just to *look* at them—tires me right out, weighs me to the carpet.

Jenny says that the Revolution will better our fare. That it will pay us for our home tasks and make us self-supporters. And I'm ready to put my doubts in a drawer and believe it isn't a swindle; I'm ready to follow the wind. But what she's not saying—what I've to keep to my own sorry self—is that the pace the

Revolution's going, with the comrades divided on themselves and squabbling over trifles, we'll not live to enjoy it.

I stay in my chair like this till I hear Frederick's step coming down the stairs. Of a sudden I'm charged with a desire to squeal on them. I must let it out, I think. I must reveal to him how they really are before it burns me away. A fire lights in my chest and roars in my ears. 'We could do without them,' I'll say. 'We could live alone, just you and me, and get by regular well.'

I hear his feet hitting the tiles in the hall. I stand and take up a stack of plates and hold them in front so that, if he comes in on me, I'll be seen to be doing something. He shuffles about outside the door. Picking things up and knocking things over. Giving out German curses.

'*Shy-sir*,' he's saying, '*Shy-sir, shy*—'

A moment and he bursts in, the skirts of his coat flying. 'Ah, here you are,' he says. 'Have you seen a letter lying around?' He spies over the tables and sideboards, turns over the clock on the chimneypiece, peers under the mats and the doilies. I can't work out if it's me who's looking slow or him who's moving train-speed. 'I put it on the hall table to take to Karl, but someone seems to have moved it.'

By his tone I know he's holding down a temper. I decide now to be the wrong minute to come at him with the house doings. 'I've not seen any letter, my love,' I says, putting down the plates to help in the search. 'What did it look like?'

He turns to look hard at me, the conch shell in one hand and the ballerina figurine in the other. 'It looked like a letter, Lizzie.'

Folding open the doors to the parlour, he has to fix his elbow to his side to keep the papers under his arm from falling. I go to help him. 'Here, give me those.'

'*Nine*—' He puts them down on the writing desk. 'Leave them there, do not touch them.' He pulls the doors open the rest of the way and goes through, begins tearing at every blessed thing: the plants, the vases, the albums, the pressing books, the sewing box.

I sigh and follow him in. Lift the newspaper off the seat of the armchair. 'Is this it?'

'Which? *Ya*, thank the devil.' He whips it up. 'I wish people would keep their hands off things.' He puts it under his arm where he had the other papers before. 'Right, Lizzichen, I'm off'—hand brushing light on my arm, whiskers tickling my cheek—'I'm with Karl for dinner tonight.'

'But I've ordered fowl. Spiv is going to roast it.'

'Have it yourselves. Or I can send Jenny down to help you.'

'Nay, nay. I'm sure the girls will be happy with an extra helping.'

'Super, then.'

'Don't forget these.' I give him the papers from the writing desk.

'Ah *ya*, thank you. *Bis bald*.'

I bide till he's halfways out the door. 'Oh but Frederick—?'

He twists and looks at me over his collar.

I point to his shoes, all scuffed and muddied. 'You're not going out with those looking like that, are you?'

He looks down and curls his toes up. 'I don't have a clean pair left. These will have to do.'

Being so peculiar about his appearance—his lines he likes straight and his colours in tune—I thought he'd be pleased to have his eye drawn to the lapse, but I see now I've only nettled him further. A flush comes to his cheeks, and his response is mottled by it, and it makes me feel down-low and contrite, for I remember now that I promised to polish them yesterday, and it's only on account of his high manners he's not mentioning it. There's people, I know, that write down their tasks in a ledger, and the hours for doing them, but I count on my own brains, and I'm not a machine, time and times there's things that slip through.

'Come on then,' I says, 'Take them off and I'll do them this minute. I won't have Jenny saying I send you out on your business looking like a rural.'

'I have a cab waiting. They are fine as they are.'

'Sit down there now. Flick of a lamb's tail and they'll be done.'

I draw him over to the chair by the occasional table and put him into it. He moans. Throws his papers down. Takes out his watch and studies it. But he stays sat all the same.

I'm about to ring the bell for Pumps to bring the polishing box when the earwigger herself comes running in with it. 'Here we go, Uncle Angel,' she says, and kneels in front of him. 'Give me your foot here and we'll get those spick and span for you.'

The bell-cord still tight in my grip, I glower down at her. 'I'll do that, Pumps, thank you. I'm sure you're busy at other things.'

'Not at all,' she says. 'I can't think of any task that would better merit my attending.' She smiles up at Frederick and takes his foot onto her pinny. He meets her mooning face and—begad the weakness of men!—his arrangement softens.

'Pumps,' I says, coming to stand over her, 'This is something I've promised Mr Engels to do and I'd like to do it.'

'For God sake, Lizzie,' he says, chucking an arm at me, 'Let the girl do it.'

I'm still holding the newspaper I took from the armchair. I slap it now against my skirts and take the chair on the other side of the table. All right, let her do it, but she'll need watching over.

While Pumps works, he fans himself with a magazine, sending the smell of spices across. 'What would I do without you, Pumps?' he says. 'You're a good girl, you're learning well.'

She looks up at him, and they beam at each other, and it's enough to make the juices rise from your stomach.

He lets her work for as long as he has the patience. 'I'm going to be late,' he says when it's final exhausted. 'Are we nearly there?'

'Nigh on, Uncle Angel,' says Pumps. A few more lashes of the brush, and she lifts his foot down to the carpet. 'There we are. Good as new.'

'Thank you*, mine leebling*,' he says. 'They look great.' He leans over and kisses her on the cheek.

She reddens and bows down, hides her face under the fringe of her bonnet. ‘You’re some fine charmer, Uncle Angel,’ she says, putting the tubs and the brushes back in the box.

He tips his head and grins. Gets up and stretches. Puts his papers under his arm. ‘Don’t wait up!’

He’s gone—*slam!*—and I’m left with the task of bursting the little grubber’s head, though I find now I don’t have the energy for it. She mutters something about clemming for a smoke, and I let her go.

I gather up my ends and make the window in time to see Frederick climb into his cab. But there’s only a flash of him to catch, and it strikes a chill in me, the fact that I see less of him now I’m living with him than in Manchester when he had us separate; the fact that we were better off the old way, better friends to each other. And there’s other facts, too, that come dashing towards me like the rain against the glass, but I turn from them and come away, for I’d hate for him to look back and see me here, watching at his coat-tails.

December

XII

The Holy Family

Like flies on gristle, the mad bodies of London swarm the Zoo. A thicker brew of hatters in this corner of the Park than in the whole rest of the city. In the parrot house, weird old women trill and chirp and throw buttons to the birds. In the aquarium, gents softened by idlement leer into the murk and, by the looks of it, dream of sprouting fins of their own. The reptile house, the giraffe house, the camel house, the pelican house: little asylums, all, for those nuts with the shillings to spare for the turnstiles; wealth enough to be separate and peculiar, the busy world not daring to put on them or hinder their temper. It makes me queasy to be here, in and among them, and I worry that Tussy's love of the place is a sign she's headed the same way.

'I beg you, Auntie Lizzie,' she said. 'Come with me to see the moving crib.'

'The what now?'

'The moving crib. Every year before Christmas they build a stable and fill it with exotic animals. And instead of statues, they have real people playing the holy family.'

Am I the only me who sees it?

I agreed to come, against my own wishes, for I was afraid that alone she'd be approached, or in her innocence would do the approaching herself and, by there, get herself into situations. I'm so fond of the poor child, I'd hate to hear of her tricked or fouled. 'All right, all right, the Zoo it is,' I said, and no sooner was it out of my mouth than I began to look forward to the hours spent away from the house, and to the hand-holding and the secret whispers. 'We'll bring a picnic, make a day of it,' I said.

But, of course, by the time today arrives around, bright and free of rain, she's assembled herself an entire army of keepers, in the middle of which I vanish, bare noticed.

Frederick leads us down the paths with the confidence of a man who has come to see this Christmas spectacle before. With his women, it's probable; the ones he fears will go to the bad if they're not given proper distraction. He's dressed light for the freezing weather, in a frock coat built for September. Beside it, Karl's broadcloth suit, buttoned up to the whiskers, appears a solemn demand for respect: from the season, from the people, from the animals the same.

Scattered around are the comrades Tussy has convinced to come. One of them, a young strap I don't have a name for, looks to have tied invisible twine from his sleeve to Janey's, so firm does he stay by her, so little does he let her drift from his air. To watch it makes my heart sink, for I've seen it before, the clever and quiet middle girl dashing into the arms of a rake, not for love or money but to avoid remaining at home as help to failing parents. My wager is she'll be engaged before we even realise.

Two others, old enough to know better, are making circles around Tussy like stalking dogs. She puts a sweat on them by darting from cage to cage, pointing at the fur and feathers, lecturing on the ins and outs of the mating business, and now, for breaks, insisting they repeat the English names of the beasts till they can say them proper and with no foreign slurring.

Pumps is climbing a railing to get a better view of something. I watch her and worry that I've made a mistake by allowing her to come while keeping Spiv at home. She's getting used to the little privileges that come with having Burns in her blood and it's hard to know whether that's right or wrong.

Jenny is far off with the women Jaclard and Goegg. I'm being tanned by her, I can tell. Every time I come near her, she turns her head towards the bars and puts on to be interested in the life going on behind them. And her face: a window once wide open, now closed fast. Her behaviour is no mystery to me, of course. She's acting like she is because I refuse her invitations. Because I don't call to see her. Because I've not turned out the way she'd planned.

Walking alone, I follow the company into the tunnel. Our noses closed against the reek, our eyes lowered against the loiterers in the shadows, we soon come out by the deer paddock.

'This way,' Frederick calls out, and marches us towards a stable where a small crowd has gathered. A collection of forlorn-looking boys in sandals and robes and false beards are stood, shivering, around a cot lined with straw. The Virgin Mary has blue paint around her eyes and red on her cheeks and a shadow where her fluff has been sheered. The baby Jesus is a doll in winding sheets. The wise men have gold slippers and blackened faces. Scratching around the sad scene is a collection of impossible animals. Trunks, tusks, horns, hooves: it's all there, a ridiculous array. Saddest and loneliest of all is an animal half-zebra and half-donkey standing on three legs in the corner of the stall. Tussy lures it over with some grass she's pulled up from someplace.

'I consider that nothing living is alien to me,' she says when, final, it takes her offering.

It chews. Flaps its lips. Trundles back to its place. Lifts its tail and pisses a gush.

'What *is* that thing?' I says.

'It's called a quagga,' she says, reading from the plaque.

Fact: the hippopotamus is the only thing worth the fare.

Frederick suggests taking tea in the rooms by the bowling green, and we agree.

'Everyone, follow me!'

Jenny takes Tussy by the hand, steers her onto Frederick's arm, leaving her admirers to tussle over Karl's attentions. Karl humours them the length of the llama pen (it's Tussy, again, who tells us what they are), before breaking away and coming across to me.

'Do you mind, Lizzie? Can I beg the favour of a word?'

'Of course, Karl. What can I do for you?'

He applies just enough tug on my arm to draw me to the back of the pack. I watch Tussy move further and further away and, trapped like a bird, curse myself for having left the nest at all.

‘As you can probably see,’ he says, ‘My wife is not in the best of shape.’

I look at Jenny giggling onto Frederick’s shoulder. ‘I’ve seen her worse.’

Karl can’t hide his surprise. ‘I must object, Lizzie. Please do take into consideration that she likes to put on a good face. I can assure you the woman is __’

Suffering. I get it. The lot of the thoroughbred.

‘My wife loves company,’ he says, ‘Even when the season is over and the days are shorter, she likes to receive guests and to get out as much as possible. True, she is beginning to understand that she must cosset herself a little more and not try to make every single event. But, on the other side, when she spends too much time at home she becomes, well, she becomes weary and crabbed, and her temper fires quick at the trigger. Like one of these animals here.’ He looks around and rubs the back of his hand in a fretful way. ‘Please do call on her, Lizzie. She would benefit greatly from your company. We all would.’

‘I’ll do the best I can, Karl. I’ve a house to run.’

He turns and, with desperate eyes, searches me through.

‘I’m sorry, Karl. What I mean to say is, it would be a pleasure. You don’t have to worry. I’ll make sure Jenny is well looked after for the winter.’

He sighs and smiles and lands one on my cheek. ‘Thank you, Lizzie. I just wanted to mention it.’

‘Of course, Karl. Any time.’

The bogwork done, he brightens. ‘And now we have Christmas to look forward to, don’t we? We’re delighted you will be joining us. We are inviting all the comrades who have no families to go to. Making it special for them. I guarantee a ruckus. I know Jenny will love to have you there. And Nim will appreciate the extra help from Pumps and Camilla.’

He grins and pecks me again, his beard dipping down into my collar and tickling my neck, and like a ninny I let out a titter, but inside there’s a fury bubbling, fired by the feeling that, once again, I’ve been tricked.

‘What’s this about Christmas in the Marxes?’ I says to Frederick when I get him alone later.

‘Didn’t I tell you?’

‘Nay, you’ve didn’t. As usual I’ve to find out from the wrong people.’

‘Are you angry?’

‘What do *you* think?’

‘I thought you’d like the idea. Less work for you.’

‘Oh, by the wilful ass of Mary and Joseph.’

‘You don’t want to do it?’

‘Of course I don’t want to do it! Our first Christmas in London? Spent with Jenny and the whole wide world? Why can’t we have it alone, as a family, quiet-like?’

‘All right, if that’s what you want, that’s what we’ll do.’

‘Nay, it’s too late now. You’ve already committed us.’

‘We can change our plans. I’m sure Jenny would understand.’

‘Nay, we can’t do that.’

‘Why not?’

‘Blessed be, Frederick, for a man who claims to know the destiny of mankind, you understand diddly-dick about the laws of womenfolk.’

Where the greatest crime is to have your own mind.

XIIII

An Irish Lie

I know I ought to go up to her. There’s things she’ll want me to do. A list. To buy and to do. But I can’t rouse myself to it. Tomorrow the spirit might be in me, but not today. Today my duty is to my own. My own place. My own house. And Lord knows it’s long overdue a laundry wash.

‘Frederick, I’m going to need your help.’

He’s bent over his desk, scribbling. ‘Uh-huh,’ he says without looking up.

Sighing, I get down and check under his chair for slut's wool. 'It's going to be a busy day, Frederick.'

'I understand. If you need a hand'—he waves the free one in the air over his head—'All you have to do is ask.'

'Well, that's what I'm here doing, Frederick. I'm asking.'

'Ah.' He turns his eyes up and looks at me through his fallen fringe.

'It's laundry day,' I says, 'The last before Christmas. And I've no intention of putting it off or getting the woman in. If we're to get it done before suppertime, we'll all have to pitch in our bit.'

'What do you want me to do?'

'Follow me.'

'Now?'

'Take that plate and those dirty glasses with you.'

Down in the scullery Spiv is bent over the washing book.

'Sir,' she says, 'What are *you* doing here?'

'He's going to help,' I says.

He winks.

She looks him up and down, a lick of scorn, before getting back to her list.

'Right, Frederick,' I says, 'You can start by sorting the pile out into aprons, collars, shirts, body linen—and what's else?—nightclothes, pinnies and petticoats.'

'I am not certain I—'

'Any muslins, coloured cottons or woollens, leave to me. Unusual looking stains, put them at one side and I'll have a look.'

'But, Lizzie, I have not yet eaten lunch.'

'You'll be having a big dinner.'

'I do not think I will make it that far alive.'

I take the old cheese from his plate (he's still holding it, of course, for he has no idea where to put it down) and push it into a bit of yesterday's bread. 'There, that'll keep you going.'

The aggrieved look he pulls doesn't prevent him from stuffing it in.

'Spiv, where's Pumps?'

She nods towards the storeroom.

I shake my head, not grasping.

'Hiding,' she says.

'Oh by the burning hole of Moses.' I pull on the storeroom door but it doesn't come. 'Pumps, let go of the handle.' I try again but it stands with. 'Pumps!' I bang on it with a fist. 'Get you the blazes out of there!'

The silence of a cringing animal.

'Mr Engels is here, do you want him to see you acting the brat?'

A yelp, the sound of things falling from the shelves. The door gives, swings open.

'Git!' I says.

She stays cowering in the gloom.

'I said, git!'

Keeping herself as far from me as the area allows, she creeps into the light. A scarf is tied round her face to cover her nose and mouth.

'What in the name of—' I tear it down: a line of blisters across the top of her lip.

'She's been at the arsenic again,' says Spiv.

'Shut up!' Pumps screams.

Spiv mimics her—*Shut up!*—before turning to Frederick. 'She uses it to take her runner off.'

Middle-chew, Frederick lets his mouth fall open, crumbs and wet bits falling. He puts a hand to his own whiskers, hides them away, as if they too were in danger. You forget they can be a shock, the home doings, when you're not used to them.

Pumps runs crying from the room. I follow her out. 'Spiv, I'll deal with you later.'

She shrugs, dips her pen in the pot, scribbles something down.

'Frederick, when you're done separating, take the sheets out from soaking and rinse them. Spiv'll show you how. We'll be right down.'

He swallows and gawps like a man out of his depth, a man sunk too deep.

I find Pumps upstairs, slumped and sobbing. ‘The consequences of vanity,’ I says.

She buries her weeping puss deeper into the crook of her elbow.

‘Shall I call Dr Allen?’

She shakes her head.

‘We’ll dress it, then, and you’ll be right. I hope you’ve learnt your lesson this time.’

She lifts her head and wipes her face.

‘Come now, Pumps. It’s not the end of the world.’

Laying on liberal with the sniff and blubber, she lets herself be led to my room. There I put a tincture on the wound that leaves a purple stain all about her mouth and cheeks. It looks a fright, from three paces like a regular mutton chop, so I allow her to put the scarf back on, but only as far as the nose and not over it; I’ll not have her going around looking like a sneak-thief. I tell her where I’ve hid the cake and send her down to it.

‘Get it into you quick and don’t dawdle, there’s work to be done.’

Left alone, I stop a minute at my dressing table. Take my favourite brush from the tin. Run it through once. Pull a handful round. Start at the ends. There’s relief in this stolen moment, and I’m certain there’d be pleasure too, if the tart I baked yesterday hadn’t just now crowded in on my mind. I wince remembering how Spiv and Pumps looked at it coming out of the oven, hard as stone from too much rolling.

I put the brush down. It’s not the big but the petty things that keep us from sitting. It’s against the little mistakes that we bear on, on, on. Through the mornings of upped nerves and wasted breaths, the breakfasts warmed with a sup to stead us. On into the lonely lunches and the afternoons of blaspheming in the mind and reflecting on what can’t be helped. On across the halls and landings, the seeing-afters and well-doings, the fires and folds. The book room. The cook room. The privy. The parlour. On and on and into the bedroom again, where again we pale at the filth of the windows and the chimneypiece caked and the mirror smeared, and we catch the cut of ourselves, nuddy but for our workaday

dress, head bare of a cap and in want of attention, exhausted and deserving of a sit-down, if only we could learn proper how to air the dough.

Back downstairs, Spiv has the possing stick and is beating the linen. I send her out to make a start on the supper—I suppose we can't have Frederick starving—and I give the job over to the man himself. He takes the stick without complaint. But then he starts to enjoy himself too much, whacking at things and creating a mess, and making lewd gestures to put Pumps into convulsions, so I put the two of them to shave the soap and do it myself.

We take turns rubbing in the jelly and throwing the water. I bide till the soda is done before coming away to the kitchen to check on Spiv, leaving them alone to do the blue. When I come back some minutes later, I see they've come round to be on the same side of the copper, and are stood close enough to hold the holy host between their hips, three hands in a line down the stirring pole—hers, his, hers—and for an awful minute I'm reminded of himself and Mary, standing in that boat in the river, the hold of the oar shared between them, him showing her how to push off.

I elbow between them and look down into the pot. 'Have you mixed it well through? If there's streaks it'll be your head, Pumps.'

After a minute, I take her off to the kitchen to dab the woollens and silks. 'Start with this light conduct and you'll always be taken light. Easy to put on, easy to cast off.' I leave her there to sulk.

Back in the scullery, I tell Frederick to follow me to the garden with the load, for there's a strong breeze and still an hour or two of good winter sun left in the day.

'I'm sorry about my niece, Frederick,' I says when the largest sheets are up and hiding us from the house.

'She is certainly a personality,' he says.

'Do you find her handsome?'

'Lizzie!'

I snatch at his sleeve. 'She's a young thing yet. I'll not have her meddled.'

Startled, he steps back, tugs at his arm to free it. 'Lizzie, I am appalled.' He looks about as if waking up in a place he doesn't recognise. 'Do you need me for anything else?'

'Nay, go on.'

He shakes his head and marches back inside.

'Don't disappear, Frederick,' I call after him. 'We'll need you for the flatirons.'

Is there a loneliness more lonely than mistrust?

Boating on the river was his idea. He comes back to Manchester from the Continent full of them. His first, straight off the boat, is to take up with Mary again, to take up with her as if no time has passed to make him wiser, though in fact it's been a full eight years. *Eight years* he's stayed away, writing his books and chasing the great revolutions around Europe. And for the same length she has lived here, as she has always done, a tiny cog in the Manchester machine, only now with her heart locked in a secret box that she believes only he can open. And here he returns, the prodigal son, to run his father's mill—the job that family duty more than poverty has forced him to resume—and he comes to Mary with his idea, his big idea, which is to have her again as his woman. And what does she do, only spring open with gratitude. And from there are born further ideas. To travel to Ireland on holidays. To move in together. To one day marry…

But first there's the river: what will be Frederick and Mary's first daytime outing as a reunited pair. They've been seeing each other as they always did, at night and behind curtains, but now they've decided go broad with themselves, and they insist I come along (not for my good company, mind, but to take some of the philistine gape off them). I've vowed never to play the goose for them again, not since last week, when they dragged me around every music hall in Ancoats and then ditched me in a hush-shop to go up the stairs together, so I tell them I'll come only if I can bring a friend.

'Which *friend*?' says Mary.

‘Lydia,’ I says. ‘Lydia from the carding room.’

Says Lydia: ‘Not a chance in highest hell.’

But she shows mercy when I grease her with the promise of beer and a free lunch. ‘He’ll pay for everything,’ I says.

‘Is it right, though?’ she says. ‘Going about with yer man?’

‘It’s himself who wants it, Lydia. And Mr Ermen knows about it and can’t do anything. Isn’t it a free country? Don’t worry, you won’t lose your place, you have my oath.’

She thinks on it a long time. ‘All right,’ she says ‘I’ll do it.’ But only if she can bring her sweetheart Jamie. Which puts me right back in the muck. There’s no road left for me but to tell Lydia to bring someone else, a man, to even the numbers.

She brings Moss. His real name is Donal Óg but they call him Moss because of the fair hair that grows in small clumps on his cheeks, never quite joining to become the full beard. It’s a name born out of envy, of course; a name devised by men who won’t ever look half as handsome as him. He’s a dyer at the same place our own father used to work. We once met at a wedding in the Grapes, and I’ve noticed him on other occasions since, but in truth I could whistle down the wind for all I feel for him. His fifteen shillings would never get you anyplace.

We meet at the park gates. Moss is late but he comes with flowers.

‘Picked not bought,’ Mary whispers.

Frederick puts himself between Jamie and Moss, takes their elbows. ‘They’re called Pomona Gardens after the Roman goddess of fruit trees and orchards,’ he says and leads them ahead towards the water.

The men made themselves neat, but put beside Frederick they seem but cadgers, their efforts to spruce and shine themselves only making them look wretched, as if they’ve come straight from the early house. Understanding this, and prickled by Frederick’s high talk, Jamie flashes back and gives a face. Lydia and Mary trade tittles. Moss understands the rareness of the occasion—it’s not every day you’re put level with the powers—and acts the brown-noser, looking to where Frederick points and nodding along to whatever he’s told, the effin eejit.

I look down at my flowers. Not bought and looking beaten. But fair's fair, Mary, he'd have had to walk out to the fields to find them.

We spread the rug while Frederick goes to talk to the boatmen about renting a boat.

'Don't come with us,' says Mary when we're sitting. 'Let me go out alone with him. Say you're scared of drowning or something and you'd prefer to watch from here.'

The men shrug. Lydia winks. I look daggers.

'I got us a good deal,' says Frederick when he comes back. 'Two hours for only a little more than the price of one.' He looks thrilled with himself. 'It's always worth your while to bargain.'

They nod. I pick at the grass.

Mary gets up and takes his hand, makes a show of dragging him away to the banks.

'Aren't you coming?' he calls back to us.

'You two go on and have a turn,' says Lydia. 'We'll join you in a bit.'

Jamie moves to take Mary's place on the rug to be closer to Lydia. In the fuss of arses and limbs, I stretch my legs and spread out my dress, leaving only the corner for Moss. He doesn't seem to care. He takes two bottles from the basket and walks on his knees into the sun. There he rolls up his sleeves to the shoulder and his breeches to the knee, and puts himself out to bask. He's watched by the people drinking tea at the little tables under the creepers. Further down river, there's a spot where the men swim in the next-to-nuddy and the women take off their boots and show their shins, but we're not there now; we're *here*.

'Piss-artist,' goes Jamie, as if to say he himself is the kind that stays covered if there's ladies about and drinks only what he's offered or can afford.

Lydia is glad to gob the bait. 'One beer goes further in a poor family than two in an oiler like him.' Her smile is crooked. His is cruel. Mine is faint-livered and craven, for though I want naught from Moss and wouldn't be happy if folk put me together with him, I do hate to hear a bested man drubbed further. He's had it harder than most, I've heard, a father that ill-used him and kept him from his meals, and he's turned out a lovely looker and kind enough, considering.

‘Moss,’ I says, putting the sandwiches on a plate, ‘Come and have something to eat.’

‘In a minute,’ he says without turning his face from the heat.

For a time then there’s silence, just the flies and the moving water, and for another time we play a game where we guess what dodge Mary is going to try next to make Frederick handle her. Rock the boat? Splash the water? Grab the oar? When we tire of this, we turn our attention back to Moss.

‘You’ll get burnt,’ I says. ‘Come back into the shade.’

‘I’m grand,’ he says.

‘Arrah come on, Moss,’ says Jamie. ‘We’re missing you here. Come and tell us one of your stories from Ireland.’

‘I’ll do no such thing, I’m fine where I am.’

‘Arrah Moss, don’t be like that,’ says Lydia.

‘I’ll be how I like.’

‘Leave him be,’ I says. ‘Isn’t he grand where he is?’

I bring him a beer and a sandwich.

‘*Guh rev meela,* lovely Lizzie,’ he says and gives me his teeth. White and strong, they are, the ones they haven’t been knocked out. He bites the sandwich, takes a gulp, then puts the bottle and what’s left of the bread onto the grass and rolls onto his side as if to sleep. I pick up the old bottles and bring them back to the basket.

‘I’ll tell you what then,’ says Jamie once I’m settled, ‘*I’ll* tell one of Moss’s stories.’

‘Go on,’ says Lydia, nudging him, ‘Go on, tell us.’

‘Oh Christ, Jamie, spare us,’ I says.

‘Lizzie!’ says Lydia, ‘Remember yourself! We’re only here for you. Doing you a good turn.’

He tells a story of Moss when he was a boy back in Tipperary. How one day at the river—a river like this one only called the Ara—he had his clothes robbed and had to walk home stitchless except for the bit of sack he picked up to cover his vitals. It takes Jamie an age to tell it, going into all the particulars about Tipperary town and who did the robbing and how, and making sure to mention

that Moss already had clumps of hair growing up and over himself even though he wasn't yet ten.

I watch Moss through the telling. He doesn't show himself to be hearkening. He doesn't kick up or cut in. Doesn't move at all, except to swat a wasp or scratch his tummy. It must be he knows Jamie's jealous. It must be he knows Jamie would take on all of his troubles if it meant being a stunner the same. So he turns the deaf ear.

But when Jamie is over and Lydia has balled out her laughs, and when there's been pause enough for a bit of guilt to be felt for telling another man's tale, Moss does get up and come over.

'You didn't tell the end of it,' he says, dropping his empty onto the rug and rummaging in the basket for another. 'What you've told is only the beginning.'

He keeps us biding while he drinks from the new one, and then while he swallows and wipes and staggers over the lean on the tree. When final he gets round to it, I can't help but think he's putting on to be tipsier than he is, for the scene it makes.

How he tells it, when he got home from the river, starkers as he was, his mother wouldn't open to him, the news of his shame having reached her before.

'Off with you and find your father,' she called at him through the door. 'If the sight of you doesn't bring him home, Christ only knows what will.'

Knowing she'd not be talked round, he set off on a tour of the drinking houses and, by the time he'd found the one holding his father, the whole of Tipp was laughing at him. His father himself was laughing till he understood it was his own son that had come through the doors. And when he understood this, he was quick to turn the laughing to his favour, the cute hooer, by keeping on laughing and making a song and dance of ordering his son a spirit from the bar.

'Give the boy something to warm him,' he said. 'Can't you see he's half-froze?'

To the delight of his intimates, he gave Moss his shirt for the walk home.

'A double act! There's a pair of you in it now!'

Some sight they were on the roads, father bare of chest and son bare of leg, the two of them three sheets to the wind. Moss—watching his father wave at the

people who turned to mock, listening to how his father caught their sly sniggers and threw them back as heartful bellows—began to feel light, near happy, and well nigh forgot what he was going home to receive.

His father's high mood vanished when the door of the homestead was thrown closed. But when Moss looked at his father, he saw that it wasn't only his humour that was changed but something else too. What it was, his hair had gone white. White complete. Some time between the pub and the house, he'd lost all the colour out of his locks. His father's hand was raised to start the thrashing but, seeing how Moss was looking at him, not with fear but with gaping disbelief, he broke off and went to check himself in his shaving mirror. Being as vain as he was handsome, he thought the thing was lying, and he put his fist into it. Then he pulled it out of the wall and used it on Moss.

'That's how I got these scars here,' Moss says, opening his shirt and taking it down to show his neck and shoulders and back.

I turn away. On the other side of the green, at the little tables, people are peering out from under their hats. 'Cover yourself up,' I says.

He obeys. Puts his hands in his pockets. Spits in the grass. 'I'm going for a jimmy-riddle.'

We watch him go off towards the bushes. A fine figure, no question, but it's his own fault everybody knows his trials.

'Do you even think he's *from* Tipperary?' I says.

Jamie and Lydia shrug together.

While he's gone, Frederick and Mary bring the boat to the banks and beckon us to join them.

'You two go on,' I says. 'I'll bide here for Moss.'

I'm still here biding when the four get back.

'Where is he?' says Jamie.

'Must still be looking for a private spot,' I says.

Lydia hisses and folds her arms across. 'Well, we're going to the roundabout. Are you staying here?'

I look at the hole in the brier where he disappeared. 'Nay, I'm coming with you.'

Frederick buys tickets for everybody. Jamie and Lydia take theirs without a thanks and climb up onto the same horse.

'Woo-hoo,' cries Jamie.

'Yipee,' cries Lydia.

Frederick laughs and calls out to Mary. 'Come, Mary, let us ride together like Lydia and James!'

'Nay, nay,' she says, waving her hands and shaking her head, 'Nay, please Frederick, nay.'

I look at her. *Nay, please Frederick, nay?* Aren't these public displays what she lives for?

'Come on, Mary,' says Frederick. 'It is going to start in a minute. It would be fun!'

'I'm sorry, Frederick, but I can't, I can't.'

I give her a stern look. 'What's wrong with you. Can't you get up there with him now he's paid for you?'

'I can't, Lizzie,' she says, touching her belly, 'Not in my *condition*.'

I want to fetch my picnic up. And in fact, that's what I do, only I put a hand up to stop it coming past my lips.

'Are you all right, Lizzie?'

The roundabout creaks to a start, and the three of them, the wanton couple and the lonely German, go round. The music rings a pain in my temples. I swallow down and look around for somewhere to sit.

'You're no more pregnant than I am,' I says as I move away. 'Wasn't I washing the run out of your sheets just two weeks ago?'

I sit on a bench by the bandstand. Mary stays by the roundabout, gives a weak-looking wave every time Frederick passes. When it stops, Jamie and Lydia come off arm-in-arm, swerving and wobbling and all-round acting like topers. Frederick rushes to Mary and pours his foreign concern over her. From where I'm sitting, I can't be sure if he knows what game she's playing. He brings her over to sit at the tables. I wait till the tea is brought before joining them.

'We ought get the rug and basket,' I says. 'They'll be robbed.'

But no one moves.

Moss doesn't come back.

'Typical,' says Jamie.

That night Frederick doesn't stay the night, for he can't be seen walking to the mill from this direction in the morning. I hear him leave around midnight. Mary comes straight into me.

'I'm tired,' I says. 'And we're up early.'

She pays me no heed. Gets into the bed beside me. 'I've told him,' she says.

'Told him what?' I says, though I know well what.

'About my circumstances.'

'Oh for Christ sake. Good night, Mary.'

'If I'm not pregnant now, Lizzie, I will be before long. It's not a real lie.'

I shake my head in the dark. 'And is he happy about your *circumstances*?'

'That's the thing. He's over the moon.'

'Suffering Jesus.'

'He's going to stick by us.'

'Is he now.'

'He's going to put us in a bigger place, maybe even further into the country, for the fresh air, and as soon as I start to show, he's going to tell everybody and move in with us himself.'

'Us? Who's this us?'

'You, me and the baby. And him.'

I laugh. 'Have you lost your senses?'

'What do you mean?'

'You think I'm going to stick round here and take on the burden of your mistakes? Sit up for your dirty issue? Clean the crap out of his nappies?'

'You're twisting my meaning.'

'You're the one that's twisting, Mary. Twisting the good out of everything.'

'You're my family, Lizzie, and you'll soon be Frederick's too. He vowed to look after you.'

‘Look after *me*?’

Out of naught a vision of Moss comes: nuddy as Our Saviour on the cross. ‘Better to marry me,’ he says, ‘than to burn in this hell.’

The next day, after the bells ring, I go looking for him. He’s not hard to find. I take the seat beside him.

‘Two more of those,’ I says to the tapstress.

‘What do *you* want?’ he says.

‘I’m sorry for yesterday, Moss.’

He shakes his head. ‘Arrah, you don’t have to be sorry, Lizzie Burns. You’re a good woman. I’m not worth you.’

I touch his hand. ‘Enough of that, Moss. You’re worth more than most I know.’

He looks at me then, and through his blinking eyes, I can see his urges.

‘I’m getting you out of here,’ I says.

And he follows. You don’t understand the power you have till you test it.

We can’t go to his house for he shares with other men, and I’ll not bring him to ours, not with Mary there to fling the dirt, so I lead him up the passages. We start a couple of times but we’re not left alone for long.

‘I know a place,’ Moss says. ‘But it costs.’

‘Don’t worry about that,’ I says.

He brings me down Great Ancoats and into a neighbourhood I can’t name. The room is bright enough and tidy. The lass who shows us up is younger and has a plainer, cleaner face than you’d suppose.

‘Thanks,’ I says when I hand her the coins.

‘You have till the morning,’ she says. ‘Nine on the clock. If you leave before, you don’t get it back.’

His bit is a thick log that sobers me and gives me second thoughts.

‘You ought know something, Moss,’ I says.

‘What?’ he says, lifting his head out of my mammies.

‘I know my way around a man but I’ve never let one inside.’

His eyes go wide and his brow creases, and I can't tell if he's more surprised by my frankness or my maidenhead.

Once it's in, there's little in the act that surprises me. I lie under and he goes over, and I search in it for the pleasure, though it's over before I catch more than a spark.

Afterwards he stretches out beside me, puts an arm across my belly.

'If I'm up the pole,' I says, 'Will you run off like you did in the park?'

'I'm sorry about that, only I didn't feel right. I was riled up, and when I'm like that my manners are not of the best. I hope you can forgive me.'

'I suppose.' I put my arm to rest over his.

We're like this till I'm almost asleep. But then he chooses to say, 'I was engaged to be married, you know. In Ireland.'

'I don't need to know about that, Moss.'

'She was a fine girl and I loved her, but I had to leave. It was the only way.'

'Please, Moss, that's all none of my business.'

He sits up on his elbow. Looks down at me. 'I hope you'll make me your business now.'

'Let's see what happens.'

What happens is not a babby but ulcers on my fingers and about my cunny.

'You filthy bastard,' I says to him when he comes to see me at the lock-hospital, 'You big dirty filthy bastard, you've given me the Old Joe,' and if I'd strength enough to mete him out a lashing I'd do it, in front of the nurses and all.

'I didn't know, Lizzie,' he says, holding out another posy of his picked flowers, 'Please believe me, I didn't know.'

I wave the weeds away. 'Well, you don't have to worry anyhows. Frederick is paying for the mercury.'

'Lizzie, please forgive me.'

'You'll have to take the same yourself before you get another lass into this mess.'

'Oh Lizzie—'

‘I can talk to Frederick for you, if you want. About covering the costs.’

He falls into the chair by the bed, white as death. Around us, the women cough and moan.

‘Lizzie, let me marry you,’ he says after looking at me for a long while.

‘Proposals, Moss? This is not the time.’

‘I’ve naught only what I stand upright in, but I love you and want to look after you.’

‘Are you talking out of shame, or do you mean it?’

He doesn’t have to reply. I can tell by the way he takes grip of the bedsheets that he means it, violent.

It’s men are at the bottom of every plague in this world. We come to the lock with this frontmost in our minds, and as we lie here stewing in our cures and wondering if we’ll be next to go cripple, or walk off into fits, or turn so childish we’ve to be washed in bath chairs and given to drink with a spoon in a teacup, our knowledge turns to action: sometimes screams or fists but most often sombre vows of chastity breathed out into the late-night miasmas. ‘Dear Lord,’ we says, ‘Dear Lord God Our Father, if you find the grace to spare me, I’ll never go near another one again.’ And we’re dead earnest. We believe ourselves new-made saints. And we make the same vow the next night and every night after, till we’re told by some twist-whiskered pup that we’re saved and can likely leave in the morning. And now we’re so grateful—so effin overglad—our holy promises are dropped and we forgive the dirty drakes everything. More than that, when we see them biding by the door to take us home, it’s ‘Lucky me!’ we think, ‘Lucky me to have such a morsel worrying after me!’

Moss goes for my elbow and I let him have it, but when he uses it to slow my walk, I take it back from him and says, ‘I don’t need a crutch, I can get round grand.’ And further on, when he lays hold of my hip to help me cross a road: ‘Don’t handle me like I’ve lost the use of myself. I’m well and not changed.’

We stop for a pause at Ducie Bridge. Shoulder-to-shoulder, we lean over the parapet where the bricks have fallen away. The weather being dry, the river is

shrunk to a string of pools. Caught in the weirs, the slime sits out to dry and rot. The stink is enough to make you dizzy, but we close our noses to it and stay.

'Look,' I says, pointing to the sky above the tanneries.

'What?' he says, searching in vain. 'What is it?'

'Arrah, you're too slow. It's gone behind. It was a seagull.'

We come away. My knees are sore after the weeks of lying slack, and by the time we reach Salford I'm in a mighty sweat. We buy ass's milk and brandy-balls from a coster outside Weaste station, and eat and drink sitting on an overturned cart.

'Moss, you need to know something.'

He stops chewing and looks at me in a tone of 'Ah Lizzie, what's this? Do I really need to know anything?'

'If you don't like what I say,' I says, 'you can walk. I'm giving you licence to turn on your heel and go. I won't hold it against you.'

He looks at me, afraid.

I throw what's left of my sweet to the mice and rub my fingers on my skirt. 'I can no longer have children. That part of me has been taken.'

He drops his face down to his boots. 'So we'll do without and we'll live better for it.'

His answer comes too fast and I don't trust it. 'Look at me, Moss.'

He lifts up, his eyes ashiver from too much talk.

'Don't you want a family? A homestead of your own? Without the hope of little ones, would there be any sense to us?'

'I'd go on happy with just the two of us.'

'You says that now.'

'I says that now and I mean it. The most I can give in this life is my word.'

And what more, for brutal truth, could I ask?

Sat on the cart, we stay, and watch the bodies come out of the station. The swells and sailors coming from Liverpool. The Manchester men climbing into their gigs.

‘Did you make friends at least?’ he says.

‘In the lock?’ I says.

He nods.

I smile and poke him in the side. ‘All I’ll miss from that place is the laudanum.’

We get up and walk the rest of the way. At the end of my road we kiss.

‘Leave me here, Moss.’

‘I want to go in with you.’

‘Nay, I’ll do this alone.’

‘I’ll bide here.’

‘Go home and I’ll call on you tomorrow.’

‘Don’t change your mind, Lizzie. Don’t let them talk you against me.’

‘Don’t be fretting and git.’

He doesn’t move till I peel him off and push.

‘Go on, skedaddle. ’

I don’t have the key so I have to knock.

‘Here she is, back,’ says Mary, opening. She kisses me on the side of the head above the ear.

Frederick is here. ‘Look at you,’ he says, taking me from her and planting on my cheeks. ‘More ravishing than ever.’

She’s cooked a fish, I can smell it.

‘I hope you’ve not gone to any trouble. I’m not terrible hungry. It’s more tired is what I am.’

‘You’re out of breath,’ Mary says. ‘Have you been walking?’

‘Just a little.’

‘Why didn’t you get a cab back? The money I gave you yesterday, didn’t you use it to get a cab?’

‘It’s not the walking. I’m just tired out after all the time on my back.’

‘Well, come on, you’ll sit and have something.’

‘Just a drink, Mary, please. That’s all I want.’

From the armchair I listen to them eat. The whiskey softens the noise of them, their scrape and swallow. It softens Mary's ire, too, when final she decides to release it.

'Oh but she's some wilful one,' she says, the same as if I'm not sitting here two paces away, 'Insisting on going into the lock like a pauper when she'd have been cared for best here at home.'

'Leave it be, Mary,' says Frederick.

I don't look over. I keep fixed on the window and the day that's darkening on the other side.

'Well, she's cured,' she says. 'I suppose that's the main thing.'

When they're finished, they bring their glasses over to the sofa.

'Aren't you going to give her the gift?' says Mary to Frederick after he's sat.

'Ah, *ya*,' he says, getting up again and going off to the bedroom.

When he's good and gone, she leans in. 'Aren't you the lucky one.'

'Aren't I the *what*?'

'Getting away with only your womb lost?'

'Only?'

'Well,' she says, 'It could've been your hair. Or your teeth.'

He comes back and hands me a basket of soaps.

'That's awful kind of you, Frederick.'

'With these you can take lots of hot baths and rebuild your forces.'

I smell them. Lavender. And rose. 'They're lovely.'

'Lots of baths and fresh air and rest, that is what I prescribe. And I forbid you to go back to the mill.'

'I'm not intending to go back, Frederick, not till next week at least.'

'Not next week, not ever. Mary has left for good and so should you.'

I look over at her. She sips from her glass, then holds it out to the side, dangles it between two fingers as if threatening to drop it on the carpet, as if such a spill wouldn't be *her* mess to fettle. 'What're you looking at me like that for, Lizzie? It was only a question of time. It's not right for me to be there any more.'

'Not right?'

‘The rumours were putting Frederick into too many awkward corners. The Ermens were asking questions, only dying for the excuse to smoke him out of the business. And the Club, he couldn’t even pass it without jokes and whisperings coming out at him. And the Communists up in London, well *they* are—’

‘They’re not rumours if they’re true.’

Frederick coughs. He has to sew his mouth to keep the lush from showering. Mary doesn’t flicker a lid. Slugs the end out of her glass and puts it down. ‘Lizzie, you wouldn’t believe how jealous those bitches got, what a misery they were making of it for me.’

It’s *bitches* they are now. Once upon a time, they were careful and kind. Once on a time, they were the salt of her earth.

‘At first I laughed along, put on like I thought it was funny, but then the slighting speak began, and the games in the yard crafted only to make me suffer, and I realised I’d crack before they’d ever stop, that’s how cruel they’d turned. It’s best I got out before’—she rubs her belly like a trencher woman brewing a belch—‘before, you know.’

I know, I know. It’s enough to see her changed out of her bodice and into her loose shimmy. Fraught. In foal. Brought to bed. On the straw.

Sighing, I hold my glass out. ‘Where did you put that bottle?’

Fredrick jumps up and goes for it. Tilts me more in. Puts it on the floor beside my chair.

‘So what’s all this got to do with me?’ I says when I have it downed, ‘Why ought *I* leave *my* situation on account of *your* troubles?’

Mary darts Frederick a fearful look. He clears his throat. Crosses his legs. Looks about to speech off, but I hold up to halt him. I don’t need to hear it. I can suspect for myself. The rumours have my name in them. They say it’s the two of us he keeps for his pleasure. One Burns one night, the other Burns the next, the two Burns together on feast days and strikes. They say it’s *him* who put me in the lock.

‘Are you discharging me, Frederick?’

‘*Nine, nine,* of course not.’

‘Am I to lose my earnings to keep *you* safe in your circumstances?’

‘Christ, Lizzie,’ says Mary, ‘We thought you’d be happy to leave the place.’

‘Happy? What’d I do instead? Can you tell me that? What’d I do?’

‘That’s what we want to talk to you about.’

‘I couldn’t go out to service. No respectable house would have me after so long in the mills.’ And I’ll not sit here all day stitching and learning the melodies, going soft on a foreign man’s mint.

‘Lizzie, would you listen a minute? It’s been arranged. We’ve it all drawn out.’

And now she lays it out visible, the picture of us. In the middle is herself, of course, glowing under her own halo. And around her, sitting and standing and draped over, are her stout, German-faced children. And around them, circling with velvet arms and a grinful of perfect teeth, is Frederick. And behind him, the faint colour of wallpapering, is myself, the starve-acred relative without a sprig of her own to tend except her breakdowns abloom. And around us all, built solid and flush and clean, is a house on Burlington Street: two floors, two gardens, three bedrooms, an inside bathroom and an attic for lodgers to cover the extra expense of me.

‘Nay.’ I nigh on snap an ankle in my rush to get upstanding in my boots. ‘Nay, nay, nay.’ I’m wag-wag-wagging my finger in their faces. ‘Nay, nay, nay, nay, you can rub me right out. I’m not going any place with you two, not to Burlington nor any other street. I’m staying in my job and earning my wages as usual. And I’m going to live with Moss O’Malley.’

Now Mary bats. ‘You’re going to *what*?’

‘You heard me. It’s all been settled.’

‘Settled? When?’

‘Today. Over the past weeks. He’s been coming to see me. I paid off the nurses to let him in.’

‘Mary Mother of Jesus. With *our* money, too.’ She gets up, takes the glasses out of our hands and brings them to the kitchen.

‘I wasn’t over with that,’ I says on her way out. We hear her putting the kettle on for the dishing up. A pause while she gathers herself.

‘What’re you playing at, Lizzie?’ she says when she comes back.

‘I could ask the same of you, Mary.’

‘Ladies, please!’ says Frederick from way below on the couch. ‘Sit down and let us talk this out like civilised human beings.’

‘He’s no good for you,’ she says.

‘He wants me no harm.’

‘Harmless, aye, that’s the right word for him. Wet and harmless. A big man gone damp.’

‘You’re one to talk, a prime tippler yourself.’

‘And his intimates? All the same. Jamie, Kit, Dan, Mick, Joseph, the whole crowd of them. Naught doing but passing their time in swilling ale and smoking like the beasts that perish.‘

‘He’s a good man.’

‘Arrah, he’s a toss-pot. They all are. Talking for the good of Ireland when they’re the worst of its examples.’

Furious, I point down at her shame. ‘Well, he’d never do something like this by me.’

‘And how could he, even if he wanted to, with your insides taken?’

I clasp my mouth and teeter back. That’s the end of it. No gain to be got in keeping on. She has her mind and she can keep it.

Turning from her, I pitch a pleading eye to Frederick. ‘All we need is a few pounds to set ourselves up. Then I’d be out of your hair for good.’ I already owe him—God knows I owe him and not a little—but if I’ve gained any sense of the man, he’s above keeping personal accounts. ‘It would be a loan, Frederick. We’d pay you back bit at a time.’

Behind me, Mary foams over. Frederick silences her with a finger. Comes to the edge of his seat. Signals towards the armchair. ‘*Bitter,* Lizzie, sit down. You too, Mary.’

We obey. The furniture creaks. He studies me a minute. Then he says, ‘Is this truly what you desire, Lizzie, or do you feel pressured, by him or by us? If it is the former, I would be glad to help. But if it is the latter, then we should talk and try to come up with a different solution.’

His question puts a knot in my innards. Am I starting out of my own mind, or am I being forced against the grain? If I'm honest, I know the answer. My accidental life was bound to put me swimming upstream eventual. But I can't say it aloud.

Mary sees me shally. 'What Frederick's asking you is, are you going with him to get away from us, you ungrateful axe, or do you love him plain and true?'

Love?

Love?

The way I've heard Mary speak of it over the years makes me doubt I've feelings in my body at all. But I've seen enough of this world to know that most of us have to accept men we don't feel for, and I'm not sure it's for the worst in the end. A marriage of emotions can't be lasting. It wouldn't be healthful if it was. You only have to look at Mary, gone thin and nervous, to know it doesn't do a woman good, and she'll waste away entire if she doesn't soon understand it.

'I have to be practical,' I says.

'How is shacking up with Moss O'Malley *practical*? God, it's like you've not heard a word I've ever said to you, about anything.'

'I'm prepared to give him the benefit of a doubt.' It's a stranger he is, but a man too, and most men lean to the good.

'You're a fool, Lizzie, to cast your life on such a die.'

'I'm not with him for what he'll win me. I'm with him for his character. His morals.'

And just like that, it's said. The whole 'morals' bit. Said and heard, and certain to come back and scorch me.

We find a room in Hulme, Moss and me, a fair walk from our situations but where the Irish are few and nobody bothers with our private affairs. The place costs more than we can afford but we'll manage, for Frederick has put me in charge of the Diamond Thread and added three and sixpence to my wage, and with his loan I've paid an advance on the first three months. For that's what I'm giving it: three months.

‘Three months?’ says Moss.

‘Aye. After that, I’ll decide.’

‘You mean you haven’t yet decided?’

‘Nay.’

‘Oughtn’t we do it straight off? Isn’t that the normal way?’

‘Three months. A trial run. A chance to prove yourself.’

‘Prove myself?’

‘You can start with your drinking. I’ll not be ballyragged by a soaker for the rest of my days.’

‘Is that what you think of me?’

‘It’s what I’ve heard of you. It’s what they’re saying. You’re lucky I’m not one to put faith in the voices. I’m giving you three months to make liars out of them.’

‘And what about our living together? What’ll we tell them about that?’

‘Why must we tell them anything?’

‘Passing as man and wife, isn’t that a sin? Doesn’t God look down on it?’

‘He might, but He also knows my reasons and will forgive me for them.’

‘They’ll be expecting a wedding. Everybody’ll be.’

‘Well, they’ll have to bide.’

‘Bide? Begorrah, woman, don’t you have any Church in you at all?’

When not at the mill I keep close to home and watch him, and what I see is a man raised on naught to be naught, thankful for any crumb he has and not particular as long as he gets the needful. I tend to the meals, but I give out the stitching and steer wide of the baking, and I make sure not to take him anything to the bed, for then he’d expect it every day. He does what he’s required about the place, fixing it up and making it a bit of a home, and he makes an effort to be cheerful, striving against the sorrows of the past that sometimes sore beset him. Though we’re not yet joined in God’s eyes, in my own he’s within his rights, and I give myself over to the fetch whenever he wants it, to keep him manly and also to relieve him. And though he’s inclined to be quiet, I press him to speak and to tell his stories, and the odd time we bring the chairs out to sit, and the neighbours stand in their doorways and hearken, for I understand that in his soul he holds a

deep well of feelings, and that, without a means to draw down, it could boil into a storm and burst out of its own willing. On Saturday nights he goes out with the lads, which keeps him in bed most of Sunday morning, and he often comes home from work with the whiff, but he never gets in too late or without his legs full under him, and what he spends doesn't make us poorer, so I make it my business not to complain. And for some weeks we live like doves together, never having disputes.

Some time in the second month, Frederick summons me to the office.

'How are you getting on?' he says, closing the blinds against the clerks at their desks outside, then changing his mind and opening them again.

'At the Diamond Thread? Pretty tidy, Mr Engels,' I says, 'The girls are good workers.'

'Good, good.' He comes away from the windows to fiddle with some papers on his desk. Takes a file out, puts it back. When he looks at me again it's with a sly twinkle. When he speaks it's in a whisper. 'What I mean is, how are *you plural* getting on? We have not seen you since you left.'

'Oh, we're getting on grand.'

'You have not come to visit.'

'We'll come when we're proper settled.'

'Mary misses you. We both do.'

'Nice of you to say.'

I brush some flyings off my sleeve. I don't intend to give it easy, whatever it is he wants.

'We would like to see where you live.'

'I'll do you a dinner when the place looks halfway decent.'

He comes round the desk and takes a box from the cabinet. 'Do you need any—?'

'Nay, not a bit of it. And we'll start paying you back as soon as the wedding is over and paid for.'

'Ah!'—he shakes the coins in the box—'There is to be a wedding!'

On the other side of the glass, the men look up from their business. I pinch myself through my pocket. 'No date yet, but I suppose it will have to happen sooner or later.'

'Well, this calls for a celebration.'

'Nay, Frederick, please.'

He puts the box down and goes to pour two drinks from a bottle on the sideboard. I try to hide behind a hand. 'I oughtn't, Frederick. They're watching.'

'Do not pay attention to them. I shall tell them you have had a faint.'

'I want my head clear going back to work.'

'Oh pish-posh,' he says, handing one to me and touching his own against it.

'Cheers.'

'Cheers.'

My throat is dry from the mill air. The lush burns it further and I cough. One of clerks lowers his papers to peer at me. I take another sup and catch his eye over the rim. He turns away.

'It is good to hear you are so happy, Lizzie,' Frederick says now, sitting down and leaning back in his big chair. 'You deserve it, more than anyone I can think of.'

'Well now, Mr Engels, *happy* is a stretch.' My time under Frederick's protection made the hobble of life foreign to me, and I've been alarmed by the difficulty of returning to it. But it's also true that I've been enjoying the simple-and-straightness of it. It's what it is, and it's a struggle, and it doesn't put on to be anything else.

'Well, you certainly look happy, Lizzie.'

'I do?'

'I only wish Mary were the same.'

So we're *there* already.

He sits there looking at me, biding for a word—advice and such—but I don't give it. I put the glass on the desk and my hands on my lap. I cross my feet in front of me and look straight back at him. He doesn't need me to say what he already knows. She'll never be happy. She'll always be like a child, ever wanting what she doesn't have.

‘Please come and visit,’ he says when the silence gets too heavy for him to carry.

‘I will. Maybe when the babby’s here.’

He flinches at the mention. Grimaces like he’s been jabbed. And that’s how I get to know the babby’s gone. Come out before its time. I put on not to understand.

‘Mr Engels, I’ll get behindhand if I sit here any longer.’

‘*Ya*, of course. Be on your way.’

‘Thanks anyhows for the drink.’

I leave him pale and scrambling to look busy.

‘What was that about?’ says Lydia when I get back to the workroom.

‘What do you think?’

‘Is she all right?’

‘She’s made her bed, now she may lie in it.’

When I get home that evening I find Moss sitting outside, making speeches to some of the local children.

‘Don’t be giving them nightmares,’ I says, going in.

When the supper is on, I decide to go out and join them, but something stops me on this side of the door. I put my ear against it, but it’s only the usual racket I hear: the Liberator O’Connell and the landlords and the Great Hunger, things any Irishman with a head would know, though to hear him you’d think he was a prophet of the news.

‘You’ll get those children into trouble,’ I says to him later when we’re eating.

‘Not a bit,’ he says.

‘They’ll get some hiding if they go home spouting about the suffering sister island.’

‘Well, it’ll be good for them if they do. They’ll learn what their folks are really like. The history they carry.’

‘Just be careful,’ I says and leave it there.

But it'll not be left. There's something I heard him say to the children that stays with me like a tick, burrowing down and making a wound. And a few days after, while I'm scrubbing his back in the bath, I find myself saying, 'Moss, I need to ask you something. Do you mind if I ask you?'

'Jesus, not so hard, Lizzie!'

'The other day when you were talking to the neighbours' children.'

'When?'

'A few days back.'

'I don't recall, but what about it anyhows?'

'I heard you say something and I didn't like it.'

He looks over his shoulder at me. Big worried drops fall from his lashes. 'What didn't you like?'

'It's probable naught.'

'What was it?'

'You said that if you weren't born in the Catholic provinces of Connaught, Leinster or Munster, you weren't Irish at all.'

He laughs. 'Is that what has you so nerved up these past days? Stomping around and clattering the pots?'

'If it's anything particular, aye, it's that.'

'Christ, it's well for some, having so little to worry them.'

I slap him on the arm with the brush. 'What did you mean by it?'

'Ah for feck sake, Lizzie, it's only a way of talking.' He rubs his arm. Lifts some water out and pours it over the spot. 'A way of talking is all it was.'

'Well, I don't want any more talk like it.'

'Well, you know what, Lizzie Burns—'

Of a sudden he's up standing and the water's rushing off him onto the flags and he's grabbing the towel from my shoulder. 'I'm getting sick of your rules. Sick to the teeth.'

'If you don't like my rules, what's keeping you here?'

'I'm beginning to ask myself the same.'

He leaps out of the tub and strides across the room, leaving his wet on the only bit of carpet we have and has to last us.

‘You’re dreeping every place,’ I says. ‘Can’t you wait till you’re dry?’

He tears at the fresh clothes I’ve put out on the bed. His breeches stick to the damp and he has to hop round to get into them. ‘A better man would have raised his hand to you long ago.’ He slaps his cap on and makes for the door.

‘Where’re you going?’

‘Out.’

‘Off with you then.’ I follow him onto the road. ‘Off with you back to Tipperary, if that’s where you’re from at all.’

He reels back, comes to giant over me, though what I see is only a boy in his tantrums. ‘What did you just say to me, woman?’

‘You heard me. How can we know for sure where you’re from? We only know what you tell us, and any amount of that could be tarradiddle. There’s voices saying you were born in Cheetham and your accent is only what you kept from your kin.’

He slams his fist into the brick behind me. Draws his hand back slow. Puts it under his arm. Bares his teeth. Growls through them. ‘And what are you, Lizzie Burns, only an effin Britisher?’

Four whole days he’s gone. Sunday night, Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, till the Thursday when his money is spent and he shambles in looking like he’s been pulled through the bush.

‘Did you go to work at least?’ I says.

He doesn’t answer. Instead he heaves himself by the limbs to the bed, falls down on it full-clothed. I leave him there and finish my tasks. At supper, I put out a plate for him, but he doesn’t get up for it. What’ll not keep till tomorrow I eat myself.

‘I’ll not having you running off every time you don’t like the sound of something,’ I says when it’s time to get in beside him.

He says naught but I can tell by his breathing he’s not asleep.

‘Do you hear me, Moss? Do you hear me?’ and I keep at him till he groans and pulls the sheets over his head, for he needs to understand the health of a thing is told by how fast it recovers, and four days it too long by any measure.

I blow out the candle and in the dark allow a hand to rest on him. It’s late, after all, and he’s learnt.

After so many days with only broken rest, sleep comes quick, but I’m hauled from it young by the sound of the springs grating. ‘I’ll not be made a mocking stock any more.’

I blink up at his shadow. ‘What’s the matter with you?’

‘We’re to marry. This week, we’re to do it.’

‘I told you three months.’

‘And I’m telling you, Lizzie Burns, I’m finished with your tricks and your tests. We’re getting married or we’re calling it off.’

‘All right,’ I says, ‘All right,’ for his whimpers are those of a man who’ll not be any further pushed, and they’d frighten the insides out of you.

He caves onto me, more out of relief than longing, but he’s soon going at it full peck, and what touches me is not the sopped words he leaves on my neck but the effort it costs me to show him proper feeling in return. My heart’s hard against him, and the more he gives way, the harder it grows.

‘It’s the proper thing,’ he says afterwards. ‘I couldn’t live on like this, it goes contrary to my morals.’

I tell him he’s right, all along he’s been right, I was only being silly and afraid, and that sends him off into his snores. Leaving me to stare into the thought that there’ll never be light for me locked into this Irish lie.

XIV

The Franco-Prussian War

Jenny has grapes, real grapes, in her hair. She’s drawn me over to the sideboard and is poking furious at a display of green boughs.

‘I don’t know what to expect,’ she says.

‘I’m sure they’ll be charming,‘ I says.

‘They are French, most of them. Escapees from the siege in Paris. It worries me.’

‘What does?’

‘Them. I do not know how they will be. We *are* Prussians, after all.’

At a loss—why are we whispering?—I look back into the room. Karl is treading the length and breadth, glancing at the clock and grumbling. He’s had his beard brushed out and locks curled up special, and is making great efforts not to touch them and put them out of place. Frederick is fidgeting by the chimneypiece. Bare through the door and he’s already on his second vodka. Christmas day in Jenny’s parlour, and I don’t think Joseph himself was as fretful as this, waiting for the virgin birth.

She tugs on my elbow and I turn back.

‘You must think I am being silly, Lizzie.’

‘Nay, not a bit of it.’ I give her my best face.

‘If they are coming here to dine with us, it must mean they have embraced Communism and are free from that blasting curse of national prejudice, which at the end of the day is nothing but wholesale selfishness.’

What has them so nerved up? As far as I’m concerned, you’ve dealt with one frog, you’ve dealt with the whole pond.

Outside, the sound of wheels. Karl moves to the window and checks up and down the road.

‘This must be them.’

He sends Nim down to pay off the cab. I go to the mirror to make some last revisions. In the glass now, I see Nim coming in, looking wan. No one appears behind her. She speaks something in German. Exclamations fly. There’s a rush for the door.

‘What’s wrong?’

‘Oh forgive us, Lizzie,’ Jenny says. ‘We have to go straight down to the dining room. One of the men has an injury and cannot get up the stairs. How could we be so thoughtless?’

‘Not thoughtless,’ I says, shaking my head, ‘Not a bit of thoughtless,’ and a part of me feels sorry she’ll not have her pageant processing down, two-by-two, the biggest animals first. She looks forward to such affairs and it will damper her mood to have it passed over.

Nine men stand in the hall. In any other house they’d be crushed but here they’ve room to stand in a line crossways and to bow. I’m not the only one shocked as to their number. Nim’s pallor has gone to green, and Jenny has a croak in her voice when she says, ‘Gentlemen, the season’s greetings to you all.’

The injured man is balancing between two ashplants. In his aspect the good lords over the bad, though he isn’t a man you’d ask for a direction with any faith you wouldn’t be cursed at. What I suppose to be presentations are made. When my turn comes, Jenny switches to the English.

‘And this is Frederick’s dear spouse, Lizzie. An Irishwoman.’

They dip a final bow in my direction before being led into the dining room.

Nim has to run around and reset the table before we’re put sitting down. Jenny fills the time by making a theatre of deciding who to put where. I make myself busy lighting the candles that have been blown out by the draught we bring in. The table is laden—dishes of tomatoes and strawberries and grapes and greengages, bowls of nuts and savouries, a Russian salad—but I know that Jenny likes to keep her courses spare, and I’m curious to see if there’ll be enough to sate the extra stomachs. (Spiv in the kitchen won’t be happy, but at least Pumps might do as she’s told and not put a foot higher than the scullery step, for she won’t want so many men to see her dressed as she is, in the dreariest bonnet I could find in her wardrobe.)

I’m glad to be sat at the corner, away from the horror of making myself understood. Frederick is put on my right, Karl at the head to my left. The wine has been taken from their dandy green bottles and put into dull-looking jugs. Nim pours from these now. Once all our glasses are full—it takes an uncomfortable time for her to get all the way round—Karl bellows out a toast. At the other end, Jenny makes to stand but remembers the wounded man’s condition and sits back down. We touch glasses from where we are.

After some murmuring and shifting, Karl drops his eyeglass and clears his throat. All heads turn to this end. He speaks loud and in the French. During his pauses, his mouth makes that sarcastic curl that Frederick says makes his enemies quake. Hair like wire pokes out from his ears, long and strong enough for a bird to land on. He's wearing his usual broadcloth. Poor Frederick, meantime, has gone all out with the silks. It can't be chance alone that his necktie matches the runner on the table.

While Karl speeches, I can't help handling the silver, which has been shined to blinding. The china has been rubbed to white by time. Invisible on the linen, it is, and brittle as the host, though it probable cost a sum nonetheless. I see my fiddling has been noticed, so I take my hand away. Folding and unfolding my napkin under the table, I bide for the soup.

With Frederick's help, by the time the second broth is cleared and the fish arrives, I've put names on some of the Frenchmen. The thin, raw-boned one is Lenoble. The one with the ragged pair of worsted gloves tucked under his plate and the busy gob tucked under his nose is Boyer. The stern one, strong-made, is Pernaudet. Ottlick isn't French at all but a Magyar. He's my first glimpse of his race, and it's a let down, though the patch on his eye is fair and impressing. The wounded man is Bouton. He has been silent since we sat down, keeping watch. He catches my eye now and smiles like he knows what I look like out of my shimmy. I look away. Give my flush to the wall.

Frederick does most of the speeching during the meat course, which isn't long for it contains a turkey that looks much less massive now it's cooked and put in the centre of this crowd. While Nim carves, Jenny fiddles with the cuff of her blouse and, by her staring, tries to will more meat off the bone. I do my bit by refusing more than a smitch. 'I can fill myself up with water,' I think and reach for the third glass on the right (you only make a mistake with finger bowls once).

With pudding—fruitcake, custard, jelly, ices, nuts and cream cheese—Nim also brings bread and butter and seed cake and macaroons and wafers in case anyone is still hungry. No one dares touch any of it, except the Frenchmen, who larrup in, but they have the excuse of being strangers.

Talk about the war starts up. Anxious that I not be ignorant of what's passing, Frederick speaks in the English about the manifestations in London in favour of British assistance to France. Jenny—in a voice far more foreign than I know it to be—tells the men that her daughter, too, is across the Channel, working with her husband, Mr Lafargue, to end Prussian occupation, and then, of course, to bring about the final Revolution. Karl says that a German victory, and a carving up of France, would end by forcing France into the arms of Russia, followed by a new war of revenge, which would act as a midwife to revolution in the East. The men listen and have opinions of their own, which they give out in the French.

Where there is now a lull, Lenoble gives Nim a nod and she brings him two parcels he has given her to put away. The crumpled brown bag, he holds out to Jenny. She clutches her chest and cries out. Only when he insists does she take it and look inside. More yelling.

'What is it, Frederick?' I whisper.

'Dried apricots,' he says. 'They would have preferred to bring a bottle of something French and good, but times are bad.'

To Karl they give the gift covered in newspaper.

Frederick nudges me. 'They have wrapped it with one of my articles about the war, do you see?'

At first Karl is careful not to tear the paper but the French jeer him till he rips it open. A book. He reads the title and everyone laughs.

'What is it, Frederick?'

He starts to explain but soon stops and calls across the table.

'Mr Lenoble, if it doesn't displease you, can you explain in English what the book is, for my wife's sake?'

Lenoble bows an elegant bow. 'Madame Lizzie, the book is called *Confessions of a Breton Seminarist* and it tells of all the ways the religious men and women in France misbehave themselves.'

'We used to read about the Empress,' snickers Boyer, 'Now we read about the nuns!'

Roars of laughter. Jenny yelps and claps her hands. I sip and bide for the noise to die down before I says, 'Is it true? What it says in the book?'

Lenoble wipes his mouth. 'When it comes to the religious orders, Madame Lizzie, truth is worse than fiction.'

I can't be sure what he means, only that it's of a familiar persuasion. I let it go.

A discussion follows about the refusal of religion by the working classes, and now about the need to abolish marriage, as a next step. I open my fan and beat some air into my lung. What puzzles me is why it's oftenest married people who want marriage abolished, while the unmarried ones, like myself, want it kept safe, in case one day we might need it.

Jenny rises and opens a hand in the direction of the sofas: time to remove ourselves there. Pumps stokes the fires and lights the candles on the tree. Nim pours tea and coffee into cups on the occasional table. Frederick looks after the gin and whiskey. Karl passes round the cigars. I find myself beside Ottlick.

'In France,' he says, 'Men and women separate after dinner.'

'Oh, I think it's the same here,' I says. 'Only we're not the kind to go by.'

More talk about the war. More speeches in the English. As far as I can tell, the only one who fails to offer something is Bouton. The longer he stays mute, the more blistering my curiosity for him grows. Perhaps he doesn't have the language to grasp what's being said, or has gone so separate in his head that he can't even hear it. Perhaps he's one of these soldiers who can no longer see the beauty in anything, on account of all the death he's witnessed, and cares least for speeches and words. Perhaps he's just biding the good moment to put in. Perhaps all he needs is a push.

'Your leg looks very sick,' I says.

The room goes quiet. Jenny bulges at me over her fan.

'I hope you're having it seen to proper. We know a good doctor if you're in need.'

He covers his heart and leans down into a bow.

I raise my glass to him. 'To life and surviving it.'

A silence now takes command, a silence made of swallowings and sighs. Out of it, Bouton's voice rises a rumble.

'Madame Lizzie, you are a tradeswoman, *ness-pa*? A worker*?*'

'I am. Spent most of my young years in a cotton mill in Manchester, and not a bit ashamed of it.'

'A cotton mill, *wee,* this is what I've been told. Is it also true that your, ah, your husband here *owned* the factory you worked in?'

'Monsieur!' Frederick is up quicker than a lady-do-naught sitting down. He disguises his haste by taking an ashtray and holding it out for Bouton to tap his cigar on. 'Mr Bouton, you speak on a complicated matter and, moreover, one that is now past. Myself and my wife now live away from Manchester.' He puts the ashtray down, stabs his own cigar into it. 'It is no secret that I come from a family of capitalists. Bourgeois and philistine, those were the unfortunate circumstances I was born into.'

I can't help being impressed by Bouton's sharpness, his knowing precise where the weak point is, but I pity my Frederick more. It's not uncommon that he has to answer to this charge, not uncommon even though the world knows he worked in that mill to keep Karl and the Movement afloat. And knock me acock if I ever see *Karl* having to defend himself in this way.

'Believe me, Lieutenant,' Frederick says, moving back to his chair but not sitting on it, 'I never lost sight of the contradictions of my situation. I managed the mill because I had to. Destitute, I would not have been much help to our Cause. Be in no doubt, it was a hard time for me. I occupied a position I did not enjoy, and I occupied it for twenty years. What sustained me was the knowledge that my profits were also the Revolution's.'

Bouton hearkens without cutting in, but he makes sure to show himself unpersuaded. Karl stares at his feet. Jenny offers the wafers round.

'I would also like to say so that the record is clear,' Frederick says now, flicking out the skirts of his coat and sitting down, 'I would also like to say that in Manchester I made a point of *not* socialising with the bourgeoisie and of devoting my leisure hours to intercourse with plain working—'

‘I heard you were quite the fox hunter,‘ says Bouton, his tone as easy as a sea breeze.

I wince at the clout of it. The colours rush to Frederick’s face. He throws a leg over one way and now the other. Cups his hands over his knee. Jigs up and down. The quiet is complete enough to hear the rustle of my dress as I run by palm down my thigh to dry it. I look at Bouton. I can tell by the stones of his eyes that, in spite of his flippant manner, it doesn’t pleasure him to be contrary like this. He’s not doing it for fun or high spirits but rather is doing what he thinks a soldier must when he finds himself among parlour men. He’s saying the truth of real things.

‘In Manchester,’ says Frederick, ‘I discovered poverty and degradation among the working people worse than in any civilised place on earth. But I also discovered a proletarian culture of significant intellectual elevation. The labourers devoured Rousseau, Voltaire and Paine. Byron and Shelley were read almost exclusively by them. On Sunday evenings thousands filled the Hall of Science to hear lectures by their working brothers on political, religious and social affairs. And I was there with them. I was there to hear those men whose fustian jackets scarcely held together speak on geology and astronomy with more knowledge than most bourgeois paper-shufflers possess.’ He tucks his hair back. Runs a finger over his lip and smiles. His esteem is recovering. ‘I can assure you, all of you, that even when in the service of cotton capitalism, I was never anything but devoted to the International.’

‘I’m certain Mr Bouton is not suggesting otherwise,’ says Lenoble.

‘*See voo play*, Mr Engels,’ says Pernaudet, ‘Mr Bouton was simply being curious. He did not mean to cause offence.’

Frederick bends forward into a bow and takes his drink back up.

‘Mr Bouton,’ he says and salutes the soldier.

‘Mr Engels,’ Bouton returns the gesture. ‘Do forgive me if my questions are bold. I have been so long among fighting men whose manners were poor, I am prone to forget myself. I hope you can excuse me.’

‘Please Mr Bouton,’ says Frederick, ‘There is no need to apologise.’

And, with that, it looks like it's over, the storm blown wide. Frederick sits back and slugs down. Bouton turns his attention to lifting his bandaged leg and carrying it to a new spot on the carpet. Jenny rushes over and puts a cushion under. Ottlick turns to me with a small conversation about the weather in London and how it compares to the outside world.

'It's the only thing,' he says, shaking his head, 'The only thing for which this city cannot claim greatness.'

I nod and smile for politeness sake, but in truth my interest is what I can see over his shoulder: Bouton and the winds still howling through the ruts on his face.

'There is still one thing I do not understand, Mr Engels,' he says.

Fredrick pulls away from Karl's ear. 'What is that, Mr Bouton?'

'Since my arrival here in London, your role has been explained to me on a number of occasions and by a number of different people, and yet I cannot seem to comprehend it quite.'

'My role?'

'Your role, Mr Engels, your position in the International, as you call it. If you have left the situation by which you were financing it, what do you do for it now?'

This churns Karl right up. He rises—*creak!*—to stand by Frederick's chair. Slaps a hand onto his shoulder. 'Mr Bouton, please, if I may speak for my colleague. The man you are addressing, and with such ill-manner if I may say, is our corresponding secretary for Belgium, Italy, Spain—'

Fredrick murmurs something.

'And Portugal and Denmark, that's right. This, Mr Bouton, is none other than the man in charge of co-ordinating the proletarian struggle *across the Continent*.'

Frederick accepts Karl's tribute with a quick nod.

'It sounds like your secretary does important work, Dr Marx,' says Bouton.

'I can assure you he does,' says Karl. 'Important work and apparently thankless.'

With a proud flick of his head, Karl seizes Frederick's glass and brings it to the drinks tray with his own.

‘Have you ever fought, Mr Engels?’ says Bouton.

His back still to the room, Karl slams down his glass. ‘Indeed he has!’ He swings round. ‘Back in forty-eight he was involved in no less than four important battles against the Prussians. He himself raised the red flag over his hometown. In theory *and* in practice, Mr Engels is an expert on war. It is not for nothing we call him our General.’

Bouton smiles a conceding smile. ‘I did not know this history of yours, Mr Engels, and am most glad to learn it.’

Frederick receives this weak praise with an extravagant whirl of his hand. ‘Now that you are in London, Mr Bouton, I hope we shall have many more opportunities to learn about each other.’

Karl gives Frederick his drink and, mumbling quiet oaths to himself, returns to his own seat. He plumps down. Pulls the thighs of his breeches towards himself so that their ends come up over his boots to show a sliver of pale and spotted skin.

‘And you Dr Marx? Have *you* ever fought?’

The grin comes so quick to my face I’ve to rush to cover it with my fan. I see it now. Karl has been Bouton’s target all along. He’s been going through Frederick to find his way to him. A coil in me loosens, and I feel I can start to enjoy myself.

Karl gulps down and wipes his mouth with his sleeve. For a grain of what has already been said, I’ve seen him drench bodies in bitter slang. This time, though, he manages to keep his temper. ‘If forty-eight has left us with a lesson, Mr Bouton, it is the danger of inadequately prepared rebellions. It is my duty as a revolutionary leader to educate the Proletariat towards its eventual destiny. Without instruction and guidance there can be no useful action. We all cannot, nor should we all be, soldiers. To the Revolution, as to the new society, we must give according to our abilities.’

‘And the International? What does *it* do? Does it have an army?’

‘Our Association constitutes nothing more than the bond between the most advanced working men in the various countries of the civilised world.’

‘A bond?’ says Bouton. ‘Does the bond *do* anything?’

‘Its task is to infuse workers’ groups with socialist theory and a revolutionary temper.’

‘You mean its task is to sell your books.’

Lenoble and Ottlick both fling their arms out in objection. ‘Monsieur Bouton, *see voo play*. We are guests in Dr Marx’s home!’

Bouton ignores them. ‘Don’t you think, Dr Marx, that the workers would be moved more easily by appeals to direct action than by learned treatises about labour and capital?’

Uproar. Everyone on their feet, shouting and flailing about. Everyone except Bouton, of course. And me. You won’t find *me* up there bawling over politics.

Karl raises up to calm the waters. ‘*Bitter, bitter, bitter*,’ he says, and now when he has quiet and everyone is sitting again, ‘You know, Mr Bouton, you are right. Ideas can accomplish absolutely nothing. Ideas never lead beyond the established situation. They only lead beyond the *ideas* of the established situation. To become real, ideas require men to apply practical force. However—and *this* is the vital point—force must be organised by the new idea. Force without the new idea is wasted.’

Bouton folds his arms across and frowns. ‘You speak of action, Dr Marx, but what action is your organisation taking? I am sorry but I cannot believe it to be merely a coincidence that your headquarters are in the only country in Europe determined *not* to revolt.’

Again, chaos. Again, everyone up and shouting. This time, though, Karl follows Bouton’s lead and stays in his seat. Screened by the dancing bodies and the curtain of blue smoke, he digs his elbows into his lap and lets his head fall into his hands, reaches his fingers into his brush and scratches his scalp.

‘Will the cursed peace in this country ever end?’

When things have settled, Karl leaves for the cellar to choose something to fill the empty jugs with. He plods out, followed by Frederick, and now by Lenoble, Boyer, Ottlick and Pumps. Jenny rings for Nim and helps her bring some things

downstairs. On the way, she tries to collect my eye, but I look down and sit tight. I spend enough time in my own kitchen.

I'm left with Bouton and Pernaudet. Huddled like plotters on the couch, they talk in low voices in the French. I clear my throat.

'Don't you think it gives a queer air to a place, having so many people who don't want to be in it?'

They look confused.

'London, I mean.'

'Oh, London.'

'Why did you choose London, gents, if it displeases you so much?'

'This was the only place. It was either here or Switzerland.'

'I see. And Switzerland?'

They shake their heads as if to say, 'You think here is peaceful?'

I use a stray napkin to rub the paint off the lip of my glass. 'I've come to believe emigration can't be healthful for a person,' I says.

The two men nod, wistful.

'You know, Madame Lizzie,' Bouton says after a time, 'You have the aspect of someone who has seen trouble and had to fight it.'

'That I've done my share of fighting can't be gainsaid. By nobody it can't.'

'You're not the same as these people'—he nods towards the door—'My advice to you is, go softly and do not lose yourself among them.'

I begin to protest but I have to admit the justice of his words.

'We all have our reasons for being somewhere, do we not, Madame Lizzie? In France there is war. An order out on our heads. We cannot return, not if we want to live. This is our excuse. But you, Madame Lizzie, what is yours?'

'My excuse?'

'Go easy, Bouton,' says Pernaudet, and mutters something in the French.

Bouton dismisses him. 'Yes, Madame Lizzie, what is your reason for being here, away from where you belong? You must have one. We all do. If we did not, we would be back there, *ness-pa*?'

'I've no place to be going back to, Mr Bouton. This is my home. Is that what you call a reason?'

‘No.’

‘Bouton!’

‘Please leave him, Mr Pernaudet. Though he tries, Mr Bouton doesn’t offend.’

Pernaudet bows.

Bouton smiles. ‘Do *you* like it here, Mrs Burns? In London. In these houses?’

‘Like it or nay, it’s where I find myself, and it’s where I’ll live myself out.’

‘Such a pity.’

‘Bouton!’

‘Please, Mr Pernaudet, I don’t wish to be handled with kid skin. Mr Bouton, I’ve been to Ireland only once, on a holiday with Frederick, but I still call myself Irish, and I will till the last of my breaths. Can you understand that?’

He curls his lip down. ‘No.’

I laugh. ‘All right then, can you understand this: was I to take myself off tomorrow, back to Ireland or wheresoever, Mr Engels’s house would fall right down.’

‘No house for the Internationals?’ he says. ‘My God, Madame Lizzie, where would we all be then?’

Where? Nowhere is where.

A body must be where her money is made.

II

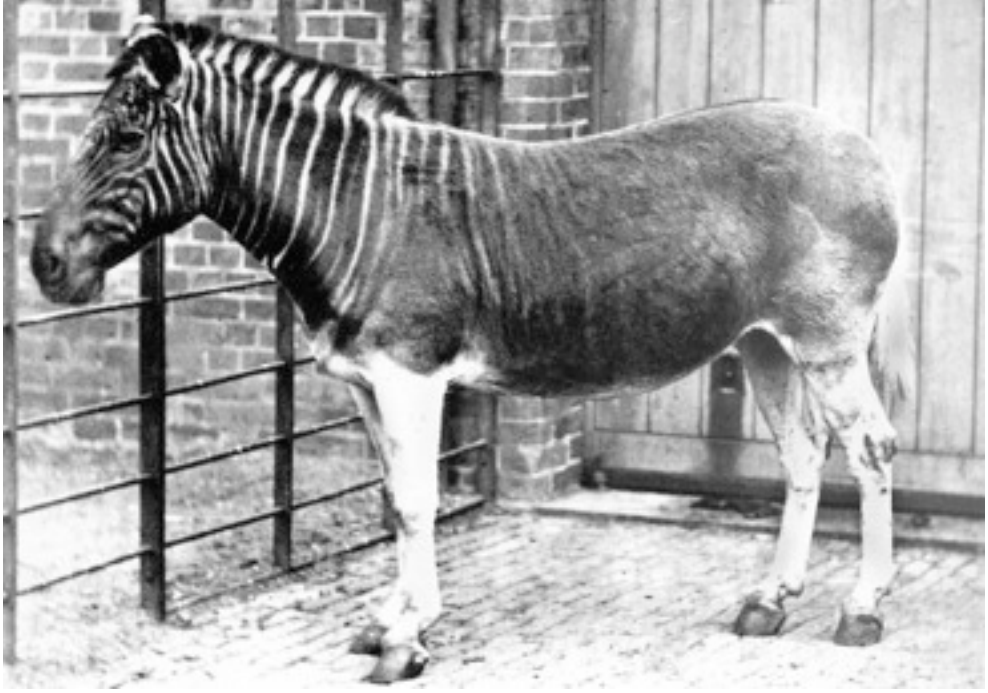
ESSAY

Illusions of Truth

Michel Foucault and the Inescapability of Historical Fiction

CONTENTS

Introduction	114
I. Donkey's Years	119
II. Zebra Criss-crossing	145
III. Are You Pulling My Tail?	186
Conclusion	221
Works Cited	226



Introduction

The quagga was a South African wild ass. Its front part resembled a zebra, but in the mid-section its stripes faded, and the spaces between them widened, leaving a brown hind quarter much like a donkey's. In 1870, the same year Friedrich Engels and Lizzie Burns moved to their new home on Regent's Park Road in London, the quagga mare held at the nearby zoo was photographed.

Fig. 1. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/486005/Quagga>.

It was to become the only existing photograph of the animal. The last wild quagga was shot some time before the decade ended, and the last captive specimen died at the zoo in Amsterdam in 1883.

Despite appearances, the quagga was not a hybrid: the offspring of a male horse and a female zebra are zebrine, those of a male zebra and a female horse

zebrule, and those of a male zebra and female ass zebrass. But nor was the quagga an individual species. In 1984—the same year Michel Foucault died—genetic tests carried out on preserved skins found that the quagga was in fact a subspecies of the plains zebra. This discovery gave a group of people in South Africa an idea: by selectively breeding the zebra, they would resurrect the quagga.

> Animals selected for breeding are chosen purely on visual analysis. Those with the least stripes are used for breeding the next generation. Animals are methodically scored on their stripes to follow the progress over generations. With continuous selective breeding over generations the individual stripe and colour variations should fade, resulting in animals with coat patterns that closely resemble those of the original quagga…It is necessary, of course, to have a criterion for deciding when the project has achieved its goal. It has been decided that when an animal is achieved which has no scorable stripes on the hind part of the body, and no stripes on the legs, then it qualifies. Accepting that we are only selecting for this set of attributes of the original quagga, and not for any other genetic features which may have been possessed by the original quagga population, we will then term this a 'Rau quagga', the qualification giving acknowledgement to Reinhold Rau, whose vision and drive inspired and guided the project in its initial stages. <*www.quaggaproject.org*>

Despite appearances, appearances matter. The physical traits of prospective zebra are examined for how closely they resemble the quagga. The closer the resemblance, the greater the chance that the animal possesses the quagga genes which the Quagga Project believes to be present in living plains zebra populations. Likewise, offspring are judged according to how similar their hides are to the extinct animal (that is, to the twenty-four mounted specimens that exist in museums around the world). Those foals stubborn enough to cling to their stripes are 'translocated' or 'removed'. Those that show a tendency to quagga-ness are kept on and bred in their turn.

But—the obvious question—are looks alone enough? Was the quagga unique in ways other than its external aspect? Did it have its own unique genetic and behavioural attributes?

> It has been argued that there might have been other non-morphological, genetically-coded features (such as habitat adaptations) unique to the quagga and that therefore any animal produced by a selective breeding programme would not be a genuine quagga. Since there is no direct evidence for such characters and since it would be impossible now to demonstrate such characters were they to exist, this argument has limited value. The definition of the quagga can only rest on its well-described morphological characteristics and, if an animal is obtained that possesses these characters, then it is fair to claim that it is a representation of, at least, the visible quagga phenotype. <*www.quaggaproject.org*>

There are many objections we can make regarding all of this, the most urgent being: what has happened to the quagga? When we 'discovered' the quagga in 1778 and gave it a proper name of its own (*equus quagga quagga*), were we not saving it from these kinds of future confusions? Have we now to concede that we did not *know* what we saw, that the uniqueness we discerned was an illusion? For a hundred years, the quagga was allowed to live in peace as a quagga; indeed, even after we had wiped it out, it continued to thrive in our science and in our history (as an extinct species, it is true, but at least according to the rules we used to name it).

Thrive, that is, until today. Today we are being told that this history is based on a mistake, that it is a lie; today they want us to believe that there was never that much 'quagga' to wipe out in the first place. Having put its time-travelling techniques to work, gene science has decided it was hasty of us to have ever classed the quagga as anything other than a type, a race, a category of the plains zebra. The quagga, it turns out, had never been more or less unique than the Burchell's Zebra (*equus quagga burchellii*), the Grant's Zebra (*equus quagga boehmi*), the Selous's Zebra (*equus quagga borensis*), the Chapman's Zebra (*equus quagga chapmani*) and the Crawshay's Zebra (*equus quagga crawshayi*); therefore, there is no reason why, with a bit of aesthetic engineering, the quagga (*equus quagga quagga*) could not be resurrected.

But—our heads spin—if the quagga was merely a kind of zebra that happened to take after donkeys (natural deception), and if Rau quaggas are merely zebra that try to take after quagga (simulation), has the quagga—as a natural object, as a thing-in-itself—ever really existed? Was the quagga merely a myth (a fabrication of our taxonomic categories) that in the name of conservation (revival) and with the aim of atonement for past sins (all the directors of the Quagga Project are white like the original exterminators) we are now trying to make real?

We—writers of 'historical fiction'—sense that there are lessons to be learned here. Something about the contingent nature of knowledge. And something else about the problems involved in locating origins and essences. And perhaps even a glimpse of the conceptual forces that condition the very possibility of our speaking and understanding. But positioned as we are at the beginning of our inquiry, we are unable to adequately articulate what those lessons might be, and how we might go about learning them. In truth, we hardly know what we are looking at yet; we certainly do not know what we are looking *for*.

There are a number of directions in which we can set out for help in making sense of the quagga conundrum. We can head towards science (genetics, biology, natural history). Or towards philosophy (ontology, epistemology, linguistic theory). Or towards history (of nature, of science, of conservation, of extermination). Inquiry carried out in any one of these disciplines would, we are sure, yield results both rich and variously true. It is really only by chance—the memory of a passage from a book by Foucault—that we decide to stay at the crossroads between them.

The Order of Things. Preface. First paragraph. A quote from an uncited passage by Borges. The quote is itself a quote from 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which animals are divided into:

> (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (xv)

This, Foucault tells us, was the inspiration for his book. The book 'arose out of' this passage. Whether or not this is the case—whether inspiration of any kind was involved—matters little. What does matters is that we are amused by Borges's classification, that we wonder at its impossibility. What matters is that we ask ourselves how could someone think *that*? Or more precisely, how could we have *once* thought that; how could they *over there* think in this way? Because, as far as Foucault is concerned, once we have asked this question, we are primed to consider the further and more significant question of what makes something—a piece of knowledge, a particular classification, indeed the activity of classification itself—*thinkable* in one time and place, and unthinkable in another. What forces give rise to the *possibility* of the knowledge that, for example, an animal drawn with a camel-hair is a species, or that a quagga is just a plains zebra from a long way off?

As writers of 'historical fiction', we are drawn to this question of what is possible in the knowledge of a given era; and as inquirers into this question, we are drawn to Foucault because he operates in three modes that, consciously and unconsciously, with intention and by chance, we adopt in our own practice: history, philosophy and fiction. That is to say, at different times, and often at the same time, he is, like us, an historian, a theorist and a storyteller. Would an analysis of how he works in these three modes help to shed light on what is happening—in our culture, in our language, in our minds—when we write what we call 'historical fiction'? If, with the help of Foucault's work itself, we were able to glimpse the network of conceptual forces that make possible Foucault's propositions, would we also catch sight of the network that makes possible our own? Indeed, can we truly speak of *two* networks: one for Foucault and one for us? Are they, in reality, one and the same?

In Chapter One we will approach Foucault as Historian. More precisely, we will examine what Foucault calls 'archaeology': a distinctly historical mode of theoretical analysis which seeks to isolate discourse from any material influence in order to reveal the purely discursive conditions that make certain kinds of knowledge possible at particular moments in history. We will undertake this examination in the context of a broader inquiry into how history as a discipline is

understood today, that is, the specific character of those questions about history that are thinkable in the present. We will demonstrate that underlying our current ideas about history are the conceptual and linguistic possibilities and constraints that shape our ideas of *time* itself, and that these more fundamental conditions are, in fact, what make possible Foucault's 'archaeological' analyses.

In Chapter Two we will consider Foucault as Theorist. Here, we will examine Foucault's method of 'genealogy': a singularly theoretical mode of historical analysis that seeks to move away from archaeology's concern with 'pure' discourse towards an exploration of the material conditions under which discourse is produced (and, conversely, the discursive regime within which material conditions are themselves (re)constituted). We will show that genealogy's interest in these material conditions reflects a deeper concern with the problems of *space*. Genealogy's preoccupation with space leads it, we will demonstrate, to a further set of questions regarding the relationship (established by archaeology) between 'discursive' and 'non-discursive' domains of knowledge. We will argue that genealogy's attempt to dissolve this relationship—to annul what it perceives as an artificial division between the conditions that produce (and are produced by) matter and the conditions that produce (and are produced by) discourse—is made possible by a more generalised configuration of knowledge that sees space and time as unified and indistinguishable.

Finally, in Chapter Three we will look at Foucault as Storyteller. More precisely, we will examine the peculiar status that *truth* holds in Foucault's work, given that it is highly sceptical of the possibility of certainty in all kinds of discourse. Here we will encounter what might be the central paradox of Foucault's thought: on one hand, a total lack of faith in the existence of a 'space of truth' located outside the historically contingent conditions of language, and on the other hand, an apparent delight in those instances in history where marginalised voices succeed in speaking their 'truths'. We will argue that this contradiction in Foucauldian thought is, at core, a product of our current conditions of knowledge that permit a highly ambivalent conception of truth to flourish: in our scientific and philosophical discourses we wonder whether truth can ever be possible and yet in our everyday lives we behave *as if* truth is a given.

This ambivalence, we will show, is closely bound to the problem of self. What role can truth play in our *experience* of time and space? How true can the products of our consciousness be? Through an analysis of current scientific and philosophical perspectives on consciousness, we will demonstrate that not only our perception of the world, but also our perception of self (and therefore the claims to truth we make in our discourses) are, at base, historical fictions. This, we will conclude, has interesting consequences for those categories of discourse, such as 'historical fiction', which apparently rely on what is 'true'.

I

Donkey's Years

Once upon a time—let us call the moment 'the fourth century AD' or 'the later Roman Empire'—it occurred to us to ask, 'So what *is* time?' The question arose from an uncomfortable awareness: although in our everyday lives we behaved as if we knew what time was, when we actively sought to define it, we could not (Augustine, 231). Our common sense understanding of time as the measure of the movement of physical objects did not, we realised, explain the nature of time itself. We had no measure with which to measure our measure.

Of course, this was not the first time we thought to puzzle over this problem. Inquiry into the essential qualities of time had been taking place for at least nine centuries (Sorabji, 99); it was not an activity unique to us, the late Romans. What *was* new were the possibilities of thought about time in our time; what was new were the conditions under which our theories about time were produced, that is, the social, historical and linguistic factors which determined what was true about time for us.

Time had, by our time, become a problem that Christianity was obliged to address. If Christianity was, as it claimed to be, the sole holder of truths; if it was the system of laws that was to replace all previous systems, there was an onus on it to come up with answers to some fundamental questions about the world and its workings. And if we were to be true spokespersons for this modern religion—if we were to justify our conversion to ourselves and to others—we had to formulate explanations for certain phenomena, such as time, in a way that both conformed to the messages of the Bible and refuted those of the older pagan cults.

This task of distancing new truths from old falsehoods was to prove difficult, however. The challenge was not finding phrases about time that contradicted what had gone before. (Assuming an antagonistic position in relation to the existent myths and images came relatively easy to us; overturning and inverting ungodly convictions was indeed an essential feature of our Christian identity.) Rather, our troubles lay at a deeper level: we could not, we found, step outside of our time to produce entirely new—that is, entirely Christian—propositions about time. In the process of giving proper sense to our assertions, we came always to depend on what we were opposing. Which is to say: the historical circumstances that gave validity to our Christian lessons about time—those circumstances that made our lessons *thinkable* in the first place—were the same that supported the ostensibly conflicting teachings offered by other contemporary belief structures, from Manichee theosophy and Neoplatonic mysticism, to Scepticism and indeed Atheism (Chadwick, xiv-xxv). The fundamental conditions of knowledge that determined the truth of our Christian descriptions of time were identical to those that determined the truth of these other descriptions; the two discourses (old and new, pagan and Christian) were simply contrasting elements within the same system of knowledge; they were hostile products of a single discursive matrix, bound by the same limits and governed by the same rules concerning what was coherent, consistent, sound or acceptable. There was nothing stopping us from judging as false all non-Christian approaches to the question of time, but this did not mean that these rival approaches did not count as a kind of knowledge. Quite the opposite, they counted enough for us to include them as counterpoints in our formulations.

Looking back on our Roman selves, what brings this shared epistemological ground most vividly into view are the paradoxes that ran through and underlay our explanations of time. What these paradoxes reveal is that the relationship between our Christian discourse and the pagan discourse it was attempting to replace was, more often than not, marked by interdependence; the conclusions we came to were, in many instances, as irreligious as they were Godly. In our discussion here, we will focus on two of the most important of these paradoxes.

The first relates to the problem of time's existence, and specifically to the question, 'Where did time come from?' Our answer to this began with an unsurprising assertion: God made time. Time *was*—it existed—and therefore, like everything else in existence, it had to be God's creation.

> How could innumerable ages pass, which you [God] had not made? You are the originator and creator of all ages. What time existed which were not brought into being by you? Or how could they pass if they never had existence? …You have made time itself. Time could not elapse before you made time…There was no 'then' when there was no time. (Augustine, 229-30)

About this, then, we were clear: before God made the earth, there had been no time. Time had begun with the dawn of the physical world. Time was bound to matter. Although it had come out of heaven, it did not belong in heaven; time was itself thoroughly mundane.

Thus conceived, time was at once the product of eternity and the opposite of eternity. This raised the question of what sort of time eternity was. Was eternity a different kind of time? Was it time at all? We had to be careful when formulating our answer to this: it was unavoidable that we conceptualised eternity using our terrestrial conceptions of time (what other conceptions could we have?), but, equally, it was a crime—blasphemy—to attribute worldly time to God, for to do so was to presume that there was a human idea that could capture His vastness, and thereby mimic or reproduce it.

> Your 'years' are 'one day' (Ps. 89: 4; 2 Pet. 3: 8), and your 'day' is not any and every day but Today, because your Today does not yield to a tomorrow, nor did it follow on a yesterday. Your Today is eternity. (230)

In our attempt to construct a single account of the creation of time that, on one hand, related to our understanding of everyday time (our discourse had to be thinkable), and on the other hand, refrained from tarnishing God with connotations of transience (God had to remain eternal at all times), what we

actually ended up creating were two realms containing distinct forms of time: firstly, the time into which we had been born, and secondly, the no-time from which God had brought about time. In the former, things arose and then passed away in succession, while in the latter, nothing had ever arisen or died. There was time here on earth because God, who Himself had no time, said that time ought to exist elsewhere, outside of heaven. But—and here lies the paradox—how could God have created time if He had no time in which to create it? What kind of words could God have used to bring about time ('And God said, Let there be…') if the action of speaking itself required time?

> But how did you speak?…[If] it was with words which sound and pass away that you said that heaven and earth should be made, and if this was how you made heaven and earth, then a created entity belonging to the physical realm existed prior to heaven and earth; and that utterance took time to deliver, and involved temporal changes… Whatever it might have been which became the basis for such an utterance, unless it was created by you, it could not exist. Therefore for the creation of a physical entity to become the basis for these words, what kind of word would you have used? (225)

The only possible solution was that the words God used to make time were of an *eternal* sort.

> You call us, therefore, to understand the Word, God who is with you God (John 1: 1). That word is spoken eternally, and by it all things are uttered eternally. It is not the case that what was being said comes to an end, and something else is then said, so that everything is uttered in a succession with a conclusion, but everything is said in the simultaneity of eternity. Otherwise time and change would already exist, and there would not be a true eternity and true immortality…And so by the Word coeternal with yourself, you say all that you say in simultaneity and eternity, and whatever you say will come about does come about. You do not cause it to exist other than by speaking. Yet not all that you cause to exist by speaking is made in simultaneity and eternity. (226)

So, although it was true that God had taken a week to create the earth, that his verbal commands had come in succession, one leading onto the next, it was also true that each of these commands had happened in a space where all words were simultaneous and eternal; the action of bringing about time on earth had itself been timeless. Hence our conviction that reality was double and divided: here there was the reality of our fleeting words and over there, separate from us, there was the reality of God's eternal Word. God's Word had no time; it functioned as a kind of endless Wisdom from which our meagre knowledge sprang. Our having to use fleeting words to communicate our commands (to ourselves, to others, to nature) was a consequence of our fallen state. Thanks to our original sin, our words were, and would always be, inadequate for the expression of divine actions.

The exception was the Bible. Although made up of our words, the Bible consisted of His Word; it was a gift from Him, a flowing of words from his Word. This fact opened up the possibilities of time for us: if we studied the Bible and spoke only with the words we found there; if we lived in our time with the Bible's timeless truth within us, guiding our actions, we could, on some rare occasions, experience a beatific vision and thereby live, if only for an instant, God's eternal time here on earth. What this meant was that, in some special circumstances, the two separate realms of time entered into a relation; channels opened between them. The challenge for us was to lead a life that would bring about this opening of channels; the challenge was to dedicate our lives to devotion, to speak only of God using his Word; the challenge was to transcend our words and glimpse the other eternal reality.

> Who can lay hold on the heart and give it fixity, so that for some little moment it may be stable, and for a fraction of time may grasp the splendour of a constant eternity? Then it may compare eternity with temporal successiveness which never has any constancy, and will see there is no comparison possible…Who will lay hold on the human heart to make it still, so that it can see how eternity, in which there is neither future nor past, stands still and dictates future and past times? Can my hand have the strength for this? Can the hand of my mouth by mere speech achieve so great a thing? (228-29).

Our insistence on the realness of time in both its earthly and Godly manifestations, and on the possibility of real, if momentary, communication between the two domains, was, at base, a rejection of Sceptical ideas that were current in our era. Sceptics doubted the possibility of any certainty—any fundamental *reality*—except in questions of pure mathematics (Sonabji, 150). They looked with suspicion on any attempt to attribute truth to any phenomenon that could not be tested in a theorem. By arguing that our day and God's Today were to the same extent real (even if not to the same degree holy), we were, in effect, disassociating ourselves from these radical doubters. This attempt at disassociation was not wholly successful, however. When it came to disproving the Sceptics, we could not avoid articulating peculiarly Sceptical concerns.

These concerns stem from the fact that, although we swore by the reality of earthly time, we could not properly attribute existence to at least two of its tenses: the past and the future. We understood that if nothing passed away there would be no past and if nothing were still coming there would be no future, but, try as we might, we could ground neither the past nor the future in reality; no matter how hard we tried to grasp them, the past continued to be no longer and the future continued to be not yet (Augustine, 231). Despite the traces of the past and the images of the future that shaped our landscapes and weighed upon our consciousness, it seemed the present was all there actually *was*.

> If future and past events exist, I want to know where they are. If I have not the strength to discover the answer, at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. (233)

This inability to locate the past and the future threatened to undermine our conviction that time was a reality. That is to say, it threatened to make Sceptics of us by destroying our certainty about the existence of time. This could not, of course, be allowed to happen. As one of God's creations, time had to be saved.

Our solution was to subsume the past and the future into the present. In order to account for the slipperiness of the past and the future, we began to treat them as conscious states residing within the larger and more real present state.

> Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come…The present considering the past is the memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation. (235)

This represented a significant shift in our vision. Time went from being an objective to a subjective reality. It ceased being a phenomenon that could be measured against eternity, and became instead a form of consciousness: an awareness of what had happened and what was happening and what might happen. It had, in short, entered the mind.

> So it is in you, my mind, that I measure periods of time… The impression which passing events make upon you abides when they are gone. That present consciousness is what I am measuring, not the stream of past events which have caused it. (242)

Here, we see a curiously Sceptical account of time: time as internal measure; time as consciousness measuring consciousness; time as 'I' timing the current impressions of 'I'. And our Scepticism was not to stop at this. Once we had understood that the three tenses of time were in fact different modulations of the present; once we had identified time *as the present*, we were obliged to account for this present, and this task was to lead us into even more uncertain waters.

> If we can think of some bit of time which cannot be divided into even the smallest instantaneous moments, that alone is what we can call 'present'. And this time flies so quickly from future into past that it is an interval with no duration. If it has duration, it is divisible into past and future. But the present occupies no space. (232)

This, then, is the second important paradox of our Christian discourse on time. The present—that which we believed to contain all time—could not itself be measured; it had no perceivable duration. The present appeared to be both instantaneous (instantaneously short, gone as soon as we blinked) and infinite (infinitely long, there as long as we looked). Every moment that we tried to fix was, by the time we fixed it, already gone, and every moment we thought we fixed could itself be infinitely divided. The measure of the present's passing was not stable. We found it impossible to mark the moment in which it slipped into the past or rolled on to the future. When, we were left wondering, did *now* become *then*?

> But how do we measure present time when it has no extension? It is measured when it passes, but not when it has passed, because then there will be nothing there to measure…In what extension then do we measure time as it is passing? Is it in the future out of which it comes to pass by? No, for we do not measure what does not yet exist. Is it in the present through which it passes? No, for we cannot measure that which has no extension. Is it in the past into which it is moving? No, for we cannot measure what now does not exist. (236)

Here, we were treading on dangerous ground. If, as we contended, the present was the only real form of time, and if the present was by all accounts immeasurable, it meant that the present was not time at all but eternity. And if this was true, then we who resided in the present were God.

Blasphemy!

To suggest that, like God, we lived in eternity was to compare ourselves to God; it was to impersonate Him; it was to give ourselves equal importance; it was to pretend to be coeternal with Him; and, although by thinking such a thing we had proved it was thinkable, it was nevertheless unacceptable. Somehow we must ascribe mortality to the present.

> Yet if the present were always present, it would not pass into the past: it would not be time but eternity. If then, in order to be time at all, the present is so made that it passes

> into the past, how can we say that this present also 'is'? The cause of its being is that it will cease to be. So indeed we cannot truly say that time exists except in the sense that it tends towards non-existence. (231)

Our thinking was pulling us in two different directions. As Christians our task was to devote ourselves to God, and through this devotion, to rise above time, an experience which would demonstrate to us the difference between our transient lives and the eternity of heaven. Equally, however, any suggestion that eternity could exist outside of the specific circumstances of a beatific vision had to be invalidated. Eternity could not exist *all the time* on earth; the present had to be allowed to die, otherwise it would be heaven.

This ambivalent attitude towards the apparently timeless quality of the present reveals an underlying struggle to expunge our discourse of pagan vocabularies, and in particular the vocabulary of Neoplatonism. Neoplatonist mysticism was grounded in the belief that the purified soul, purged of all physical contact and all images of material things, was capable of achieving a union with the One (God). For Neoplatonism, this experience was one in which the soul was lifted up beyond the successiveness of time to the simultaneity of eternity, and the only method to gain such an experience was introspection; Neoplatonism exhorted us to go into ourselves. In so doing, we escaped the successiveness of the temporal process, which distracted our soul from its ascent into eternity. During our ascent, we moved from discursive to non-discursive thinking and then finally to a union with the One. In this sense, to have a mystical experience was, for Neoplatonism, to achieve a sense of timelessness (O'Meara, 91-111).

It was Neoplatonism, then, that provided us with a model for our quest for transcendence or the union with God (O'Connell, 139-42). The only means we found to distance ourselves from this model was to speak of a less complete union with God. In Christian transcendence, we did not become a timeless being—we do not *become* God—but only momentarily lost our attachment to time as we caught sight of Him in the beatific vision. Ultimately, only after death, and only for a number of souls (those who were chosen by God to be saints and angels), was it possible to become truly eternal (Sorabji, 168).

Today, we—let us call ourselves citizens of the late American Empire, or 'late Americans'—are still wondering about the nature of time. Is time the fourth dimension of the universe (a plane with an actual existence) or is it a reified abstraction (a concept, an idea)? Did it begin with the Big Bang or with human awareness of the passing day? Does it—can it—have an existence independent of motion to be measured? Does it proceed in a straight line and in a single direction? Is it uninterrupted (a continuum) or does it have discrete durations (atomistic)? Can we even ask such questions if we have not addressed the underlying problem of whether, outside of our minds, it *proceeds* at all? (Holford-Stevens, i).

Although we no longer direct our questions to a God or a One; although we devise our inquiry in such a way that empirically quantifiable solutions are favoured over those that are merely metaphysically justifiable, nevertheless we struggle to wholly erase mystical discourse from our investigations. Like for the late Romans, this mysticism—this letting-in of doubt and speculation—is most in evidence when we try to measure bodies and events as they occur *in the present*.

For instance, we find it impossible both to assign a precise instant to when a note is sounded and to know precisely what the pitch is. This is because determining the pitch of the note requires us to analyse the frequency of the sound (the length of its wave), and this requires us to listen to the note for a period lasting several oscillations before an accurate estimate can be made (Polkinghorne, 33). If we want to know what the note is, we cannot know the exact moment of its emergence into 'the now', and vice versa. Delving deeper, quantum theory tells us that we cannot have perfect knowledge of the position *and* speed of a particle (Coles, 109). If we can pinpoint the particle exactly, then its speed (the time it takes to cover a given distance) remains completely unknown. Conversely, if we know its speed precisely, then the particle could be located anywhere. In other words, we can know where a particle is, but not know what it

is doing (present continuous); or we can know what it is doing, but not know where it *is* (present simple).

In other words, our conception of time requires duration. For the purposes of our philosophical and historical discourses, we require time-as-duration in order to formulate questions or assign signification to practices or events: an immeasurable instant in 'the now' cannot hold meaning in the way a series of instants that we conceive to have passed can. In our scientific work, meanwhile, we assign time to phenomena of increasingly short duration. As of 2010, our measuring record stands at 12 attoseconds (and attosecond being a quintillionth of a second), which is itself 10^{24} times larger than our theoretically conceived Planck time, a value that we describe, with characteristic hubris, as the smallest time measurement that *will ever be* possible. What this actually means is that within the context of the laws of physics as we understand them today, we can neither measure nor detect any change for times less than one Planck time apart (Coles, 9). Beyond this—down there, somewhere—time is instantaneous (infinite, eternal, God-like).

Is that where 'the now' is?

To think about duration even for a second is to understand the artificiality of our systems of time measurement. For our scientists, it is to wonder about the role of mathematics in physical theory, and to ask, is nature really mathematical? (Coles, 123). For our philosophers and historians, it is to wake from the delusion, firstly, that our markers of time (attosecond, second, minute, hour, year) possess a reality beyond the conventions that created them, and secondly, that the discourses we attach to these markers (the 'disciplines of knowledge' or the 'human sciences' that we construct around them) correspond in any direct way to the human life that existed in 'the now' now past. Lastly, for late American community as a whole, it is to understand a) that time has to have duration if it is to make sense to us, b) that time with duration is a concept, and c) that this concept is what makes it possible for us to think about time at all.

This is more than mere tautology. Consideration of the temporal aspect of thought—the measure in time of its eruption, elucidation, utterance, dissemination—has profound consequences for our understanding of the present, and therefore

how we think of the past. As we consider it further here, it may even lead to a reformulation of our old Christian definition of 'immediate awareness' as 'present considering the present,' and thereby to a position where we can detect the assumptions we continue to rely on in order to speak with 'straightforwardness' and 'common sense' about the past and the present in our discourses, especially those we define as 'historical'.

The minuteness of an attosecond, the *experience* of it, is far beyond our consciousness and our imaginations. This is because we—the atoms that have gathered into collections that now think they are us—are huge compared to those constituent parts (Close, *Nothing*, 2). Our senses have developed in a way that allows us to make sense of the macroscopic world, but leaves us blind to the molecular world that exists in restless agitation around us. Self-awareness involves vast numbers of atoms, and when large numbers of atoms become organised, simple regularities can emerge and be perceived; we can assign properties to the organised collection that we cannot assign to individual atoms or small numbers of them. Laws that we see operating at the level of individual atoms become organised into new laws as we move our sights to more complex systems. It is this hierarchy of structures and laws that enables us to understand and describe the world as we see it (without scientific instruments), even if our understanding and our descriptions are inadequate to the worlds—just as real and infinitely vaster—that we cannot see (91). Were it to suddenly develop an individual human-like consciousness, an atom would not experience time as we do; neither, at the other end of the scale, would a planet or a galaxy. The tick of the clock might make sense to our minds, but it certainly does not to an atom or a star. Our *perception* of the present and its deep *reality*—its microscopic and macroscopic infinity—cannot be the same. The exact location and momentum of every particle in the universe at a precise point in time is an inconceivable reality for our science, our philosophy and our history—our mind—and yet this is what 'the now' must ultimately be.

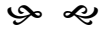
Simultaneity *is* 'the now' (what we are doing here and what they are doing there are actions in the same 'now') and yet to relay information (to tell them what we are doing, or to see us do it) implies a duration, however small, and a passing away of the moment that we are telling or that they are seeing. Experiments have been done to measure the lag between things happening and us experiencing them. The results show that our conscious experience takes time to assemble (Carroll, 64). Neuropsychology has revealed that we re-sort our memories within fractions of a second so as to change the order in which we shall remember events happening, and that decisions we are going to make are detectable by brain scans before we are conscious of having decided anything (Deutsch, 5). We will put aside the questions that these findings raise about free will (we will return to them in Chapter Three), and focus for now the consequences they have for our understanding of 'immediate awareness' or 'direct conscious experience': henceforth, we must allow for the possibility that experiencing something *directly* in the mind may in fact be an illusion of the perceiving mind itself, and that what direct experience represents is not 'the present considering present', as we once believed, but 'the present *pastness* of things present already considered'.

What this means is that the conscious present—our *mental* here and now—is not equivalent to 'the now', and must by definition contain something of the past. To measure what we perceive, and thereby to understand it, we need to wait until the act of perceiving has lasted a certain amount of time. If we are perceiving an explosion, this may be only a second; if we are perceiving a current battle or a revolution, it may be a day or a week; if like Foucault we are perceiving 'the Modern Age' it may be decades or even hundreds of years. The result is always the same, however: our 'direct' mental experiences are not actually present to what phenomena, images or texts they are describing. 'The now' cannot form part of our discourse, for 'the now' is not time (Gefter, 42).

What this actually means for us is that the brain itself, as a collection of atoms, exists in 'the now' like everything else, but its products—the reactions, thoughts, interpretations that it issues in order for us to have conscious, rational experience—need time to mature into movements or mental objects, and must

therefore necessarily contain an element of the past: the present that we are reacting to, thinking about, interpreting, has *always already* moved away. It may well be true that the fundamental non-conscious mechanics of understanding occur somewhere deep in the instantaneous 'now', but all we can ever hope to have conscious knowledge of is the mental present, with all its inherent pastness. This is because it takes time to understand that we have understood. To observe with our minds—to think—is an inherently historical act.

When did *now* become *then*? When we took the time to think about it.



When something moves, we believe that it changes. Clocks tell us that time is linked somehow to change. From here, there are two paths that lead to opposing views of time, the first of which (the idea that time is a real, fundamental property of the universe, that it provides the framework in which events take place) we are in the process of rejecting. The path we are following instead leads us to believe that change itself is the fundamental property of the universe and that time emerges from our mental efforts to organise the changing world we see around us (Clark, 38). When we observe or measure change, we are making time, and in the process, our state of knowledge changes. Which is to say: measurement represents what is known by us rather than what has actually changed out there in 'the now.' What we *know* (time) and what *is happening* ('the now') are different, and can never be the same. What we know is discursive (it is expressed in thought); what *is* is extra-discursive (it *is* whether we think about it or not). Or to put it all another way: the discourses which our thought expresses as knowledge are historical; what we are knowing is a history of a mentally fixed present and not the truth of 'the ever-changing now'.

When considering the form of knowledge that we call history, it is important to notice that the present that we choose to speak *to* is as much a construction as the past we choose to speak *of*. 'The then' has occurred and cannot be resurrected as actual events but only *represented* in a discourse that we call the past (Jenkins, 8). Likewise, 'the now' is now occurring, but what we measure and

turn into knowledge in the mind are only *representations* of it: what we call the present. The past (our limited memories, our fragmented record of events) is not 'the then' (the totality of what is gone), while the present (the phenomena we can perceive around us) is not 'the now' (the totality of what is).

History is discourse; discourse is historical.

This principle—the basis for what we might call 'language-model epistemology'—severs the tie between discourse (in our case history) and any external reality to it on the grounds that discourse *is* the structure of mental life, and no discourse can ever stand outside itself to observe a reality external to itself (Partner, 95). In other words, our discourses (our histories) speak not to real events but to other discourses that purport to be about real events. Our minds cannot get out of discourse to check if our discourses correspond to the real world or its past, because these discourses constitute our mental reality (Jenkins, 11).

The world—and only most obviously its past—comes to us with a duration in time. This duration (this pastness that is *always already*) is essential to discourse, for it is within it that our concepts of beginning and end, including forgotten beginnings and unreached ends, and our simultaneous awareness of impenetrable reality and intelligible story, are given existence (Partner, 92). An acute sense of history, the feeling of being in the middle of a story fraught with meaning, which must have had a beginning *somewhere* and will somewhere have an ending, in which the pattern will be completed and revealed, is characteristic of our minds (90). In this sense, our knowledge comes not directly from the world but emerges as we organise, configure and plot out what our minds perceive (Munslow, 8). Our knowledge does not directly correspond to the world but instead to the discourses themselves that order the world in our minds.

Despite the wide currency of such ideas, most of the history we write today persists in claiming *reality* as its authority (White, 'The Value of Narrativity,' 23). This kind of history we shall call 'traditional', not to suggest that its methods are driven by nostalgia for a history *as we once did it*, but rather to acknowledge its own long and ongoing history, its endurance through at least two centuries into the present. Traditional history depends, for its special tone, on a concept of language which unhesitatingly asserts the external reality of 'the now' and 'the then', its

intelligibility in the form of ideas, concepts, phenomena or other mental things, and a direct connection between mental things and verbal signs (Partner, 94-5). In this sense, it is the kind of history which continues to make the real into an object of desire (what *really* happened?). It remains resolute in imposing a formal coherency on events, which it then presents as real. This reality wears the mask of a meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience (White, 'The Value of Narrativity,' 24).

In its petitions to reality, traditional history is supported by a number of underlying images, one of the most potent of which is the 'dialogue' or 'argument' that it imagines itself initiating between 'the real now' and 'the real then'. It is this image that it most regularly summons when it is called upon to define itself.

> The reciprocal process of interaction between the historian and his facts, what I have called the dialogue between present and past, is a dialogue not between abstract and isolated individuals, but between the society of today and the society of yesterday…The past is intelligible to us only in light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past and to increase his mastery over the society of the present is the dual function of history. (Carr, 49)

Indeed, in some cases, it seems, the dialogue can go *forwards* as well as backwards.

> [O]bjectivity in history does not and cannot rest on some fixed and immovable standard of judgement existing here and now, but only on a standard which is laid up in the future and is evolved as the course of history progresses. History acquires meaning and objectivity when it establishes a coherent relation between past and future. (124)

Even when such self-conceptualisations make concessions to 'the unavoidability of interpretation', 'the multiplicity of historical voices' or 'the gaps in the

record'—gestures made to demonstrate, perhaps, that traditional history is 'postmodernising' at a rate at least as fast as the other disciplines—still they ultimately rely for their validity on a deeply embedded optimism in the capacity of discourse to offer accounts of the 'the real now' and 'the real then', accounts which can then be used as lenses through which each can view the other.

Which is to say: whether its indulgences to postmodernism have been paid or not, traditional history remains, at turns, a 'reconstructionist' and a 'constructionist' mode of doing history. The reconstructionist approach maintains a foundational belief in empiricism and historical meanings deriving from sense experience as mediated by discourse. It claims that history is about objective and forensic research into the sources, the reconstructing of the past as it actually happened, and the freedom of the whole process from ideological contamination and artistic ambiguity (Munslow, 20). It believes it possible to detect bias and expunge it by attending scrupulously to what the sources say (Jenkins, 46). Constructionism, meanwhile, appeals to general laws in historical explanation in an effort to build all-encompassing theories to account for past phenomena. It examines much broader sweeps of history and searches for deeply rooted currents in past economies, societies and cultures. Drawing on anthropology, among other disciplines, it sketches out the *unstated* or *unrecognized* reasons why people did the things they did. What it hopes to grasp is the *mentality* of people living in previous ages (Arnold, 98).

Given that traditional history still exists—that it keeps on securing widespread authorisation for its continuance—we can only suppose it must change the state of our knowledge in ways that continue to be compelling for us. Yet, to judge from the amount that we have written against it in recent years, and from the persistence of our urge to extend and enrich these criticisms, it must also be that we are ill at ease with at least some of its principles and methods. It must be that we want it to acknowledge—we do not yet know how—the undiscoverable, possibly meaningless, and open-ended nature of its objects (the past and the present). Of course, we are unsure if traditional history could make such an acknowledgement *and* carry on being traditional history, but this does not stop our wanting; it does not satisfy our hunger for a kind of history that would

educate us about the pastness of the things present and the unknowability of 'the now'.

Traditional history and the criticisms made of it occupy the same constructed present (the present pastness of things present). If we are to find an alternative to traditional history, it is in the same present that we must search. With a regard that is by necessity backward-looking, retrospective, we must seek out the kinds of history that are at once 'non-traditional' *and* thinkable, according to the criteria established by our analysis of the concept of time, and within the conditions of knowledge as they exist today.

Chance, accident, occasion lead us to that body of texts, located in the present of postmodern theory—*present* because, though far from novel, it has not yet decayed into a state of unthinkableness—that we shall call 'Foucauldian'. We shall call it this not because the man Foucault was the absolute origin of, or the sole genius behind, the ideas and methods it puts into practice, but rather because his name is a recognised sign, a sort of metonymic substitution, for a network of related discourses of which Foucault's texts make up an important but by no means total number of cells.

An analysis of this Foucauldian network implies a triple folding back of our discursive present: we will be looking back into our present to see the ways in which the Foucauldian critique looks back into *its* present to criticise what *it* calls 'traditional history'. The traditional history that we will see through the lens of Foucauldian criticism, and, in turn, the Foucauldian criticisms that we will see through our own critical lens (one that has been given its own particular strength and curve by our questions concerning the idea of time) will necessarily be distinct from each of these elements considered in isolation; distinct, yes, and perhaps more capable, too, of identifying which problems of history are solved, which are ignored and which are overlooked by, on one hand, each element individually, and on the other hand, by the three elements folded together.

As we take this look back, the first thing we notice about Foucauldian history is its 'magnanimity'. Foucauldian history recognises that traditional history remains determinedly thinkable in our present, and, what is more, it understands that its own validity hinges upon its compatibility with traditional history's accounts (Goldstein, 12). For these reasons, Foucauldian history openly supports traditional history's right to continue to explain the past as it has always done; all it asks of traditional history is that it be careful not to look at itself more closely than it does, not to peel away the banalities it depends upon for its operations, for if were to do so, it would notice that there is more to explain than it thinks (Veyne, 'Foucault Revolutionises History', 156). In this sense, Foucauldian history ironically claims *not* to be critical. Its approach is not, it says, a way of proving that everyone else is wrong. Quite the opposite: it understands that discourse is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different methods. Rather than trying to reduce others to silence by claiming that what they say is worthless, it undertakes the more 'positive' task of defining the present from which it speaks (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 17).

It is not by pretending to transcend its own historical standpoint, or by speaking from a fictitious future, that Foucauldian history is able to submit the present to analysis; on the contrary, it achieves this by attributing duration to the present, and by sitting within it, an *embedded* perceiver of what in the present has always already past. As such, it is not interested in uncovering what cannot be seen. It is not interested in the reconstitution, on the basis of what the documents in the archive say or hint at, of the past from which those documents emanate and which has now disappeared far behind them; it is not interested, that is, in treating discourse as the language of a voice since reduced to silence (6). It is interested, instead, in the documents themselves *as they appear*. It is interested in working from within the same present in which the documents exist, in order to develop them, organise them, divide them up, distribute them, order them, arrange them in levels, establish series, distinguish between what is relevant and what is not, discover elements, define unities and describe relations (7).

For Foucauldian history, then, the archive does not enable us to reconstitute the past—to recover a lost 'voice'—but represents a field that must itself be searched for unifying structures, series and relations (Delaporte, 141). Implicit in this approach is a dismissal of the image, essential to traditional history, of an age-old collective consciousness that makes use of material documents to refresh its memory; a dismissal of the kind of history that is primarily and fundamentally about 'remembering' or 'memorising' a reality that floats, in an indistinct but retrievable form, beneath the surviving documents. In contrast to this, Foucauldian history sees its work simply as that which is expended on the material documentation that exists today; it sees its work as one way in which we can recognise and develop the mass of documentation with which our structures of knowledge are inextricably linked (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7).

In this sense, it does not set out to discover what is obscured or concealed, but to make visible precisely *what is visible*. Or if we prefer: it makes evident what is so close, so immediate, so intimately linked to us, that we do not perceive it (Davidson, 'Structures and Strategies of Discourse', 2). It regards what is thought to be hidden beneath the archive as that which is, in fact, most familiar to us because most consistently 'uncovered' in our discourses; and argues that, actually, what we are unable to see *because it is always before our eyes* holds more interest (3).

Since everything that Foucauldian history needs lies open to view, there is nothing to explain. That is to say, it is not, by its own claims, hermeneutic: it does not seek another, better-hidden discourse to the one it sees. To this end, in place of explanation, it puts *description*. Or rather, it offers its mode of description as a *precondition* of the explanatory task (Davidson, 'Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics', 223). Ultimately, all it wants to do, it says, is describe statements in the field of discourse and the relations of which they are capable (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 31).

Thus, the Foucauldian method asks on what could be based the *relations* and *unity* of the large groups of statements that constitute a particular history. As opposed to traditional history, which might explain this unity in terms of a full and

continuous field of objects, or a normative type of statement, or a well-defined set of notions, or the permanence of a thematic, or a progressively deductive structure, or the *oeuvre* of a collective subject; as opposed to this approach, it sets out to discover whether, between the constitutive statements of history, it can discern a regularity: an order in their successive appearance, correlations in their simultaneity, assignable positions in space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchised transformations (37).

Perhaps foreseeing the threat posed by homogenisation to an approach based on relations and regularity, Foucauldian history insists that the discursive visibilities to be described must not be gathered in groupings based on uniformity or sameness, or brought together within globalising or totalising frameworks. These kinds of 'regularities' are, it argues, incompatible with another of its defining tasks: the specification of difference. In this respect, Foucauldian history overlaps with other areas of postmodern theory (Derridean, Baudrillardean) that seek *not* to overcome the differences they might discern in a set of discourses; which seek not to hide them, smooth them out or explain them away; but which try to locate them, to analyse them, to say what exactly they consist of, to *differentiate* them (171).

But Foucauldian history can be itself differentiated from other postmodern approaches in at least one significant way: it does not dissolve all forms of structure, coherence and intelligibility into an endless flux of signification (Best, 44). Having cleared the ground of those traditional assumptions which make discourses that are actually dispersed appear close-knit or homologous, or which make those that are actually adjoining appear distant or analogous; having shone a light on their actual difference, it then attempts to grasp what forms of regularities and relations really *do* exist among them. In other words, its task is not just to attain a plurality of histories juxtaposed and independent of one another, but also to determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between

different series and configurations of things (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 10).

To put all this into a Foucauldian vocabulary, then: Foucauldian history aspires to the condition of 'archaeology', to the intrinsic *description* and *differentiation* of visible documents (7). Such a form of archaeology—what is, at base, a metaphor that Foucauldian history uses to describe its own methods to itself—does not lay bare an edifice; it does not propose to reconstruct that which once stood, *as* it once stood; instead it calls attention to the diversity of the visible fragments by spreading them out into distinct parcels in such a manner as to reveal relationships that would otherwise have remained unheeded, or that were perhaps too obvious to bother with before (Delaporte, 142). Unlike a 'geology', which might be seen reaching into and seeing for itself the underlying sediments of discourse, archaeology claims access only to the surface effects (specific uses of language) from which it must somehow infer more general structures of a system of discourse. Thus the particular documents to be studied are important only for what they tell us about the overall configuration of the site from which they were excavated (Gutting, *Foucault*, 34).

But wait: *more general* structures? *system* of discourse? *overall* configuration? Are these not the kinds of totalising explanations that archaeology sets out to avoid? If the point of archaeology is to remain on the surface of a particular discursive field; if its aim is not to define a second discourse concealed or revealed by the visible one, but instead to define that visible discourse itself, in all its specificity, then what is this extra field of knowledge it discerns, this added layer of epistemological interest that, apparently, lies exterior to, or ulterior to, discourse itself?

To answer this, let us first of all address, in good Foucauldian fashion, what this 'overall configuration' is *not*.

> [A]rchaeology does not try to restore what has been thought, wished, aimed at, experienced, desired by men in the very moment at which they expressed it in discourse; it does not set out to recapture that elusive nucleus in which the author and the *oeuvre* exchange identities…[I]t does

> not try to repeat what has been said by reaching it in its identity. It does not claim to efface itself in the ambiguous modesty of a reading that would bring back, in all its purity, the distant, precarious, almost effaced light of the origin. (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 139-40)

When archaeology demarcates a discursive configuration, it is involved in an enterprise very distinct from that which would purport to unearth an ontological foundation that would somehow ground discourse. Indeed, the idea that the precise essence of an object of thought can somehow be brought to light, or that 'origin' is the locus of truth, is precisely what the demarcations of archaeology are trying to render unthinkable. The relations archaeology describes, the limits it fixes, the comparisons and correlations it makes are indeed *intended to question* any explanation that has recourse to final causes and zero points. In the archaeological view, quite against teleological thinking, there is nothing prior to knowledge, or subsequent to it (although there are certainly things that rest outside it) because knowledge is defined by the combination of what is visible and what is articulable in a field of discourse (Deleuze, 51). For this reason, rather than project itself forwards to an imagined last word, or recede ever backwards to an illusory first whisper, archaeology stays radically in the present (that is, the present pastness of things present) in order to restore to that present its own historical *originality*. In doing so, it exposes any attempt made by traditional history to recapture 'ultimate' human experience as merely an exercise in anthropologism; an outgrowing of the empirical belief in a conceptual abstraction called Man (Hoy, 'Introduction', 2).

For this is the second point: if the 'overall configuration' that archaeology discerns in a field of knowledge is not origin, then by the same token, it is not Man either. Man, in the archaeological view, is not a 'natural object' that we can grasp and understand in its totality, but an idea, a problem, and not even the oldest nor the most constant problem we have ever posed for ourselves. On the contrary, it is one of our more recent inventions (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 387).

According to archaeology, Man eventually emerged as an object of thought (the 'target' for psychology, sociology and literature) when, only a couple of

centuries ago, the human being for the first time became not only an aloof representing subject, but also the object of modern scientific investigation, a finite and historically determined being to be studied in its living, labouring, and speaking capacities (303). Embedded in a new (modern) field of temporality and finitude, Man as master of knowledge became threatened: how could he continue to be master of knowledge when he was now also its object? (Best, 41). From this question there were generated, in turn, a series of unstable but enduring contradictions: Man is determined by external forces yet aware of this determination and able to free himself from it; history precedes Man but he is the phenomenological source from which history unfolds; Man both constitutes and is constituted by an external world (42).

Traditional history attempts to resolve these contradictions by recuperating the primacy and autonomy of the thinking subject. It gives us back our sovereignty over knowledge by reconstituting us in transcendental form: 'Man', 'Humanism', 'History', 'Progress'. For Man, this gift to himself, represents:

> the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainly that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted entity; the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness—will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 12)

Traditional history rehearses this play of Man awarding transcendence to himself every time it gives absolute priority to the observing subject; every time it attributes a constituent role to an individual act; every time it places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity; every time it tells of noumenal subjects moving through time; every time it focuses on works and themes; every time it expounds generalities and reports anecdotes; every time it draws on Humanism and Progress as the guiding lights of History (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xiv; Delaporte, 140).

Archaeology, on the other hand, aims at history without Man. It does so not to assert that human beings are nothing, but rather to expose the concept of Man as a fraud (Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', 39). There is no subject, it argues; there is no 'I' prior to the forms of description and action appropriate to a person. Every way in which we can think of ourselves as people and agents is something that has been constituted within a web of historical events; in terms of our thoughts and our knowledge, a thing-in-itself is impossible (36). This way of conceiving Man represents a change of emphasis: the stage on which we enact our history, as well as much of the script, now seems to be established independently of our thoughts and actions (Gutting, *Foucault*, 34). Whereas traditional history takes the transcendental signified, Man, as definitive of human reality, archaeology maintains that Man is just one contingent interpretation of that reality, and that, as such, it might one day pass from our knowledge (our set of truth-claims) and become unthinkable (Gutting, 'Michel Foucault: A User's Manual', 11-12).

So, these 'overall configurations' which archaeology discerns when it describes, differentiates and disperses the discursive fragments of a field of knowledge: if they are evidence of the existence of neither an origin we can retreat to, nor a real Man we can depend upon, then what, in fact, are they?

The key is language. Or more precisely: language conceived as a structure independent of those who use it. Archaeology works on the principle that at any given period in a given domain (late Roman, late American), there are substantial constraints on how people are able to think. There are, of course, the formal constraints of grammar and logic, which exclude certain formulations as meaningless or self-contradictory, but what archaeology is interested in is a further set of constraints, perhaps unperceived by or incomprehensible to those following them, which substantially restrict the range of possible thought, and hence make certain ideas unthinkable. If it can decipher what these rules are—what kinds of discursive relations they bring about—archaeology believes it will

be able to see how apparently arbitrary constraints actually makes sense within the framework defined by them (Gutting, *Foucault*, 32).

For archaeology, then, what is consciously going on in the minds of scientists, philosophers or historians during a given period is less important than the underlying structures that form the conditions in which their thinking operates. It is not so much interested in, say, Darwin or Descartes or Foucault, as in what made the ideas of these people possible.

> We must be careful to distinguish here between two forms and two levels of investigation. The first would be a study of opinions in order to discover [for example] who in the eighteenth century was a Physiocrat and who an Antiphysiocrat; what interests were at stake; what were the points and arguments of the polemic; how the struggle for power developed. The other, which takes no account of the persons involved, or their history, consists in defining the conditions on the basis of which it was possible to conceive of both the 'physiocratic' and 'utilitarian' knowledge in interlocking and simultaneous forms. The first analysis would be in the province of doxology. Archaeology can recognise and practice only the second. (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 200)

Archaeology does not, therefore, exclude subject-centred accounts, but points out that they are prone to distortions deriving from the false assumption that history is primarily driven by the experience and projects of the consciousnesses that 'live' it. To overcome such distortions, archaeology introduces into its historical account forces outside conscious thought; micro-forces which are at odds with the continuity and direction that we read into our macro-visions of the present and the past.

In this world of micro-order, what unifies a field of discourse is not so much the permanence and uniqueness of the objects of discourse (statements) as the space itself in which they emerge. What defines the relations between the statements are their *rules of formation*, or, more positively, their *conditions of possibility*: those structures, made visible by the statements themselves, which determine the syntactic and semantic form—the material content—of what is said

and thought. When archaeology sets out to describe a field of statements in their specificity, what it must show, in fact, is that the set of rules or family of conditions that it puts into operation is irreducible to any other (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 139).

This concern with the unconscious (or, if we prefer, *non*-conscious or *extra*-conscious) conditions for thought is not new; at least since Kant we have been wondering for some time about where to find them and how to define them. The conditions that previous approaches claimed to have discovered, however, were usually universally applicable, necessary constraints on *all* possible experiences, whereas for archaeology the conditions for thought are contingent on the particular historical situation and vary over time and domains of knowledge (Gutting, *Foucault*, 36). That is to say, archaeological constraints are not global and immutable in character, nor grounded in the structure of the mind, but are historically changing and specific to given discursive domains; they operate according to a sort of uniform anonymity, but only on those who undertake to speak in a particular time and place, and in a particular discipline or discursive field (Best, 40; Deleuze, 56; Flynn, 31-32).

To the total set of conditions and constraints which unite the discursive field at a given period, and which thereby give rise to the effects of knowledge, archaeology gives the name *epistemological field* or *episteme*. The episteme is not a form of knowledge in itself, nor is it a hermeneutic framework into which knowledge can be placed; it is the (conceptual) entirety of regularities that can be discovered among the discourses of a given period (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 191).

In any given culture and at any given moment, archaeology admits only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge (*The Order of Things*, 168). It looks back into the archive in order to map out the configurations of the individual epistemes that it discerns there. In doing so, however, it remains all of the time aware that this mapping enterprise is regulated by its own episteme, that it is characterised by those tools of analysis that the present pastness of things present allows.

Within its own episteme-determined analyses, then, archaeology discerns four distinctive epistemes that have existed between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries: the first begins in the late Middle Ages and comes to an end in the late sixteenth century; the second spans the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the third begins around the end of the eighteenth century and extends to the early twentieth century; the fourth is the just-emerging-present of the late twentieth century (that is, the present that we are looking back on here).

According to archaeology, the first episteme (roughly, the Renaissance) characterises knowledge according to the dominant protocol of resemblance or similitude, where closely related objects are viewed as part of a Great Chain of Being. In the second episteme (the Classical Age or the Age of Reason), knowledge is generated according to rules that required a clear sense of differentness. In this age, objects are understood and explained by distinguishing them from each other so as to create meaningful comparison, an approach which generated the kind of knowledge dominated by contiguity and continuity, classification and measurement, and the idea that order can be imposed on the world through the vehicle of a transparent language. The third episteme (the Modern or Anthropological Age) is preoccupied with Man as both the central subject and the central object of reality (Munslow, 141-42). The fourth episteme (the present, the Postmodern) suggests—*suggests* because the rules that govern the present pastness of things can often only be intimated—that the tension created by the Modern invention of Man cannot last for too long, that Man as both an empirical and deductive animal is disappearing, and knowledge (and consequently Man as a subject of knowledge) is coming to be recognised as nothing more than an epistemological product (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 386-87).

Archaeology claims that its use of such long periods does not represent a return to the philosophers of history, to the great ages of the world, or to the periodisation dictated by the rise and fall of civilisations (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7). It would be inaccurate, it says, to see in them an attempt at totalitarian periodisation, whereby from a certain moment and for a certain time,

everyone thinks in the same way, in spite of surface differences, and says the same thing, in spite of a variety of vocabularies.

> On the contrary, archaeology describes the level of enunciative homogeneity that has its own temporal articulations, and which does not carry with it all the other forms of identity and difference that are to be found in language; and at this level, it establishes an order, hierarchies, a whole burgeoning that excludes a massive, amorphous synchrony, given totally once and for all. In those confused unities we call periods, it reveals, with all their specificity, 'enunciative periods' that are articulated, but without being confused with them, upon the time of concepts, on theoretical phases, on stages of formalisation and of linguistic development. (139-40)

So the *period* is not even archaeology's basic descriptive unit. If it speaks of periods it is always in terms of particular discursive practices, and as a result of its analyses. The Classical Age, for example, is not a temporal figure that imposes its unity on all discourses; it is the name that archaeology gives to a tangle of discursive formations that it sees appearing and disappearing in specific fields of knowledge (176).

In line with this, the four epistemes are not presented as acts of a drama of development, or as chapters of a narrative. The transitions which mark their beginnings and ends are not transformations of an enduring subject—an homogenised *mentality,* a transcendental *being*—but rather ruptures in consciousness itself, disjunctions or discontinuities so extreme that they effectively isolate the epistemes from one another (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 235). This idea of *isolation* is important, for epistemes do not grow organically out of each other, nor do they occur as revolutions in thought through some version of a dialectical process; instead they spontaneously appear *in parallel to* each other, filling in the spaces suddenly vacated by other conditions of knowledge (Munslow, 141). A new episteme do not rise up against its predecessors, but simply crystallises alongside of them (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 234).

According to archaeology, an awareness of episteme is what is required for us even to imagine certain theories and philosophies in a particular age rather than in another (Canguilhem, 80). It is episteme that allows us to understand how and why a statement might count as serious and important at one time, whereas it cannot even be entertained as a candidate for truth perhaps only a couple of decades later (Rouse, 96). It does so by demonstrating that new 'ways of thinking' result not so much from discoveries or advances as from the coming into being of new objects of thought for which new truth and falsehoods can be uttered. So, when traditional history sets out to write the history of biology in the eighteenth century, for example, what it does not realise is that biology *does not exist* at that period; the pattern of knowledge called 'biology', which has been so familiar to us for a hundred and fifty years, is not valid for a previous epoche. In fact what exists in the eighteenth century is an episteme that gives rise to a grid of knowledge constituted, not by biology, but by 'natural history' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 127-28).

Which is to say: the different grids of knowledge produced by the four epistemes not only employ different techniques for comprehending the objects occupying the field, they are not even directed to the study of the same objects. Even though the terminology of the natural historians of the eighteenth century and that of the biologists of the nineteenth may contain the same lexical elements, the differences between the 'syntaxes' of eighteenth-century natural history and nineteenth-century biology are so great as to make any lexical similarities between them trivial as evidence. The language of the two epistemes inhabited different realms of discourse, cultivated different modes of representation, and remained captives of different conceptions of the nature of the relationships obtaining between things, on one hand, and words, on the other (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 237). The difference between the language of natural history and that of biology is, in fact, the effect of an immense reorganisation of culture, a new arrangement of epistemological possibilities (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 43).

New arrangement. Immense reorganisation. It is safe to say, then, that archaeology's main concern is with change in time. It is careful to define, however, what form this concern takes.

> [H]ow do you see change or, let us say, revolution, at least in the scientific order and in the field of discourses, if you link it with themes of meaning, project, origin and return, constituent subject, in short with the entire thematic that ensures for history the universal presence of the Logos? What possibility do you accord it if you analyse it in accordance with dynamic, biological, evolutionist metaphors in which the difficult, specific problem of historical mutation is usually dissolved? (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 209)

Thus, in its analysis of change, archaeology discounts two traditional explanatory notions. The first of these is 'cause'. The search for cause is seen by archaeology as a characteristic feature of traditional history, and, as such, it must be questioned. Typically, the search for cause is carried out by moving from the level of analysis of statements in a discursive field to another level that is external to them: the social conditions, the mentality, the vision of the world. As a result, such a search always risks losing itself in notions such as 'the spirit of the times', 'tradition', 'influence', and 'social change' (Davidson, 'Structures and Strategies of Discourse', 10). In archaeology, on the other hand, change is seen, not as the result or the effect of something else, but as a system of transformations, a structure that is itself susceptible to scrutiny and investigation. In other words, archaeology substitutes for an undifferentiated reference to cause the analysis of the configurations of transformation themselves (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xiii). In the place of 'extra-discursive' ideas like 'influence' and social change', it offers a description of statements in a way that makes the relations of implication, of opposition, of exclusion appear that could link them (Davidson, 'Structures and Strategies of Discourse', 12). Underlying this approach is a conviction that change from one state of affairs to another cannot take place without there being correlative changes, all of which are governed by the episteme. So, whereas traditional history asks the question: given a change, what could have caused it?

archaeology asks: in order for a change to be able to be obtained, what are the other changes that must also be present in the field of contemporaneity? (10).

The second traditional image of change that archaeology rejects is 'continuity'. Rather than refer to change as if it were a living force calmly evolving through time, archaeology speaks of it in terms of the *suddenness* and *thoroughness* with which certain states of knowledge are sometimes reorganised; it speaks of it as *rupture* and *event*; as *discontinuity.* As we have seen, the people of the nineteenth century do not think of 'biology' in terms that have been bequeathed to them by preceding ages, nor in forms that presage what will soon to be discovered; they think of it in terms of a general disposition that not only prescribes their concepts and methods, but also, more fundamentally, defines their present *mode of being* (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 208). A mode of being is not, in fact, a phenomenon of heredity and tradition; it does not develop in a temporal sequence; it does proceed in a single direction towards greater objectivity of knowledge; it cannot be explained by describing the state of knowledge that preceded it and what it has provided by way of 'original contributions'; on the contrary, the breaches that separate epistemes, and thereby bring about new modes of being, are *radical events*, distributed across the entire visible surface of knowledge at a particular moment, and whose signs, shocks, and effects it is possible to map (217-18).

> Instead of considering that discourse is made up of a series of homogenous events (individual formations), archaeology distinguishes several possible levels of events within the very density of discourse: the level of the statements themselves in their unique emergence; the level of the appearance of objects, types of enunciation, concepts, strategic choices (or transformations that affect those that already exist); the level of the derivation of new rules of formation on the basis of rules that are already in operation—but always in the element of a single positivity; lastly, a fourth level, at which the substitution of one discursive formation for another takes place (or the mere appearance and disappearance of a positivity) (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 171).

Once it has happened, this fourth level of event—the force that, in a single blow, subjects different disciplines of knowledge in an epistemological field to one and the same break—can be located within the *unity* that forms a foundation for the diverse forms of the new episteme. As a surface movement, the event brings about a mutation of cultural interests, a redistribution of opinions and judgements, the appearance of new forms in discourse, which can themselves be used to define the nature of the break that brought them about (*The Order of Things*, 238).

This break, however, is never so radical as to spring forth *ex nihilo* and negate everything that has preceded it; rather it is possible only on the basis of rules that are already in operation (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 17). Radical as it is, it is not absolute change, but a 'reconfiguration' of epistemological elements. Although it brings about new rules of a discursive formation, which redefine the boundaries and nature of knowledge and truth, it includes some 'overlapping', 'interaction', and 'echoes' between the old and the new *(The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 149). To say that one discursive formation is substituted for another is not to say that a whole world of absolutely new objects, concepts and theoretical choices emerges fully organised in a text; it is to say that a general transformation has occurred, one that does not necessarily alter all the elements (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 173).

By archaeology's own admission, establishing discontinuities is not an easy task: any limit it sets may perhaps be no more than an arbitrary division made in a constantly mobile whole (*The Order of Things*, 50). For this reason it introduces the idea of *duration* into its conception of discontinuity; it unfreezes change, attributes to it a temporality. This temporality becomes evident in the conflicts and resistances that discontinuity itself engenders. Taken by itself, a statement cannot count as knowledge. Only in the ways it is used, and thereby increasingly connected to other elements over time, does it become and remain epistemologically significant. But these uses and alignments encounter resistances and generate conflicts with other emerging uses and alignments, and, in turn, these conflicts spur further investigations, articulations, and technical refinements. Conflict thus becomes the locus for the continuing reorganisation of knowledge: where knowledge encounters resistance, there is the potential for

discontinuity; where it does not encounter resistance, it is likely to receive little or no further articulation and to risk becoming isolated and inconsequential (Rouse, 113-14).

Thus envisaged, change-as-discontinuity is not substance; it is not corporeal; it affects concepts and not people. And yet, its capacity for conflict means it is certainly not immaterial; it takes effect, becomes effect, on the level of materiality. It has its place; it exists in relation to, in coexistence with material elements (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 230). It is here, at this point of immateriality meeting materiality, that we discern a core tension within archaeology. As a historical method, it relies on a conception of language as independent of those who use it, and, in line with this, sets out to address the discursive domain alone (the relations between discursive domains and the rules that formed them). But as its analyses spread out and become more involved, it develops an interest in the relations between discursive and *non*-discursive domains: institutions, political events, economic practices and processes (162). Thus the privileged status archaeology gives to language and knowledge over practices and institutions becomes problematic. While a focus on language alone might have a legitimate philosophical justification (recasting traditional views of history and seeking the clarification of discourse in terms of linguistic rules unperceived by human actors), a more adequate analysis would ultimately have to situate discourse within its full social and political context (Best, 45). That is to say, the moment eventually arrives when archaeology must show how the autonomy and specificity of discourse nevertheless do not give it the status of pure ideality and total historical independence (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 164). Suddenly it finds that thinking about ideas in time is not enough; it cannot avoid having to think, too, about practices in space.

II

Zebra Criss-crossing

Perhaps predictably, given what we have seen regarding epistemes and the conditions of knowledge at a given time and place, the criticisms that Foucauldian 'archaeology' makes of traditional history—that its representations of the 'real' rest on transcendent and therefore profoundly *unreal* ideas of origin and Man, that its account of change relies on an impossible search for cause and the imposition of mystical explanatory frameworks like 'progress' or 'evolution'—these criticisms are countered by traditional history in terms that are exactly, that is, *identically* opposite: traditional history's objections to archaeology appear as mirror images of the objections that it itself was subjected to by archaeology; they constitute marks on the reverse side of the same epistemological fold. If traditional history is, according to archaeology, infatuated with the real, then archaeology is, according to traditional history, infatuated with discourse. If traditional history approaches the world as if it were made to be read by human consciousness, archaeology approaches human consciousness as if it were a world with its own readable history. If traditional history is, unbeknownst to itself, a prisoner to the language in which it articulates the real, archaeology is a prisoner to language, a knowing and willing prisoner at that, one with the audacity to make a merit out of its inability to account for actual practices, experiences and environments. If traditional history is embarrassed by or reluctant to openly confront the interpretative systems it draws on in order to formulate its factual data, archaeology wilfully ignores the fact that a system of interpretation can have historical significance only if it is supported by some significant body of corresponding facts. If traditional history is, by its own claims, anti-theoretical,

anti-imagination and pro-science (Jenkins, xvii), archaeology is the reversal of these things; it is the Other of historical empiricism; it is a form of metaphysical idealism.

Disconcerted by its unorthodox methods, traditional history thus writes archaeology off as theory, as philosophy (Goldstein, 1; Walzer, 58). It argues that history, if it is to remain recognisable as such, must be composed without an explicit theoretical position; theories, it says, must not be imposed on the texts of the archive. It does not regard as theory its own rules about how to read and what to read for, but instead looks on them as fundamental, necessary, 'natural' pre-conditions to the act of doing history itself (Young, viii). History—the 'proper', 'recognisable' kind—may well be hindered by the inevitable constrictions of language, and as a result may well fall short of achieving accurate linguistic representations of extra-linguistic phenomenon; but these obstructions, these shortcomings, do they not represent history's defining internal struggle, are they not what makes history what it is in the first place?

Archaeology, for its part, leaves unanswered, even unasked, questions (about cause and effect, about environment, about physical action, about practice) that traditional history finds essential to its project. Archaeology is simply too abstract. Its generalizations are supported by insufficient warrants (Megill, 132). Its arguments fly in the face of empirical evidence, and its statements are often mere over-simplifications (Midelfort, 259). It refuses to marshal concrete and specific evidence for its claims. The epistemes, for example, are based on a limited and unrepresentative selection of texts (Huppert, 191-207). Those texts it does select, it regularly misinterprets or mistreats. It mixes up dates, includes errors so gross that they appear deliberate, and appears to relish historical absurdities (Vilar, 188).

In inverse proportion to its ability to tolerate its own internal contradictions, traditional history refuses to accept the contradictions evident within archaeology. Primary among these unacceptable paradoxes is archaeology's claim to be interested in discourse *as it appears to be* (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 233), while at the same time using history for the sake of something (theoretical) beyond it (Bell, 159). This paradox stems from archaeology's principled rejection

of a deeper structure of reality and of any significance that might be seen as inherent either in the world or in consciousness (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 18), even as it unapologetically sustains an interest in the deeper structures of human consciousness at particular periods in history (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 230). On the one hand, archaeology asserts that individual beliefs and actions are not its primary concern; it is not making empirical generalisations about what people in various countries and at various times thought or did. On the other hand, in trying to construct the epistemes that lie behind a diverse range of beliefs and practices, it must somehow allow the appearance within these same epistemes of the factual beliefs and actions of those whose thought is constrained by them; that is to say, it must admit some kind of correspondence, however complex, incomplete, arbitrary or difficult to discern, between a generalised conditioning structure or environment and specific beliefs and actions (Gutting, *Foucault*, 40).

Archaeology's introduction of an added layer of discursive knowledge in which it locates the rules of formation for concepts and theoretical relationships—the episteme—does not do away with traditional history's search for specific social and environmental causes for human thought (and thereby the conscious or unconscious reasons for human action). Likewise, archaeology's account of change in terms of other changes in the episteme does not eliminate traditional history's questions concerning material agents; external drivers of change. Archaeology's appeal to sudden rupture and random events to explain change without resorting to notions such as environment or social change; its appeal to episteme as a means of explaining historical cause without recourse to teleological thinking (influences, catalysts, agents, origins); these appeals are, according to traditional history, tantamount to answering a question with a problem, or resolving a problem by displacing the question (Flynn, 43). At some point—goes traditional history's objection—archaeology will have to take its head out of the linguistic cloud and look at the actual conditions under which words are uttered, and within which action is undertaken; at some point it will have to *get real.*

In a sense, then, traditional history locates a problem within archaeology that archaeology has always already identified within itself (*always already*

because it is a requisite for its functioning that this problem be set aside). Archaeology justifies its conceptual constructions in terms of their own interpretative coherence rather than their correspondence with independently given external data. Its aim, it says, is a comprehensive, unifying interpretation that will give intelligible order to an otherwise meaningless sea of individual historical truths; the facts are not irrelevant, but the primary support for its position is not its demonstrable correspondence with them but its logical and imaginative power to organise them into intelligible configurations (Gutting, 'Foucault and the History of Madness', 67). At the same time, however, archaeology is cognisant that a method of historical analysis that has any claim to historicity must eventually address discursive challenges originating outside of its own self-contained interpretative schema. That is to say, it is aware that its emphasis on abstract linguistic structures, its obsession with words, is too fragile to withstand external demands for an account of when, how and where discourse meets the realities of environment, body and action (Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', 34).

As a consequence, Foucauldian history finds it has a new duty: to address this problem of the gap between discourse, on one hand, and body and environment, on the other—that is, the problem of how this gap might be bridged or indeed dissolved—without falling back on or making concessions to the myths (influence, origin, essence, Truth, Man) on which traditional history is built. In this sense, traditional history is important to Foucauldian history because it provides a clear picture of how *not* to proceed, what conceptual pitfalls to avoid, in pursuing this question; traditional history confirms what needs to be done *and* offers for consideration an unsatisfactory solution. But, as we will see, Foucauldian history also understands that the archaeological method is equally unsuitable to the task; like traditional history, archaeology cannot cope with questions of action and environment without stepping outside its own limits and becoming something else. A new method must be conceived: not one that will work against archaeology, or render it obsolete, but rather one that will exist alongside it, function in parallel with it.

As we shall see, in its efforts to devise such a method, Foucauldian history will find that it must shift its emphasis away from the concept of time towards that of space: the dimension in which matter (bodies, environment) is thought to be held and in which action is thought to take place. This movement from time to space as the framework guiding its approach, this veering into spatialised thinking, will extend beyond the use of spatial metaphors or the embedding of lists, tables, photographs and illustrations within texts; it will not be merely ancillary to its approach, but will pertain to the core of its historical method, to the very *possibility* of its emergence (Flynn, 42). This special appeal to space will not do away with the concept of time, however. On the contrary, it will come to see time more clearly; it will come to see it *as it is thinkable in the present*, that is, not as a separate dimension with its own separate laws but *as the contents of the universe itself*. In this new method, time, the one-time isolated and rarified entity, will be enfolded into space; it will become unified space-time.

Let us begin, then, by taking a look at how we think about space in our present (that is, the present pastness of things present), and let us begin *that* in a Foucauldian manner: by considering how we do *not* think about space, or rather, how it is no longer possible for us to think about it. In the first century BC, for instance: what made our thinking about space possible then? How on earth could we have thought about space like that?

At that time, the fundamental question that we asked about space appears, at least at first glance, to be the same as that which we ask today: does space exist independent of things? Then as now, we wondered what would be left if we mentally removed all the assorted pieces of matter that exist in a given place. Would space remain, or would the removal of matter do away with space as well? (Close, *Nothing*, 4). Can there be space that is immutable, like a stage that remains the same regardless of what is being played on it? (Genz, vii).

One of the approaches we adopted to this question—the more radical approach for its time—was what we might now call 'Epicurean': Epicurean

because it rested on the principle that natural science was the route to philosophical understanding; radical because it began not with the more popular method of abstract cogitation (could empty space exist *logically*?) but with observation of the physical phenomena around us. In adopting this empirical approach, we were not being naive; we were aware that our observations of the external world would be limited by the frailty of our senses, that what we perceived would be only a sampling of a deeper reality that we could not fully apprehend:

> Since even with the visible, great distance can disguise
> Its motions, so that what we see is hard to recognise:
> Often, a woolly flock of sheep upon a hillside crops
> A verdant pasture all a-spangle with dew's fresh drops,
> And where the grass entices them, they wander one by one,
> And the plump lambs gambol, and kick up their heels in fun;
> But when we view them from afar, the distance blurs the scene
> Until it's just a patch of white against a field of green. (Lucretius, 45)

Nevertheless, we remained confident that these samplings, these blurred scenes, were enough to infer a true picture of the nature of matter and space:

> Another reason you should turn
> Your attention to the motes that drift and tumble in the light:
> Such turmoil means that there are secret motions, out of sight,
> That lie concealed in matter. For you'll see the motes careen
> Off course, and then bounce back again, by means of blows unseen,
> Drifting now in this direction, now that, on every side.
> You may be sure this starts with atoms; they are what provide
> The base of this unrest. (39-40)

What we deduced from our observations was that all matter was made up of small particles, or atoms, each of which was indestructible, immortal. The different degree of atomic clustering from place to place was responsible for changes in density and the distinctive properties of different forms of matter (Barrow, 65). Larger bodies could be broken down to their constituent atoms, but no further. Allowing matter to be infinitely divisible would, we believed, result in the irreversible destruction of matter's identity: ultimately matter would slip into non-existence or give rise to aggregates that were too fragile to persist (66).

> Besides, unless there is a smallest part, however small
> A thing may be, it must have infinite parts, since after all
> Half of a half of anything can still be cut
> In two, and on and on *ad infinitum*. And then what
> Will the difference between the tiniest speck of matter
> And all the universe? There won't be any whatsoever!
> For even if the Sum of Things is infinite, the amount
> Of smaller parts in the tiniest speck is likewise past all count. (Lucretius, 21)

According to this vision, our universe was infinite; it consisted of an infinite number of atoms. Yet these infinities were not truly infinite: at the level of the universe there existed a final 'sum', while at the atomic level there existed a smallest, indivisible part: the atom itself. What we called infinities actually referred to finite but *uncountable* numbers: numbers of a magnitude that the human senses were incapable of seeing and the human mind incapable of imagining.

Here, in effect, we were drawing a distinction between mathematical (idealist) reality and physical (materialist) reality: in the former, we were saying, infinite division of any quantity was thinkable, but in the latter, it was not. At the same time, however, we were also constructing a singularly mathematical vision of the universe. If the universe—our Sum of Things—was made up of *immortal* atoms, then it made no sense that atoms could ever be added or subtracted from it; something could not be immortal and newly born; the universe could not add to itself or take away from itself; it had always had everything already within it. But, by the same token, a stable universe, a static world, was not what we saw

when we looked around us. What we saw was change; what we saw was variation and flux; what we saw was life and death. Our response to this problem was to imagine a regime of mutual cooperation among the atoms: everything existed in a perpetual relationship of give and take. Locally, there were an 'infinite' number of additions and subtractions, pluses and minuses, but the final outcome was always the same 'finite' wholeness. The ageing and dying of things implied the creation of other things, something perished here so something could blossom there, while all the time the final number of things remained unchanged (Jenkyns, xv).

> [T]he particles that go
> From one shrinking object cause another thing to grow,
> Making the former shrivel up, while making the latter flower,
> Never lingering. Thus the Sum of Things is every hour
> Renewed, and thus, in order to thrive, all mortal creatures need
> Each other. (Lucretius, 38)

There was no death but only eternal newness. The drama of life lay in this combination of dependence and independence, change and changelessness at the atomic level. In between the great One of the universe and the miniscule One of the atom everything was activity and mutability. The atoms were in ceaseless energetic motion, and all events and processes were merely the effects of this. Everything that happened, every action, was the product of the push and pull of atoms, of their colliding, cohering or flying apart (Jenkyns, xii).

Our vision of things needed another element, however. For the atoms to partake in all of this heaving activity; for the atoms to be able to move at all, they needed something to move *through*. Based on our observations, we reasoned that the only thing that could possibly allow such movement was empty space. Motion inside filled space was, we presumed, impossible. Solid, indestructible atoms would not be able to move through each other; they would only be able to obstruct or resist (Lucretius, 13). Without emptiness, a realm beyond what atoms

can touch, there would not be any room to locate bodies, or to have them move the way we see them moving (Epicurus, qtd. in Genz, 83).

> If it can affect the touch,
> However faintly, then it adds its mass—however much
> Or little—to the Sum of Things, if it exists at all.
> And yet if, on the other hand, it is intangible,
> And offers no resistance, so that anything that moves
> Can pass through any part of it, without a doubt it proves
> That it is void. (Lucretius, 15)

The basic nature of our universe, then, was the motion of immutable atoms in the empty space—the void—that lay between them (Barrow, 95). This motion in the void proceeded by a series of instantaneous leaps (Bostock, liii). The moving object stayed at one position for a while, and then at once appeared in a different position, without there having been any times at which it occupied intermediate positions (liv). This meant that, in a given instant, the space the atoms occupied was filled, and the rest remained empty; there was no transitional phase between one atomic configuration and another; at base, change was not constant but sudden.

In imagining the universe in this way, as instantaneously jumping from one fixed state to another, what we were effectively doing was replacing the concepts of 'what is' and 'what is not', 'being' and 'non-being', with those of 'matter' and 'void' (Genz, 61). In the universe there was always the same amount of being and non-being, matter and void; they just appeared in different places at different instants. Solid things were riddled with emptiness (how else could light pass through leaves or sound through walls?) and empty places were filled with objects (everywhere you turned, there was *something*) (Lucretius, 13). Without nothing, there could not be anything, and this nothing was everywhere.

But—we also insisted—out of this ever-present nothing, things could not appear (Lucretius, 9). If it was true that atoms could not be destroyed (that is, could not be made vanish into the void), then the converse must also be valid: atoms could not originate from the void; something could not come from nothing.

This idea was what made our philosophy thoroughly materialist: if gods or spirits existed, they were made of immortal atoms like everything else (Jenkyns, ix).

> This dread, these shadows of the mind, must thus be swept away
> Not by rays of the sun not by the brilliant beams of day,
> But by observing Nature and her laws. And this will lay
> The warp out for us—her first principle: *that nothing brought*
> *Forth by any supernatural power out of naught.*
> (Lucretius, 7)

Thus, ours was a philosophy that appeared, at least to our own Epicurean minds, without contradiction: there was being and there was non-being; there was matter and there was void; there was object and there was beyond-object; there was mass and there was medium; there was here and there was there; there were two parts and there was whole, and what in the observable world could gainsay us? The fact was, however, that such a philosophy, with such a generous accommodation made for nothingness, was abhorrent to the dominant thinking of our time (Barrow, 69). This dominant thinking—which boasted a pedigree stretching back to the Greeks, and which had been successfully refuting similar challenges to its orthodoxy since its inception—vehemently denied the possibility of the existence of the void, basing its denial on a sharply contrasting method of inquiry: what was needed to work out the nature of space was abstract reasoning rather than empirical observation (Jenkyns, ix).

When we looked at things through this more favoured 'Aristotelian' lens—that is, when we looked 'inwardly'—we saw immediately that the Epicurean conception of matter and void would not withstand proper questioning, and would quickly crumble. For what the Epicurean vision did, and what so plainly contravened the principles of inner logic, was to turn nothing into something. It *located* empty space; it gave it a *place,* albeit a negative one: a place where things were *not* placed. And for us, the majority Aristotelians of Rome, a place without a body could not be a place; every place necessarily had a body in it (Aristotle, 81). Place was what contained that of which it was the place; place was no more

and no less than the limit of what it contained (85-86). Without body, place was nothing, and nothing, if it was *truly* nothing, could not be thought of (Genz, 33). It was possible to think and speak only about what *was*: what was *not* could not be thought of, and what could not be thought of could not *be* (Barrow, 44). Because imagining the absence of things was not possible without violating the laws of logic (Genz, 5), any knowledge of nothing was intimately connected with some knowledge of something (Aristotle, 82).

We Aristotelians believed that as a consequence of this double negation, this logical rejection of the void, nature must, by its very nature, abhor the creation or persistence of any vacuum or void state (76). If our minds abhorred the idea of nothing, it followed that nature abhorred its reality. By thus imposing our rationally contrived laws onto the non-rational world, we were, of course, overturning the empiricism of the Epicurean approach. Accordingly, the arguments we employed to bear out our vision of the *horror vacui* also operated as reversals. An example of such a reversal was our conception of the universe. Like the Epicurean universe, ours was finite in volume, it contained everything that existed, and the basic elements of nature—not atoms in our case, but earth, fire, air and water—lived eternally. But what this meant for us was the opposite of what it meant for the Epicureans: since the basic elements were immortal, and since space itself was defined by these elements, there could be no place that was completely empty of them (Close, *Nothing*, 9). By definition, a void could not tolerate a body; it could not accept a body into itself and remain a void (Aristotle, 95). This suggested that the universe, rather than being a tangle of matter and space, being and non-being, was in fact a continuum filled with matter and elements, with no place left over for the void (Barrow, 69).

Our conception of motion within this continuum represented another important reversal. Like the Epicureans, we saw that things in the universe changed place, but our thinking about this yielded solutions that were precisely contrary. In our conception of things, there was no necessity for there to be a void to facilitate movement. Quite the contrary: admitting the void would, in a literal sense, *paralyse* the universe. Motion required an external cause, an outside agent, and this was something a void could never supply. Motion in a void would come

to a standstill because bodies would have nothing driving them (Aristotle, 96). If motion did spontaneously occur, there would be no reason for the moving bodies to go one way or the other because a void was necessarily the same everywhere and in every direction. And even if a body did manage set off in a given direction, it would continue on this same course forever because there would be no medium offering any resistance to it (Barrow, 76).

The void was needed, therefore, only if it was believed that all matter existed in the form of solid, indivisible and incompressible particles; it was entirely unnecessary if it was understood that matter could also consist of a continuous fluid that was itself capable of contracting and expanding. In this latter view, when bodies moved, they simultaneously made room for one another, and they did this even though there was no interval between them (Aristotle, 94). When a body changed from being in state A to being in state B, there was a stretch of time which separated these two states, and during this stretch the body was neither in state A nor in state B but changing from one to the other; it was in a transitory state C (154). No change could be instantaneous. Rather than bodies leaping through empty space, there was a continuous flow of bodies in filled space.

Thus, the prospect of an unclassifiable emptiness—a breach between bodies, an attributeless hole in the natural fabric of the world, isolated from cause and effect and detached from what was palpable to the senses—was unthinkable to our Aristotelian minds (Barrow, 59-60). In place of this unthinkable nothing, we placed a thinkable something: the concept of an intangible layer of original, primitive matter—a dimension of ur-matter or an ether—which we, translating from the Greek, called *materia prima* (Genz, 21). When contemplating nature, our thinking minds progressed from a given, observable object towards the *materia prima*, and as we did so, specific shapes receded into possible shapes (78). The *materia prima* became an object by becoming one of the forms or properties out of the totality that it contained; hidden properties transformed into seen properties and vice versa; one shape replaced another; there was no such thing as a completely new property or shape. In this completely occupied universe, motion was represented by change from a potential new position into a

real one. A flying arrow was not flying at all but was constantly re-emerging from the *materia prima*, a continuous material flow (79).

After this, there was one final problem to resolve: if, as we believed, every movement of a body in this fluid universe was brought about by a movement external to that body; if every change was changed by something other than itself (Aristotle, 195), then the search for the cause of change produced a potentially eternal succession of causes, which ultimately required a first cause to account for it. Likewise, if, as we also believed, change discontinued when the cause of change ceased to operate, then there must have been an *eternal* cause of change, for change in the world never stopped (199). What we needed to complete our thinking, therefore, was a final and eternal cause: a cause that itself did not have a cause and did not itself undergo change. This external, causeless, changeless force was our God (200-12).

It can thus be said that, as Aristotelians, we used the concept of a perpetually present something (*materia prima* and a first cause) in order to confirm precisely the same principle that we, as Epicureans, used the perpetually present nothing (the void) to confirm: something could not be caused by nothing. The Aristotelian something and the Epicurean nothing were actually two configurations of the same conditions of knowledge; they occupied neighbouring positions in a single episteme; the same principle made possible the *metaphysical nature* of one and the *materialism* of the other. The void existed/did not exist: what made the question even possible was a universe that obeyed the rule that the creation of something out of nothing was unthinkable.

Today, our thinking on the subject of space happens in a universe that obeys a different rule: something *can* emerge from 'nothing'. How did we come to this present 'truth'? How do we understand this 'nothing', how do we conceptualise it? This is an important question, for it is this 'nothing'—a *field* which we cannot directly see but from which we can see things emerging—that makes our current

thinking about space possible. It is this 'nothing', therefore, that will now be the focus of our analysis.

These days, as in the first century BC, when we talk about space, we are talking about something that we cannot directly measure. What we *can* measure (with our rulers and our light beams and our imaginations) are distances between visible pieces of matter (Coles, 22). Distances between things, however large or small, are how we locate and define the distances themselves. In other words, it is only by means of objects that we can think about areas that are apparently devoid of objects.

It makes sense, then, to start our exploration of space with an object, and what better than that which marked the limits of our Epicurean imaginations: the atom. What we call the atom today—the smallest piece of an element that can exist and still be recognised as that element—is not what we once imagined the atom to be; the two objects are as different as the methods we use to observe them. In contrast to our immutable Epicurean atom, our present atom can be broken down to reveal a rich inner structure. Its nucleus is built from protons and neutrons, and these in turn contain clusters of smaller particles called quarks. These quarks, along with the electrons that gyrate around the nucleus, are the fundamental particles of matter as we currently know them (Close, *Particle Physics*, 2-5). We do not know whether quarks and electrons are divisible or whether they have any internal structure because we are unable to see any matter that operates at a scale of less than about 10^{-18}m. If there are layers of matter deeper than this (working on smaller scales, covering shorter distances, having finer boundaries), they are beyond our present ability to resolve in experiment (27).

Our fundamental particles also differ from Epicurean atoms by an absence of sharply defined limits separating them from the space around them (Genz, 305). There is no distinction possible between the behaviour of quarks and that of what 'contains' them. When we model the interactions of quarks with others quarks, matter and space are of equal importance and cannot be reasonably detached. When we try to isolate quarks with our instruments, at some point what is a quark and what is not a quark begins to blend (307). Thus, although

mathematically matter and space are infinitely divisible, *physically* we do not know whether there is a limit beyond which divisibility ceases to make sense. It is conceivable that some elementary distance—say, 10^{-33}m—is the smallest possible separation between two points; it is conceivable that, at that level, matter fuses with space, and conversely, space becomes discrete (58).

So much for fixing definite boundaries between matter and space. But what can we say about space that is at some distance from the boundary of the nearest quark? In the universe, between galaxies, each atom is at a distance of about one metre from its next neighbour (1): to what extent is this intermediate space separate from the atoms that mark its limit? Is there anything happening in this 'physical vacuum'? Is it really empty? Our current answer is no, but, as we shall see, what we imagine to exist instead of emptiness—our intangible but existent 'nothing'—is different to Aristotelian *materia prima* in a number of important ways.

What we call a physical vacuum today is simply what is left when everything that *can* be removed *has* been removed. And what is left is energy. When all matter is excluded, energy continues to exist. No possible process governed by the known laws of physics can extract all the energy from a vacuum (Barrow, 216). A more precise definition of a vacuum, therefore, is a state where the amount of energy is the minimum possible; a state from which no more energy can be taken away; 'a ground state'; 'a zero state' (Close, *Nothing*, 102). Directly measuring the amount of energy in a zero state—putting a figure on *vacuum energy*—is impossible because it is infinitely low, but a *change* in its energy is a real measurable quantity. Analysis of changes to vacuum energy have shown the vacuum energy itself to have a presence and to permeate every fibre of our universe (Barrow, 11).

Small regions of vacuum energy see larger energies appear in the form of fluctuations. There is no pre-existing carrier for this fluctuating energy (217); the appearance of an energy-carrier (a particle) to transmit fluctuations is a consequence of the energy fluctuations themselves (233); the fluctuation interacts with the particles, which are themselves the fluctuation. Understanding this requires us to imagine vacuum energy as a kind of sea composed of *virtual*

particles, continually appearing and disappearing (237). These virtual particles consist of particles and corresponding antiparticles which spontaneously emerge and instantaneously collide to become radiative energy. In this process, energy is conserved, but the structure of the particles dissolves. That is, all particle identity is absorbed into energy (Genz, 203). The virtual particles that disappear into energy and the energy that permits their emergence and disappearance are two manifestations of the same fluctuation.

In a sense, vacuum energy behaves like a medium, but it is not a smooth one like the *materia prima*. Any object that emerges from it or enters into it will oscillate and spin in a random, disordered fashion. We can obtain quantities from this random motion which we can then use to define possible directions in a *field.* In other words, when we measure a fluctuation—that is, when we measure the tension in vacuum energy that manifests itself by producing forces—we can then map the sphere of possible influence of that fluctuation; a field is this sphere of possible influence (Close, *Nothing*, 38).

So far we have been visualising what happens in the space between distant atoms, but in fact vacuum energy exists in space that includes material objects as well as space that does not. All of space—not just that between galaxies but that which is everywhere—contains fluctuating particles and fields; all finite volumes are subject to fluctuations in energy (Genz, 201). We need to examine miniscule regions in order to confront such fluctuations directly, but they influence the way in which we perceive the physical world on all levels (viii).

To grasp the extent of this influence, let us return to our elementary particles: the quarks and these electrons. These days we believe that these quarks and electrons are best described not in terms of particles but in terms of fields. While it is true that they behave as particles as they are being emitted by a material source, and again as they are observed by a material target; it is also true that *in the intervening span* between emission and observation, they behave as spheres of possibility, or fields (209). In this sense, fields are what exist between our measurements. Once we know a field, we also know with what probabilities to expect certain measurement results (211). The field does not prescribe where exactly a particle will be observed, but when we do many measurements on

particles in the same field, we build up a curve, and this curve shows the likelihood for finding the particle in a given state at a given location (212).

The field is what we know about these particles. It is our view of them. The electron, for example, which we think of as a particle, is really a bundle within an 'electron-field' which acts with wave-like properties (Close, *Nothing*, 97). As a view, this contradicts our old Aristotelian conception of *materia prima* and its principle of external cause and effect. Not only is it impossible to predict where we will find a particle in a field, it cannot even be presumed that every action of the particle propagates locally, from one point to a neighbouring point (213). We see leaps; we see non-local relationships between locations in space. What is more, unlike the ever-present *materia prima*, the fields that fill a given vacuum must, on the average, vanish. There is no material aspect to fields. They are, quite literally, *nothing*. The only quantity of a field that remains immutable is its vacuum energy, its *zero* state (221).

The vacuum, with its seething mass of activity, turns out to be the foundation of our understanding of our elementary particles of matter, and vice versa: we cannot but view fields as particles, and particles as fields. The field is also how we explain the occurrence of *force* between two apparently disconnected bodies. We know of only four such forces: gravity, the electromagnetic force, and two that act in and around the atomic nucleus, known as strong and weak (Close, *Particle Physics*, 81). These forces are known to be transmitted among the particles of matter (quarks, electrons and so on) by the exchange of force carriers (photons, W and Z bosons, and gluons). There is also a field associated with each of these force-exchange particles (Barrow, 218). The intimate relationship between the fundamental forces and particles in space sheds light on how a force can occur between two apparently disconnected bodies: the intervening field is involved. Remove all bodies but one from a region of space and its mass will release a (gravitational) field that spreads throughout that space. We can contemplate a region of space devoid of all material bodies, but it would not be truly empty if there were even just one body elsewhere in the universe: the gravitational field from that remote body would fill all of our otherwise empty region (Close, *Nothing*, 38).

Our minds have developed a view of the world based on our macroscopic sense of dimensions: one of time and three of space. Our experience is that space and time are different, at least in our ability to pass through them and to receive or process information. While this difference is true as perceived by our macroscopic senses, and to our descriptions of phenomena down to the scale of atoms and beyond, the deeper we travel, the less sense it makes to define them as separate (Close, *Nothing*, 105). As we approach the level of fields, we begin to have grave doubts about the reality of absolute time (a time that, of its own accord and of its own nature, takes course uniformly, unrelated to any external object), and separate space (a space that exists in complete independence of bodies and motion) (Close, *Nothing*, 47; Genz, 37). This is because, at this deep level, we understand space and time to be fluctuating together; or to put it another way, we understand field fluctuations to occur in the fabric of space and time. Down there, time and space, which appear so different in our macro-level imaginations, merge and become the same thing; they lose the characteristics that separate them from each other. Time becomes just another direction *in* space; space becomes a field of possible instants. Space and time come to be space-time: the contents of the universe (Genz, 37).

What this unified space-time does, in effect, is render meaningless the concept of 'a beginning in time' or 'a starting point': if in the field there is no timeline, no time's arrow; if there is no this way and no that, then there can be no beginning, no point of departure (Coles, 121). In this vision, the Big Bang can no longer mean the *creation* of something; it can merely signal the instant when our universe emerged from an area/era (field) of pure force (gravity); it constitutes the point at which space that is virtual and time that is imaginary become real. Before the Big Bang—and, of course, we can only actually speak of 'before' in our familiar mental matrix of separate space and time—there is no *yesterday* or *tomorrow*; there is no *here* or *there*; just an infinite field of possibilities (Close, *Nothing*, 143).

In this picture, the universe has no beginning or no end; it just *is*. The vacuum—infinitely deep, filled with particles that can take on different forms, and charged with the possibility of fluctuation—is where everything that we now know came from (106). The universe itself is a fluctuation, one with a total 'virtual' energy so near to zero that its lifetime can be huge (128). Moreover, it is just one of an infinite number of other universe-fluctuations; it just so happens that ours has produced the right laws, dimensions and forces that allow us to evolve. But even if this is so, even if our universe has erupted as a fluctuation in a field, a fundamental question remains unanswered: who, what, where and how were encoded the rules of the field that enabled us (144). Fields and fluctuations do not solve the problem of creation but only rehearse a new kind of paradox of cause: we disallow the idea of the *creation* of something from nothing (the Big Bang as *creatio ex nihilo*), but at the same time, we deny that there was always *something*. What we actually think is that *there was always a 'nothing' from which something can emerge*; we just define 'nothing' in a very specific way: as a *virtual* something, a 'nothing' whose properties do not add up to something, and are therefore nothing. So, when we say the universe is a fluctuation 'out of nothing', we are certainly being paradoxical but we are not contravening our current laws. We are not merely replacing the word 'nothing' for what is in reality something. 'Nothing' as we know it is not the same as something. If it is the same as anything, it is the same as nothing; and if it *is* anything it is nothing, or rather, no-thing.

Thus, although the fundamental question we ask about space today—can it exist independent of things?—appears to be the same as that which we asked as Romans, the ultimate object of our questions—'nothing'—is, in fact, radically different, that is to say, radically present, radically our own. It is not merely that we, in the current episteme, are looking at and conceptualising 'nothing' in newer, more modern ways; it is, rather, that the object we call 'nothing' is fundamentally *different* from that which we once called nothing; the two objects do not belong to the same orders of knowledge. Our 'nothing' is nothing in a way that the Aristotelian something is not (our 'nothing' is an immaterial nothing, whereas the *materia prima* was a material something). Conversely, our 'nothing' is not

nothing in a way that the Epicurean nothing was (our 'nothing' is not an *absolute* nothing; it is not a void).

Our 'nothing', therefore, is not a variation, a more complex manifestation, of past nothings; making sense of it does not simply require the widening of older domains of knowledge; much more than that, it requires the creation and elaboration of new disciplines, entire sciences. Our methods of looking and thinking have changed; our empirical knowledge of space renders unthinkable previous observations, while our theoretical knowledge of it destroys prior logic. However, there remains at the base of our inquiry, an ancient tension between experimental (empirical) knowledge, on one hand, and abstract (mathematical) knowledge, on the other. Still today our observations and experiments can only take us so far; at some point our inquiries must tip over into theory. Conversely, our theory is determined by the limits to our experimental knowledge; our thinking can really only operate on the 'knowable' side of these limits.

In the context of space (that is, space-time), we still do not understand the boundary where matter arises out of fields (Genz, 203), nor can we precisely define the point where matter breaks down within these fields: we rely on our theories to tell us what is thinkable in these regards. It is up to theory to decide whether there are any compelling (abstract) reasons to draw a boundary between consciousness and matter (and, by extension, between then and now, here and there, I and you, man and nature, mind and body, thoughts and world); it is up to theory to decide where such boundaries ought to be drawn, and to explain why.

In order to make such decisions, theory finds it must fall back on the supposition that everything does *not* depend on everything else. If it wants to build a theory that is anything less than a theory of *everything*, it must presume that there are domains which can be studied individually, in closed systems, without recourse to the universe fields—the *forces*—that bind them. Theory is theory because it deals with what we cannot know through observation alone; it is what it is because it functions in those 'soft' or 'blurred' space-times that the 'hard' or 'factual' sciences cannot define or validate; and yet, at the same time, it is determined by very specific conditions of knowledge; it takes the forms it does by virtue of observed laws that describe deep and far-reaching micro-forces

(forces which are truly multidisciplinary in that they do not respect the boundaries that theory marks between disciplines but instead condition *all* knowledge in a given space-time).

Next, we shall examine the extent to which Foucauldian history functions as theory. More specifically, we shall examine the theoretical method —'genealogy'—with which Foucauldian history supplements archaeology. What we shall see is that, whereas archaeology attempts to maintain a separation between language (discourse) and matter (body and environment) by building a closed or 'walled' system that is conceptually devoid of external or intervening forces, genealogy recognises that walled systems are not themselves free of forces, that the walls that encompass systems are not impenetrable, that even the walls emit energy, that even they are a force. As a result of this recognition, genealogy sets out to locate, among the contents of its own (necessarily walled) system, those space-times where/when the separateness of discourse, on one hand, and body and environment, on the other, breaks down, thereby revealing the force —emanating from the walls but also beyond them—that ultimately unifies them.

At the base of Foucauldian archaeology is the awareness that it is as hard to understand how consciousness emerges out of matter to become discourse as it is to comprehend how the universe erupts out of 'nothing' to become matter. Added to this is the further awareness that it is impossible to precisely mark the point at which discourse meets body, or indeed the point at which discourse is 'felt' by, or helps to shape, environment. Archaeology's response to these fundamental difficulties is to keep them outside the bounds of its analysis. That is to say, archaeology circumvents both the question of how discourse erupts and the question of how discourse impacts environment, and instead chooses to focus on what a certain discourse looks like *once it has erupted*; it does not make reference to any influence that that discourse might have on anything other than itself.

As the medium *and* the outcome of discursive eruptions, archaeology posits the episteme, or, to return to its full title, the epistemological 'field'. This field is

both enabled by and the enabler of discourse; it is made up of and made possible by configurations of statements. This field does not emanate from a region deeper than or exterior to discourse; it is not the expression or the effect of an environment or practices outside discourse; rather, it is itself the means and the result of discourse. It is the conditions of discourse made into discourse; it is those structures and spaces made visible by discourse, which determine the sense (or nonsense) of discourse itself.

In other words, the archaeological field is the combination of what is visible in the archive (discourse) and what is potentially articulable given the configuration of the archive (conditions of discourse). It is a description *at the same time* of the discourse that exists at the beginning of archaeological analysis (statements), of the discourse that exists at the end of such analysis (the revealed conditions of the production of statements), and of any discourses that might be possible in between (given the arrangement of statements and the conditions of eruption that such an arrangement implies). It does not try to describe any *transitions* between these three different states of discourse (that is, between visible statements, conditions of statements and potential statements). It does not allow for flux between these states, or evolution from one state to another. Rather, the eruption of a discursive field is sudden and thorough: it implicates all three states. Eruption is simultaneously a statement, the condition of that statement, and any statements that are possible given the conditions. It is a radical event that, at the same moment, creates a field *and* distributes discourse across the field. It is the appearance of new forms in discourse, which can themselves be used to define the conditions that brought them about.

In archaeology we discern not the dynamics of eruption itself, but the visible effects of it: its outcome. Any physical actions or environmental forces that might have caused discourse to erupt; any material impact that discourse itself might have subsequently caused, lies outside archaeology's sphere of vision. For the purposes of archaeology, it is sufficient to think of the eruption of discourse as spontaneous and *always already discursive*. The archaeological field is a space free of action, intention, influence, agency; it is a realm independent of the lives of those who appear to be speaking, and of the lives, bodies, events or

environments that appear to be spoken about. It is a closed system, the 'walls' of which are represented by the edges of documents: where discourse ends.

Archaeology thus establishes two independent spheres: its own enclosed field, involving discourse, and beyond that, out of the reach of its analyses, a 'non-discursive' realm, involving bodies, action and environment**.** Here: what is thought, what has been thought, and what can be thought. There: what is not thought, what has never been thought, and what cannot be thought. In between these two spaces it builds an idealised partition: *idealised* because its impermeability is total; any relationship that might exist between thought and non-thought, any leakage that might happen between them, is ignored.

In the archaeological system, the 'non-discursive' sphere of action and environment is more than simply the Other of discourse; it is not extracted from analysis and put to rest in a metaphysical place where it has no weight or

presence. On the contrary, it is a definite reality. It exists even though it is not or cannot be thought or spoken about. More than *exist*, it makes up most of the universe. But this reality is left outside archaeology by archaeology itself; the question of how action and environment might be 'turned into' discourse, and conversely how discourse might 'turn into' action or environment, is sidestepped. The search for material cause is abandoned in favour of analyses of discourse *as it has already happened*. Discourse is seen, not as the result or the effect of something else exterior to it, but as a system of visible possibilities in the field *that is the beginning and end of itself*. In other words, reference to outside cause is replaced by comparisons of the visible configurations of possible discourse at different moments in the history of discourse:

> Fig. 2. Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973) 201.

There is thus a distinctly static character to the archaeological field: it is a fixed picture of the visible discursive configurations in an instant in time (a century, two centuries). There is no transition between one episteme and the next: the later episteme erupts to generate a new field; the relationship between it and the earlier episteme is one of rupture and overlap rather than gradual modification or evolution. But there appears to be an active component too. The field is what we, as 'archaeologists', *observe* of it. The *act* of observing the field is, in an actual sense, the field. In the process of demarcating the shape and boundaries of the field, we search the visible statements for disparate elements in order to organise them, order them, define unities and describe relations among them; and in doing so, we reorder the field into a new picture, one that is recognisable as a new kind of knowledge about the past: apparent paradoxes and arbitrary constraints to thought begin to make sense within the framework defined by them. However, as far as archaeology is concerned, all of this 'action' happens within the order of discourse; what is taking place is actually thought, and all thought happens within the discursive field; nothing more material is happening than the (re)arranging of discourse. There is no difference between the field and our (re) description of it.

Thus envisaged, the archaeological field is purely abstract; it is a three-dimensional spatial grid—a geometry—onto which a fourth dimension of time is superimposed. It is a picture of concepts at a particular point on a discrete temporal line. As such, it gives no indication of the points at which, or the moments in which, these concepts begin to impinge on actual people or environments. And yet, without bodies performing non-conscious or non-discursive actions in time (breathing, walking, living), and without non-conscious or non-discursive environments in which these actions are performed—without a space-time to account for the contents of the universe—the archaeological field would be nothing: the mind would have nothing to observe and would therefore have nothing to create discourses about; neither the mind in which the universe is envisaged nor the page on which such an envisaging is drawn would exist. Which must mean that, at some level, archaeology is not immaterial. At some level, it must be affected by and have an effect on materiality. But it is here/now, where/when the question of materiality arises, that archaeology falls silent, offers nothing.

From this nothing, 'genealogy' emerges. Not as a reversal of archaeology; not as a deflation or a contradiction of it. But as a break; an outgrowth; an overlapping; an enrichment. Put simply, genealogy is that form of Foucauldian history which pays attention to material causes; it is a *theoretical* method of *causal explanation* to complement archaeology's strictly descriptive approach.

We must be careful, however, to clearly identify what genealogy is seeking the material causes *of*. Whereas archaeology sought to describe the conditions that determined the production of *discourse* at specific moments in history, genealogy is interested in finding the material causes for *practices* that exist in the present. And, in this context, genealogy defines discourse itself as a practice:

> Thought is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks,

> dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding the alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action—a perilous act. (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, i)

Genealogy accepts the archaeological principle that it is impossible for the human mind to perceive reality through any other means than itself, that is, through any other means than its own discourse, but instead of seeing discourse as a series of non-material elements that erupts in an abstract space, it views discourse as a lived and living phenomenon, an *act* that forms part of and helps shape material reality. For genealogy, both perceiving material reality and intervening in it are practices; the degree to which we can view our discourses as themselves interventions, and, conversely, the extent to which we can understand our interventions as forms of discourse, is the core question that occupies it.

Genealogy is, at base, a recognition of the fact that to imagine, as archaeology does, that the validity of ideas can somehow exist prior to their genuine material instantiation within existing society is to push the question of cause further from view rather than to resolve it (Boyne, 126). Approaching discourse as a practice allows genealogy to speak without contradiction of the material conditions of discourse; it enables genealogy to speak of bodies and environments as carriers of discourse and as constitutive elements of practices, which together impinge on bodies and environments to produce certain kinds of bodies, spaces, traits, behaviours and knowledges (Best, 46). In other words, genealogy aims to show how the rules of formation of discourse are linked to the operations of physical practices and processes. In genealogy, discourse not only exhibits immanent principles of regularity, it is also bound by regulations enforced through material practices. Equally, genealogy is concerned with the ways in which discourse *produces* practices for the formation of a material reality. According to genealogy, the world is traversed by the effects of discourses which work to constitute the actual state of things (Gordon, 245). In this view, discourse has a discernible impact on other discourses, but also on bodies and the

environment; things are objectifications of determinate practices; there are no historical objects that pre-exist the practices that constitute them (Chartier, 185).

For genealogy, then, discourse is a practice like any other. Moreover, other practices cannot be detached from or viewed in isolation of discourse. The practice of criminal punishment, for example, is the materiality of the prison, but it is also the social and scientific theories that produced the prison, and the social and scientific techniques that reinforce specific practices within, around and beyond the prison; criminal punishment is, in a concrete sense, a *discursive practice*. The relations of such discursive practices are what make up the genealogical field (the map of knowledge that genealogy offers). Unlike the archaeological field, which is made up of abstract configurations of statements, the genealogical field is built up through analysis of discontinuous but actual spaces, such as the prison (Said, 150).

The shift from archaeology to genealogy is thus also a shift away from time as the paradigm guiding analysis. As an historical method, archaeology privileges time. It displays a rigorous concern with periodisation that contrasts with the relative indeterminacy of its spatial demarcations. That is to say, the uncertainty of archaeology's spatial demarcations is in contrast with the care it takes in marking off sections of time, periods and ages. Genealogy, on the other hand, recognises that to envisage the analysis of discourses solely in terms of time or temporal continuity can lead to the conceptualisation of change as the internal transformation of an individual consciousness; metaphorising discursive changes in a vocabulary of time risks falling back on the model of individual consciousness with its intrinsic temporality; always present is the temptation of totalising, teleological methods with their appeal to individual and collective consciousness and to a tangled network of influences. By contrast, genealogy endeavours to decipher discourse through the use of spatial metaphors: position, displacement, site, field, territory, domain, soil, horizon, archipelago, geopolitics, region, landscape. This approach enables it to grasp precisely the points at which discursive practices emerge and develop in relation to one another (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 69-70). In genealogy, an institution such as a prison constitutes an interplay of architecture and social science that offers insights into

broader workings of modern society. The demonstrative force of this analysis depends on the spatial organisation of prison itself. Genealogy constantly refers back to the visual evidence, to the plans, the prospects and the models that make up particular discursive practices. Thus, genealogy's line of sight is relational, not just descriptive; its contours inscribe not just the points and configurations of intelligibility but also the (normally invisible) relations between bodies and practices, and between practices themselves (Flynn, 42).

Genealogy's special appeal to space, however, is not made at the expense of time. On the contrary, it implicates time; it restores to time its *dispersive* character (44). Space, which in traditional analyses might be treated as fixed or immobile, is 'given' time, rendered dynamic and volatile. Space is seen to change *with* time; space is seen to emerge, transform, decay. Time, meanwhile, is made malleable; it is given length and breadth, and stretched over space, a process which divests it of any dialectical spirit that may previously have been imposed upon it (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 70). Time no longer advances according to contradictions or revolutions; time no longer advances at all. Instead, it is seen to be spread out in all directions to form a field. Thus, when genealogy speaks of space, it is not being hostile to time; it is not denying history. Rather, it is advancing a history of certain practices explained in spatial *and* temporal terms; a history that is at the same time a structural and synchronic mode of analysis (concerned with configurations of practices at particular points in space and time) *and* a causal and diachronic mode of analysis (concerned with the emergence and development of practices through space and time) (Gutting, *Foucault*, 45).

Within this framework of unified time-space, genealogy conceives the search for cause in a particular way: not as the isolation and sealing off of 'origin' but as a necessarily partial and unpredictable search for *descent* (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 144). Genealogy has learned from archaeology that a search for a single 'origin' can only become an endless quest for beginnings; that such a search annuls the originality of historical events; that it makes of every historical moment a homogenous totality endowed with an ideal and unique significance present in each of its manifestations; that it organises historical development like a necessary continuity, one in which events are linked

together, event engendering event in an uninterrupted flow (Chartier, 170). Genealogy's search for descent does not look to recapture the essence of things in this way; it is not a search for the source of a river of events that courses through history. It is neither single-pointed nor unidirectional; it does not move backwards on a timeline of established events in order to locate a single point of 'origin'. Instead, it spreads out in multiple directions, combs space-time for the scattered and often forgotten *antecedents* to present discursive practices.

These antecedents look nothing like the 'origin' of traditional history; they are in fact challenges to this myth. Whereas traditional explanations of origin centre on vague and general ideas of technological and social influence ('the invention of printing', perhaps, or 'the rise of the bourgeoisie'), and have explanatory force only to the extent that history is understood to be moving towards correspondingly vague and general goals, such as 'democracy' and 'secularism', genealogy proposes alternative accounts based on many small and specific antecedents (the move from public to private forms of criminal punishment, for example, or more efficient ways of organising the space of prisons) which operate independently of one another with no overall outcome in view (Gutting, *Foucault*, 46). Genealogical antecedents are local and contingent; they are accidents, minute deviations, ruptures, divergences, errors, false appraisals, and faulty calculations (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 146); they are surprises, agitations and unsteady victories (Davidson, 'Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics', 224); they are chance, passion and petty malice; they are the markers of the singularity of a particular discursive practice, its radical contingency; they are the warnings that a particular discursive practice could have been otherwise, that its self-evidence, its givenness or naturalness as a feature of the world, is an illusion (Baker, 192). As no person or population is responsible for them; as they are not owned by anyone (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 150), antecedents cannot be decisions, treaties, reigns, or battles. What they *can* be is something just as material but much harder to identify and measure: the reversal of a relationship between bodies, or the usurpation of authority, or the appropriation of a vocabulary, or the turning of a

vocabulary against those who once used it, or a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax (155).

It is from such a jumble of accidental or 'petty' antecedents—thanks to them, against them—that genealogy sees discursive practices forming (146). By measuring the effects of these antecedents as they are felt by discourse, physical bodies and environmental spaces, genealogy can gain a picture of the emergence and growth of certain discursive practices. The task of genealogy is to tell antecedents apart, to differentiate the networks to which they belong, and to reconstitute the lines along which they are connected. In this way, genealogy distinguishes between antecedents according to amplitude and chronological breadth, that is, according to their capacity to produce the effects that make up our knowledge of a particular discursive practice (*Power/Knowledge*, 114).

There is, however, something lacking in the genealogical field thus far described. Accident alone does not explain how practices that operate among disconnected bodies are established; randomness does not show how discourse can impact environment; instability does not demonstrate the ways in which theory can make its mark on what is not theoretical (the non-conscious body, for example, the body that grows and breathes without any conscious help). What the system requires if it ultimately wants to annul the archaeological division between 'discursive' and 'non-discursive' domains is some sort of medium through which practices can travel and meet; what the system requires is an energy that animates discourse, body and environment from the inside *and* works on them from the outside; what the system requires is a practice that is also a carrier of practice; what the system requires is *force.*

Genealogy arises from the recognition that a system (a society, for instance) without relations can only ever be an abstraction; to exist (to live socially) is to be involved in relations; to relate (with body, with environment, with discourse) is to be implicated in an exchange—a play—of energy. As a result, the genealogical field cannot be static like the archaeological one; it must be mobile and shifting; it

must be volatile; within it, effects must be produced (*The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 102). In other words, the genealogical field must be infused with force: force emanating from the bodies, environments and discourses within the system; force emanating from boundaries (the walls) surrounding the system; a single all-pervading force whose fluctuations produce, carry, bring into communication and reproduce practices over space and time.

Genealogical force does not in itself exist; it has no life or essence of its own. Rather, it is operational; it is the effect of individual exchanges within the system. That is to say, it is not an attribute but a *relation* (Deleuze, 27-8). Genealogical force has no other object or subject than force itself; it is an action on other actions (Flynn, 35; Hoy, 'Power, Repression, Progress', 135). As such, it cannot be reduced to one practice forcibly constraining or modifying another. It greatly exceeds any single violence that might occur between bodies (or between bodies and environments, or bodies and discourse). Violence acts on specified bodies, discourses or environments whose form it destroys or changes, whereas genealogical force has no object other than that of force, and no being other than that of relation. In genealogy, the force relation means to incite, to induce, to seduce, to make easy or difficult, to enlarge or limit, to make more or less probable, to make more or less thinkable. These, rather than to overthrow or to repress, are the categories of genealogical force (Deleuze, 70).

Antecedents emerge into the genealogical field as the entry of force. Antecedents come from 'nothing'; they arise as force from (zero) force; they are tensions in the field of force that manifest themselves by carrying and sustaining force. The emergence of force is not specifically the push of a strong body or the reaction of a weak body in the field, but precisely the field where the relations of forces between such bodies are displayed, superimposed or put face-to-face. The emergence of force is the emergence of the field that force fills as well as force itself; it is force and the medium through which this force passes; it the possibility of relation and the relation itself (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 150).

Antecedents are the markers of the emergence at the micro level of relations that, far from destroying larger unities in the field, such as historical sequences

and economic processes, actually compose them (Deleuze, 36). Larger unities are engendered by antecedents; that is, they are the product (and the producer) of the tiny, random manifestations of force that enter into relations with each other at different points and moments in the field. In genealogy, history thus takes the form of a force relation—a micro-physics of force—rather than a relation of language or meaning (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 139).

To this force that pervades the field, genealogy gives the name of *power*. According to genealogy, previous conceptions of power, such as those used by traditional history and Marxist criticism, take no account of power's real complexity, its real specificity, its real diversity (*Power/Knowledge*, 188). Genealogy undertakes to formulate a fully complex theory of power, and the first action it takes in this regard is to negate the old idea that power can be held. Whereas in traditional history power is seen to be possessed by different people or institutions at different times; and whereas in Marxist criticism power is owned by fathers, husbands, employers, teachers, prison guards and other representatives of the State, which is itself representative of the interests of a class; in genealogy power is not a substance and therefore is not something that is acquired, seized or shared; it is not a property, possession, or privilege; it is not something that one clings on to or allows to slip away; it is not built up out of individual or collective wills; it is not derivable from interests (*The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 94); rather, it is a *non-subjective* field of force.

This is not to say that power is independent or could be made sense of outside of historical sequences or economic processes; there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But, for genealogy, this does not mean that power results from the choice or decision of a body or group of bodies: the aims of power are decipherable, and yet nobody invented or formulated them (94). The stated aims and objectives of those who claim to wield power usually remain distant from the reality of the workings and configurations of power itself. Individual tactics are drafted for particular needs, but these take shape in piecemeal fashion without anyone's consciously knowing what they add up to (Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', 35).

> [In genealogy] power relations are both intentional and non-subjective…Every disciplinary act is planned and calculated; power is intentional at the tactical level where guard confronts prisoner; doctor, patient; lecturer, audience. But the set of power relations, the strategic connections, the deep functionalism of power has no subject and is the product of no one's plan. (Walzer, 63)

Power in genealogy is not brandished by a body or specific set of bodies against others but is a complex form of organisation in which we are all involved (Taylor, 76). Aside from the particular conscious purpose which people pursue in their given context, there is the configuration of the field itself, and this cannot be attributed to anybody as their plan or conscious purpose (85-6). In genealogy, there are bodies and organisations that rule other bodies; there are suppressions and repressions that come from authority; there are forms of power that serve some classes above all others, but these ruling classes do not know how they do it, nor could they do it without the other terms in the power relation—the functionaries, the governed, the repressed, the exiled—each willingly or unwillingly contributing (Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', 28).

Thus envisaged, power can neither be located at nor emanating from a single point in the field. Power has no single source or centre. Quite the opposite: it is exercised from innumerable points, in an interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile correspondences. There is no focal point of power, but rather an endless network of power relations (Walzer, 55). What this means is that there is no escaping from power; beyond power there is only more power. Power is always already present, constituting the very thing that a body or bodies might use to counter it. Power invests the dominated, passes through them and with the help of them, relying on them just as they, in their struggle against power, rely on the hold it exerts on them (Deleuze, 27-8). Which is to say: where there is power, there is also resistance, and this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 94-96). Resistance to power does not have to come from outside power to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being immanent in power. On the contrary,

it exists all the more by being in the same place as power; like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies (*Power/Knowledge*, 142).

It would be a mistake, then, to equate this picture of omnipresent relations of power in a system to the idea that power inevitably amounts to absolute rule or command. If this were the case, history would assume the form of a homogenous narrative of perpetual despotism, and genealogical analysis would be unnecessary. In fact power implies an imperfect correspondence of force; the manner in which force fails to correspond with itself (the manner in which it confronts itself in an non-egalitarian relation), and the positive significance that can attach to such discrepancies is what genealogy is interested in locating (Gordon, 247).

> The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 93)

Working on the principle that power comes from everywhere but does not affect everything uniformly, genealogy cannot confine itself to analysing the governing body in a system. The schematism genealogy purposely avoids is that which consists of locating power solely in the governing body, and thereby turning the governing body into the major, privileged and almost unique instrument of the power of one class over another. For genealogy, power goes much further than the governing body; it passes through more and finer channels; it is much more ambiguous. In genealogy, each individual discourse, body or environment has at its disposal a certain power, and for that reason can also act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power (*Power/Knowledge*, 72). Of course, genealogy does not regard the power of the governing body as unimportant; it does not aim to minimise its effectiveness. Instead what it means to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the governing body, firstly, because the governing

body, regardless of how widely its apparatuses reach, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and, secondly, because the governing body can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations (122). In other words, an excessive insistence on an exclusive role played by the governing body leads to the risk of overlooking all the mechanisms and effects of power that do not pass directly through the governing body, yet often sustain the governing body more effectively than its own institutions (73). The sovereignty of the governing body, the form of the law, or the overall unity of domination: for genealogy these are only the terminal forms power takes. Power is, in the first instance, the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the field in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation (*The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 92).

In contrast to Marxist power, then, genealogical power does not simply mean a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of certain bodies in the system. According to genealogy, it is possible to know with reasonable certainty who exploits others, who receives the profits, how these funds are reinvested, and which bodies, environments and discourse are involved, but, even with this knowledge, it is impossible to claim that power is solely in the hands of those who govern (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 213). Power is not a property but a *practice.* Power is *exercised* rather than possessed. Power is not simply what the dominant class has and the oppressed lack; it is not the acquired or preserved privilege of the dominant class, but the overall effect of relations of discursive and material practices; the dominated are as much a part of the network of power relations as the dominating. Genealogy does not deny the existence of class and class struggle; certainly everybody does not occupy the same position; certain positions preponderate and permit an effect of supremacy to be produced. What genealogy does is illustrate class in a different way: power is not homogenous, nor is it substantially identified with an individual who exercises it by right of birth; rather it is defined only by the particular points through which it passes (Deleuze, 25; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 156).

> [A]mong all the conditions for avoiding a repetition of the Soviet experience and preventing revolutionary process from running into the ground, one of the first things that has to be understood is that power is not localised in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed. (59-60)

In genealogy, then, between every body in a system—between a man and a woman, between members of a family, between a teacher and a pupil, between each body who knows and each body who does not—there exist relations of power which are not simply a projection of the power of the governing body over the individual; they are rather the concrete, changing field in which the governing body is grounded; *they are the conditions which makes it possible for the governing body to function*. That is to say, for the governing body to work in the way it does, there must be much smaller and quite specific relations of domination —micro-relations—which have their own configuration and relative autonomy (*Power/Knowledge*, 188).

> A functional microanalysis takes whatever is still pyramidal in the Marxist image and replaces it with a strict immanence where centres of power and disciplinary techniques form multiple segments, linked to one another with the individuals of a mass traverse or inhabit, body and soul (family, school, barracks, factory, if need be prison). The thing called power is characterised by immanence of field without transcendent unification, continuity of line without global centralisation, and contiguity of parts without distinct totalisation: it is a social space. (Deleuze, 27)

Genealogy does not believe that relations of power are *only* engendered from the top downward, nor does it believe that power is evenly distributed, that there exists a sort of democratic or anarchic distribution of power through bodies. Instead, genealogy believes that larger strategies of power, such as the governing body, encrust themselves and depend for their conditions of exercise at the micro level (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 200). Genealogy rejects the old 'descending'

analysis of power, which starts from the centre of power and aims at the discovery of the extent to which it permeates into the base, the degree to which it reproduces itself down to and including the most molecular elements of society. Rather, it conducts an 'ascending' analysis, starting from the level of antecedents where force relations are enacted by players who do not know what they are doing—tiny local events which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics—and then moving up to see how these force relations have been, and continue to be, invested, colonised, utilised, involved, transformed, displaced and extended by ever more general force relations and by forms of global domination (99).

In such an ascending analysis, power is not always suffered, it is sometimes enjoyed. That is to say, power is not taken only in a pejorative sense. It is also a positive concept, one that functions in the very division of phenomena into positive and negative, good and evil (Flynn, 35-6). Indeed, genealogy ceases to pose the question of power in moral terms, and begins to pose it instead in terms of existence; it no longer asks whether power is right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate, but rather asks what do relations of power consist of, how is power *practised* (Davidson, 'Structures and Strategies of Discourse', 2).

Since it incites, induces, seduces; since it passes through every force relation; since it is practised rather than possessed, genealogical power is not essentially repressive (Deleuze, 71). In defining the effects of power as repression, traditional history and Marxist criticism adopt a purely juridical conception of such power; that is to say, they identify power with a law that says 'no'; they understand power above all as carrying the force of a prohibition; they see power working only through the mode of censorship, exclusion and blockage (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 59). Genealogy believes this to be a narrow conception of power. In genealogy's view, power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress; such a power would be poor in resources, monotonous in the tactics it uses, incapable of invention, and seemingly doomed always to repeat itself. It would be a power that only had the force of the negative on its side, the power to say 'no'. Having no capacity to produce, capable only of posting limits, it would be nothing more than anti-energy (59). It would be

incapable of doing anything except render what it dominates incapable of doing anything either, except for what power allows it to do. It would be a power focused on little else than the statement of the law and the operation of taboos; all modes of domination, submission and subjugation would be ultimately reduced to an effect of obedience (*The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 85). It would be unable to account for why certain bodies in the system are brought to obey it. And it would be unable to offer any picture of progress than one that sees bodies overcoming repression (silencing the 'no' or indeed turning it to a 'yes') (Hoy, 'Power, Repression, Progress', 137).

By contrast, what makes genealogical power hold good, what makes it strong—the key to its acceptance by all bodies through which it passes—is the fact that it does not only weigh down as a prohibitive force, but also traverses and *produces* things. More than a negative energy whose function is repression, genealogical power is a *productive network* (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 59, 119). Not only does power repress bodies; not only does it destroy environments; not only does it prevent discourse, power (re)constitutes these things, and conversely they (re)constitute power. Power subjects bodies; power builds environments; power yields discourse; and at the same time bodies, environments and discourse carry power.

The productive power of power shows up in the genealogical field as effects. To incite, provoke and produce constitute 'active effects,' while to be incited or provoked, to be induced or produce constitute 'reactive affects'. The latter are not simply repercussions of the former, but can be active resistance. At the same time, each effect has the power to affect and to be affected, such that each effect implies power relations. Every field distributes power according to these relations and their variations (Deleuze, 71). Thus, genealogy is interested in the effects of power that show up in its field; it is interested in power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations in regional and local bodies, discourses, institutions and environments; it is interested in locating the point where power invests itself, becomes embodied in techniques, and equips itself with instruments and eventually even violent means of material intervention (Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge*, 96). It studies power at the point where its intention, if it has one, is

completely implicated in its real and effective practices; the point where power is in direct and immediate relationship with what can only provisionally be called its object (for it is also its subject); there, in the field of bodies, environments and discourses where power installs itself (and is installed) and produces its real effects (97).

That power is productive, and that the effects of its productivity are discernible, is genealogy's pivotal insight. As we shall now see, it is what enables genealogy to account for relations between body, environment and discourse, and thereby to dissolve the division, erected by archaeology, between discursive and non-discursive systems.

It is genealogy's view that from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards —that is, from the Classical episteme to the present—there has been a sustained boom in the *productivity* of power (119). Not only are the great governing apparatuses developed (the army, the police and fiscal administration), but there is also established a new 'economy' of power: procedures and technologies which allow the effects of power to circulate throughout the entire social body. These new techniques are—and remain—much more efficient and much less wasteful than those previously employed. Pre-Classical (pre-modern) feudal societies functioned essentially through signs and levies. Signs, rituals and ceremonies of loyalty were enacted for feudal lords; levies were paid in the form of taxes, pillage, hunting and war. In the Classical episteme, by contrast, a form of power comes into being that begins to exercise itself through *social production* and *social service*; that is, power becomes a matter of producing service from individuals in their concrete lives (125). This is a power bent on generating force in and around bodies, making them grow a certain way, and ordering them rather than one dedicated to impeding bodies, making them submit or destroying them. It operates less through physical force and representation by law than through hegemony of norms, political technologies, and the shaping of the body and mind (Best, 49). It is what genealogy calls *disciplinary power* or simply *discipline*: a

mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques and novel instruments (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 104); a mechanism of power that traverses every body, environment and discourse, linking them, prolonging them, and making them converge and function in a new way (Deleuze, 26).

As we have seen, as opposed to the old mode of violent coercion or destruction, discipline (re)constitutes. Its target for (re)constitution is threefold. Firstly, it produces new gestures, actions, habits, and skills, and ultimately new kinds of *bodies*. Secondly, it distributes the spaces and organises the timing within which bodies function; that is, it affects the enclosure, partitioning and functional spread of *environment* in order to direct the physical and mental activity of bodies. Thirdly, it yields new forms of *discourse*, new ways of speaking and thinking, which are themselves carriers of discipline. Here we shall deal with each of these individually—power's (re)constitution of body, power's (re)constitution of environment and power's (re)constitution of discourse—but only in order to show that, in fact, they cannot be isolated; they do not operate individually; they are interdependent; in terms of discipline, they are one; together they are the subject and object of discipline; they are discipline's practice.

To begin, the body. Genealogy illustrates how discipline (re)constitutes the body by describing how it punishes it. In this context, genealogy juxtaposes pre-Classical and modern approaches to punishment, and identifies four principle transitions: firstly, punishment is no longer a public display, a spectacular demonstration of the sovereign's might, but rather a discrete application of constraints needed to preserve public order; secondly, what is punished is no longer the crime but the criminal, the concern of the law being not so much what criminals have done as what (environment, heredity, upbringing) has led them to do it; thirdly, those who determine the precise nature and duration of punishment are no longer the judges who impose penalties in conformity with the law, but the experts (psychiatrists, social workers, parole boards) who decide how to implement indeterminate judicial sentences; and finally, the avowed purpose of punishment is no longer retribution (either to deter others or for the sake of pure justice) but the reform and rehabilitation of the criminal (Gutting, *Foucault*, 80). Genealogy thus presents two exemplary modes of punishment, the first a brutal

public event focussed on the heinousness of the crime itself and aimed at retribution and deterrence; the second representing the new, 'gentler' way of punishment, the product it would seem, of a more civilised, more 'humane' approach to it. But, according to genealogy, this modern, humane punishment is not what it seems. The shift from 'atrocious' torture to humane rehabilitation or 'correction' may look like increased humanitarianism and progressive recognition of the autonomy of the individual; in reality, however, it is a more finely tuned mechanism of control over the body, a more effective spinning of the web of power over everyday life. The real point of the new penal system is not to punish less but to punish *better*; to punish with more universality and necessity, to insert the power to punish more deeply into the body (Hoy, 'Power, Repression, Progress', 136; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 82).

> The true objective of the [penal] reform movement [in the Classical episteme], even in its most general formulations, was not so much to establish a new right to punish based on more equitable principles, as to set up a new economy of the power to punish, to assure its better distribution, so that it should be neither too concentrated at certain privileged points, nor too divided between opposing authorities; so that it should be distributed in homogenous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down to the finest grain of the social body. (80)

In this picture, discipline is diffused throughout the genealogical field, colonising the bodies contained in it, utilising the bodies' energy while inducing obedience and conformity (Best, 54). Discipline's aim is to make of the bodies in the field a collection of disciplined bodies, that is, bodies that not only do what discipline wants but do it in precisely the way discipline wants (Gutting, *Foucault*, 82). In such a disciplinary system, the body enters a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it; in the process, the body learns to operate as discipline wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that discipline determines. In this way, discipline produces subjected and practised entities, pliable tools of economic productivity; in this way, discipline produces *docile bodies* (Flynn, 37; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138).

Docile bodies are a useful force because they are both productive bodies and subjected bodies. What is more, docile bodies can be obtained without recourse to violence. Certainly, they can be brought about through subjection to direct contact, through a bearing down of physical force; but the process does not necessarily involve violent or bloody methods. The production of docile bodies can be a mechanism that is subtle; it can be calculated, organised, technically thought out; it can dismiss the use of weapons or terror and yet remain of a physical order (26).

Discipline produces docile bodies using several methods that are often hidden from view by their very obviousness. In the first instance, it proceeds from the distribution—or the break-up and the rearrangement—of bodies in space. To achieve this end, it sometimes requires enclosures, such as schools, workshops, offices, factories, barracks, hospitals, or prisons, but the principle of enclosure is not indispensable; discipline also works in spaces outside such enclosures, and often in a more flexible and detailed way as a result. That is to say, discipline can partition space, create sites of supervision and analysis, erect walls to break communications, but it can also establish the art of rank, for example, which individualises bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of hierarchical relations (141-46).

As well as a mechanism for analysing and distributing bodies in space, discipline must be understood as a machinery for controlling and capitalising bodies in time (157). The timetable, for example, permits discipline to establish rhythms, impose particular occupations and regulate cycles of repetition. Various other techniques, from weapon training to penmanship, break down bodily acts into their elements: the position of the torso, limbs, articulations is defined; to each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed. A docile body is the prerequisite of an efficient (time-saving) gesture; the body must seek to intensify the use of the slightest moment. Through discipline, time penetrates the docile body and with it all the meticulous controls of discipline itself (149-154).

Fig. 3. Richard W. Bailey. *Nineteenth-Century English*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999) 11.

Here: a relation, an interdependence. On one hand, discipline attaches itself to the body; it breaks the body down using the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it inscribes itself in the joints, the nervous system, temperament, the digestive apparatus; it appears in respiration, in movement, in diets (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 147-53). On the other hand, the body attaches itself to discipline; it relies on it; it obliges it and makes it an obligation; it makes it suitable for transmission; it gives discipline its discipline. In other words, bodies are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising discipline; they are not only its inert or consenting target; they are

always also the elements of its articulation; they are the vehicles of discipline, not only its points of application (*Power/Knowledge*, 98).

The body, but also everything that the body touches and everything that touches it—environment—is the domain of discipline. The exercise of discipline presupposes an environment devoid of public space, an environment in which power is hidden but bodies are under constant scrutiny, an environment that coerces by means of observation, an environment characterised by *hierarchical surveillance* (Taylor, 74). To this end, discipline produces an architecture that fulfils the functional needs of ordinary people at the same time as it renders bodies visible; that is, it produces an architecture that acts on those it shelters by opening them to surveillance and thereby to control (Gutting, *Foucault*, 83).

> Side by side with the major technology of the telescope, the lens and the light beam, which were an integral part of the new physics and cosmology [of the Classical episteme], there were the minor techniques of multiple and intersecting observations, of eyes that must see without being seen; using techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation, an obscure art of light and the visible was secretly preparing a new knowledge of man (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 171).

This modern architecture of discipline finds an almost ideal model in the military camp. The model of the camp, or at least its underlying principle, has for a long time been integral to urban development, to the construction of working-class housing estates, hospitals, asylums, schools, offices and especially prisons (171). This is an architecture that is built not simply to be seen (as with the ostentation of palaces), or to observe the external space (as with the geometry of fortresses), but to permit internal control: to render visible those who are inside. The old schema of confinement and enclosure—thick walls, a heavy gate that prevents entering and leaving—is thus replaced by a detailed configuration of openings, of filled and empty spaces, passages and transparencies (Foucault, *Disicpline and Punish*, 172). No more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks; all that is needed is that separations are clear and openings well arranged (202). Here, from the central watchtower or its equivalent, a single gaze can see everything constantly.

A single central vantage point permits the surveillance of all bodies, which themselves are incapable of seeing the watcher. The principle of control is not the fact but the *possibility* of observation. That is to say, the watcher will actually look at a given body only occasionally, but the body has no way of knowing when these occasions may arise and so must always assume that it is being observed. The body is seen, but it does not see; it is the object of information, never a subject in communication (200). What is induced as a result is a state of conscious and permanent visibility of bodies that assures the automatic functioning of discipline (Gutting, *Foucault*, 83-84). In effect, discipline reverses the principle of the dungeon; or more specifically, it preserves the enclosing function of the dungeon and eliminates its capacity to deprive of light and to hide. Full lighting and the eye of the watcher capture better than darkness. Visibility is the trap (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200).

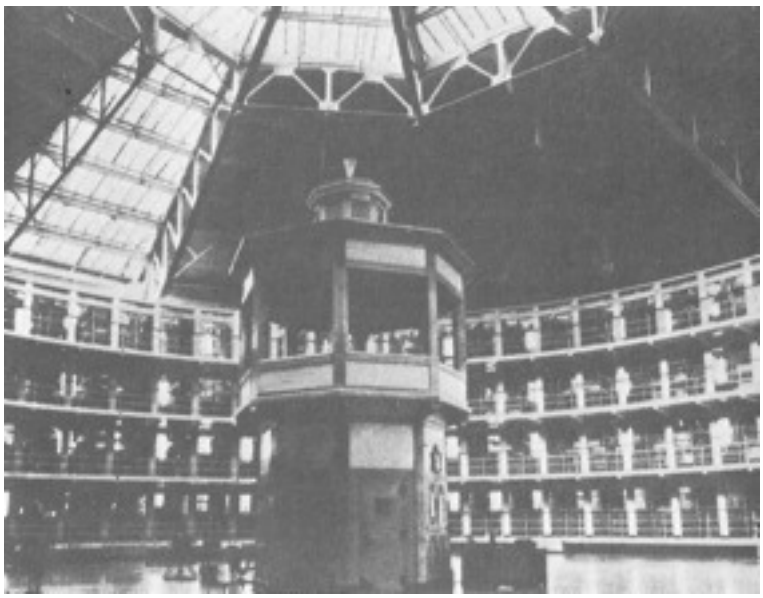


Fig. 4. Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. (New York: Vintage, 1979) Plate 4.

Discipline-as-environment aims to transform the bodies it contains; it seeks to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of discipline right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. And, though it finds its purest form in the military camp or the prison, it is in fact

polyvalent in its applications: it can serve not only to reform barracks and prisons, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. In short, whenever there is a multiplicity of bodies on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, a disciplinary architecture can be used (205).

And *is* used. According to genealogy, the disciplinary techniques introduced in prisons and barracks have become the model for other modern sites of control, such as schools, hospitals, factories and offices (Gutting, *Foucault*, 81). Discipline has broadened its scope, spread out from body to body, environment to environment; it has moved from enclosures to increasingly and indefinitely more generalised spaces; it has metastasised to pervade all of society. As it sprawls, discipline does not replace all other modalities of power; rather, it infiltrates them, sometimes undermines them, but in any case serves as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 216). And, of course, as is the case with power in all its forms, the converse is also true: the mechanism of discipline found in a specific enclosed space, such as a prison, represents a continuation and intensification of what takes place in more ordinary places. Outside the prison, we all live to a time schedule, get up to an alarm, work to a rigid routine, live in the eye of authority, are periodically subject to examination and inspection; this generalised system of discipline is what makes our modern model of prison thinkable; the prison would not be possible without the norms of discipline functioning exterior to it (Walzer, 58).

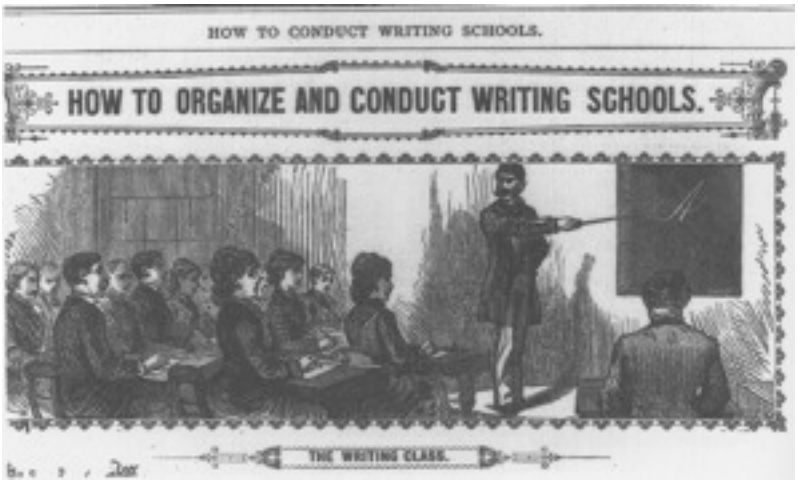


Fig 5. Richard W. Bailey. *Nineteenth-Century English*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999) 60.

Thus, a spreading out of discipline. And, at the same time, a seeping in. A percolation. A leaking through walls. A sinking into skin and muscle. A flowing through capillaries to the furthest extremities of body. As much as discipline stretches out, it materially penetrates the body in depth, and it does so without depending on the mediation of the body's own awareness or representations; discipline takes hold in the body whether or not it has been interiorised in consciousnesses (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 186). And yet consciousness, too, is a defining point of passage for discipline; the mind is principle among discipline's termini; in *discourse* discipline enters into what is perhaps its clearest —most real, most material—relation with itself.

Discipline is, perhaps more than anything else, power of mind over mind. When it penetrates the body, it does so ultimately to reach something other than the body itself; it is to reach our conceptions of ourselves, that is, our ideas of 'Man', 'Normal Man', 'Sane Man', 'Essence of Man', 'Truth of Man', 'Humanity'. In other words, discipline's final interest is in our images of self—our story of ourselves—which it aims to mould in certain ways. The spread of discipline throughout the social fabric is accompanied by a corresponding shaping of our ideas of ourselves into categories of 'normal' and 'abnormal', 'reasonable' and 'mad', 'law-abiding' and 'delinquent', and so on. Genealogy calls this process *normalisation*, and means by it the imposition of a model of well-ordered human activity on all aspects of social life: when we behave in certain ways, even

in what we believe to be a climate of relative personal freedom, we are wittingly or unwittingly responding to, obeying, conforming to, enduring, resisting categories of behaviour established by discipline (Hoy, 'Introduction', 13).

Through discipline, consciousness is instilled with *normalising judgement*. We judge others (and ourselves) not by the intrinsic rightness and wrongness of their (our) words and actions but by where these words and actions place them (us) on a ranked scale that compares them (us) to everyone else. Actions conscious and unconscious are referred to a whole—Man, Humanity, Normality—that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of rule to be followed. We differentiate and are differentiated from one another in terms of a minimal threshold: an average to be respected or an optimum towards which we must strain. Our abilities, our levels, our 'nature' are measured in quantitative terms and hierarchised in terms of value, and, through this value-giving mechanism, conformity is instilled; the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences is drawn in our minds, the external frontier of the abnormal is marked in our consciousnesses (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 182-83).

Normalising judgement therefore constitutes a peculiarly pervasive means of control: we are brought to believe that for virtually any level of achievement, there is an even higher level possible; we learn to make 'abnormal' modes of behaviour socially (humanly) unacceptable, even if they are far from the blatant transgressions that called for violent retribution in older modalities of power. In the disciplinary regime, the threat of being judged abnormal—or its opposite, the desire to be judged above or outside the normal—constrains our every thought (Gutting, *Foucault*, 84); meanwhile, from the outside, we subject the slightest departures from correct behaviour to examination and punishment (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 178).

> When a judgement cannot be framed in terms of good and evil, it is stated in terms of normal and abnormal. And when it is necessary to justify this last distinction, it is done in terms of what is good or bad for the individual. These are expressions that signal the fundamental duality

> of Western consciousness. (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 230)

In this sphere of consciousness controlling consciousness, the body serves as an instrument or intermediary: when we intervene upon the body to imprison it, rehabilitate it or to make it work, it is in order to deprive it of an *idea*: the Liberty that we regard as the right and the property of Man (*Discipline and Punish*, 11). When we deem it necessary to manipulate the body, we do so at a distance, in the proper way, according to strict rules, and with a 'higher' aim in mind: 'humanisation', 'normalisation', the rediscovery of Man in the 'inhuman'.

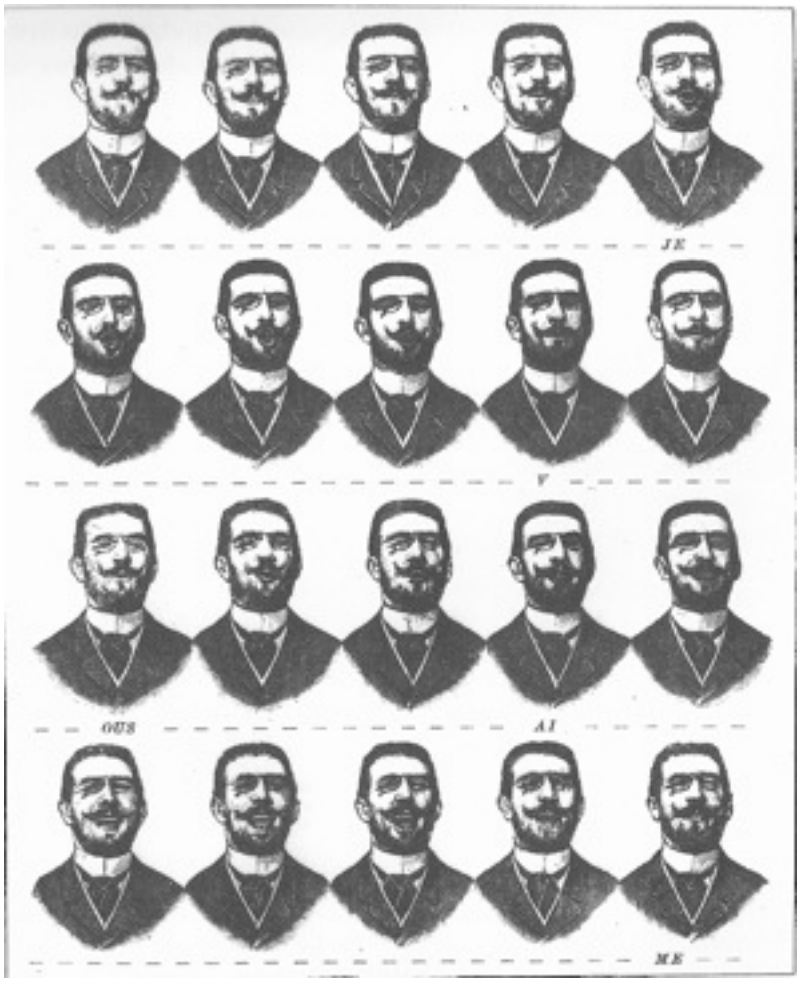


Fig. 6. Richard W. Bailey. *Nineteenth-Century English*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999) 73.

In other words, our work is carried out for the 'good' of that body. We are not interested in inflicting pain (even those bodies we condemn to death are

anaesthetised in the last moment, denied the ability to feel the experience of death); instead we are interested in acting on the heart, thoughts, the will, the inclinations; we, in our guises as warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, parents, spouses, are concerned to change *bodyless* reality: consciousness, mind, soul (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 16).

According to genealogy, then, discipline works as a normalising gaze (inward and outward) that establishes over our minds a visibility through which we differentiate and judge ourselves and others, with the aim of (re)constituting ourselves and others. Our discourses are thus shown to be produced in the service of discipline; our discourses are the vehicle of its expansion, its ever-increasing penetration of bodies, minds, institutions, societies. Our discursive practices do not purely and simply produce discourse; they are embodied in discipline: in the technical processes, in the institutions, in the patterns for general behaviour, in forms of transmission and diffusion, in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain power (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 200). Thus conceived, our discursive practices go beyond mere linguistic expression; they are in fact producers of the conditions in which discipline produces modes of consciousness that thereby work to produce physical changes in bodies, environment and discourse itself.

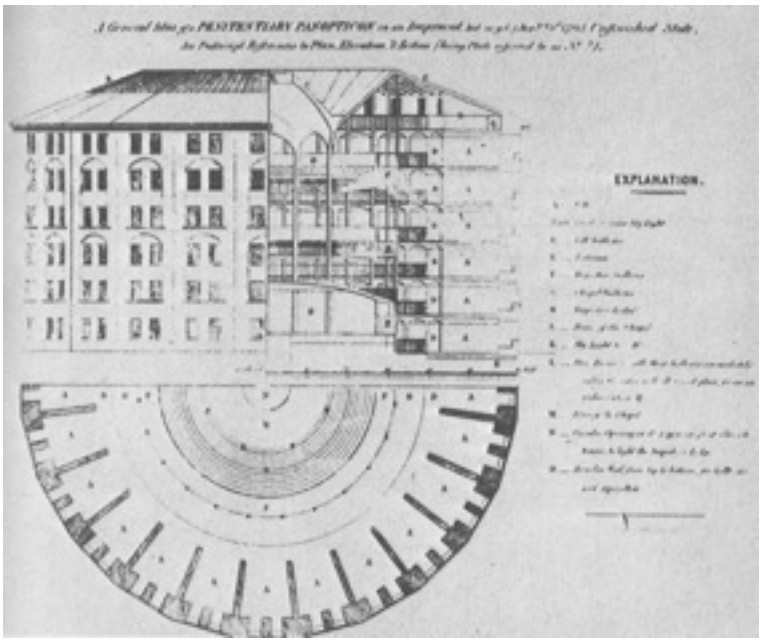


Fig. 7. Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. (New York: Vintage, 1979) Plate 2.

Genealogy is concerned, therefore, not just with the discourses through which we know the world, but with the power that constantly (re)constitutes the discourses through which we constantly (re)constitute the world and its discourses. In genealogy, we are not just discursive constructs; we are also products of technologies of power through which—by which, against which—our minds (our identity, desires, fears) are shaped and (re)constituted. In turn, it is through these (re)constituted minds that we look upon ourselves and the world; it is through these (re)constiuted minds that we shape how we and our environments actually look and interact.

In genealogy, we are not pre-given entities which are seized on by the exercise of power. We are not a collection of elementary atoms which power comes to strike, subdue, split or crush. In fact, we—our stories, identities and characteristics—are the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires (*Power/Knowledge*, 74). It is always already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. We are not the opponent of power; we are one of its prime effects. We are an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which we are that effect, we are the vehicle of power's articulation. We whom power has (re) constituted are at the same time its carrier (98).

Thus, in the genealogical scheme, power makes us; it makes us aware of what we should not be, and thereby makes us what we think we are (and where, and how). That is to say, power (re)constitutes our *knowledge* of ourselves and our world. Knowledge implies power, for power is what makes things visible and articulable—it is what makes them *thinkable*—in the first place. Objective, non-relativised knowledge is an abstraction, a myth; beliefs are valid only relative to power. Genealogy's 'knowledge' of power, for instance, is itself a form of power. Genealogy's relativist claims themselves have validity only relative to the power

that produces them. But this does not mean that power does not produce genuine knowledge. On the contrary, power *only* produces genuine knowledge because it produces the only kind of knowledge we can know: that which is produced by power. The mere fact that a particular cognitive state is an effect of power does not exclude it from the realm of knowledge (Gutting, *Foucault*, 53); rather it is the only realm of knowledge we know. It is an illusion to imagine that knowledge can exist where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop outside power's injunctions, demands and interests. In fact, knowledge and power are integrated with one another; there is no possibility of knowledge outside the field of power, nor will there ever be a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power. It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 27, 52).

By merging power and knowledge in this way, genealogy annuls the archaeological division between the discursive and non-discursive domains (between body, action, environment, on the one hand, and mind, texts, representations, intellectual constructs, on the other). When power and knowledge are unified, our knowledge of something and nothing, time and space, particle and field, matter and force, mind and body, the articulable and the visible, the discursive and the non-discursive domains join to become equal effects of power: our knowledge of something and our knowledge of nothing, our knowledge of discourse and our knowledge of bodily action, and so on, are products of the same relations of power. It is power-knowledge that joins matter and force; it is power-knowledge that joins particle and field; it is power-knowledge that joins discourse and environment.

This joining of discursive and non-discursive domains has far-reaching consequences. It is, at base, a challenge to the most enduring dualism in science and philosophy: that of mind/body, consciousness/world. If the power that animates the non-discursive realm (body, environment, world) is the same power that animates our minds (our knowledge of body, environment and world), what does this mean for truth? How can we be sure that our theories are true if truth is itself conditioned by a power that is as much non-discursive (non-conscious) as it

is discursive (conscious)? Can any of our knowledge really be true? If not, what does this mean for our categories of 'fact' and 'fiction'? And—the question we have been building to all this time—what does it mean for the kind of fiction we call 'historical' (and therefore to some degree 'factual')?

III

Are You Pulling My Tail?

According to Foucauldian theory, then, power produces knowledge, and not simply by encouraging types of knowledge that serve to dominate or by applying methods of knowledge that are useful to those in government; at every level in the social realm, at every point of contact between bodies and between discourses, power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27). Foucauldian theory is not content to say that power has a need for a particular discovery, or a particular form or approach to knowledge-seeking; rather it insists that knowledge and power are integrated with one another; the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information; the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power (*Power/Knowledge*, 51). To imagine that there will be a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power—to imagine an era of 'pure' or 'free' knowledge, to imagine an era of Truth—is fall under the spell of a utopian dream. It is impossible for power to be exercised without knowledge; knowledge always engenders power (52). Everything we know is a product of power, and is therefore the truth (as only we can know it).

> We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth…[W]e are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need,

> in order to function: we *must* speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place. In another sense, we are also subjected to truth in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits, and itself extends upon the effects of power. In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living and dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power. (93-94)

According to this theoretical scheme, everything we think we know about the world is an effect of power. We say something is true not because we have seen to its heart or isolated its essence, not because we have extracted some deep *a priori* fact from the world, but because the conditions of power that make possible our statement of truth correspond to the effects of power that that statement generates: the possibility of a true proposition and the judgement that it is true conform to the same normalising conditions, to the same rules of power-knowledge. We cannot step outside these rules in order to resist them because the rules already imply our resistance. Even to discuss power is to have already entered relations of power.

> 'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth. (133)

Objections to Foucauldian theory have tended to focus on this circular relation, this apparently inescapable loop. Here is a vision of power that is itself necessarily implicated in its own vision of power; here is a conception of an all-encompassing, all-inclusive power that reappears as the foundation of its own

discourse (Trombadori, 19-20); here is a flowing of power through the whole porous network of the social, the mental and the corporeal, a flowing which runs directly into itself (Baudrillard, 9); here is a discourse that is a mirror of the power it describes (10); here is an argument about knowledge that claims to be no freer from power and thus no truer than any other; here is a thesis that cannot escape its own antithesis.

Looking at this paradox, objectors conclude that Foucauldian theory cannot, in fact, be what it purports to be. Despite its insistence on an ineludible coil of power, the Foucauldian account is not a neutral description that cooly accepts its place in the power regime; rather, it is a view of power that is intended to subvert and disrupt the spread of power: it aims to a version of truth about power. Objectors say that Foucauldian theory is itself a counterexample to its own suggestion that the entire social body has become disciplined, that none of us can speak anything but the 'truth' sanctioned by the regime. When Foucauldian theory holds that resistance to discipline can come only from within the disciplinary system, logically it must actually be referring to marginalised places in the system that have *not* been fully subjected to discipline, places where some form of counter-truth can be expressed. If discipline were really total, if carceral techniques and normalising tendencies were indeed infinitesimally ingrained, then there would be no grounds for Foucauldian theory; there would be no way that anybody, including Foucauldian theorists, could understand they were being disciplined in this way (Hoy, 'Introduction', 14); there would be no truth that is truly opposing or contesting.

Moreover—the complaints continue—even if we grant that Foucauldian theory can, against its own rules, consider itself 'non-disciplined' and therefore the bearer of oppositional truth, it refuses to use this privileged, non-normalised position to offer alternatives to the current operations of power; it provides no new moral or political standards on which to base a challenge to the spread of discipline. Resistance in Foucauldian theory is presented as simply inevitable, that is, as inevitable as the discipline it describes (and implicitly resists). In this sense, Foucauldian theory urges resistance—it calls on us to see through the progressive and benevolent veneer of our society and thereby to resist the forces

of discipline that create the very illusions of progression and benevolence—but it offers no account of what would constitute good reasons for resisting nor any explanations of how it could be resisted; its own resistance is an unexplained given.

According to its critics, then, Foucauldian theory objects to discipline while denying that there can be anything like liberation from it, a space of non-disciplined truth we can flee to; Foucauldian theory portrays the dangers of discipline while insisting that these dangers are always and everywhere met by resistance, a meeting of forces that *defines* the dangers in the first place. But is this the only way that we can think about power? Can principles for the criticism of power be developed from a standpoint independent of power? By denying the possibility of a standpoint outside power, does Foucauldian theory not doom criticism (of power and everything else) to nihilism or indeed fatalism? (Hoy, 'Introduction', 10). In such a scheme, what consistency do the words 'struggle' or 'resistance' really have? Within such an apparently predetermined dynamic, what can actually change the terms of a relation of power? (Trombadori, 19). And—the bigger question—why would resistance be preferable to submission? Why would we—why *ought* we—struggle against discipline if the outcome of our struggle can only be to make discipline what it is?

Critics argue that only by employing normative notions (that is, the kind of notions it is trying to expose) could Foucauldian theory begin to answer these questions; only with the introduction of standards of behaviour and essential qualities of Man could Foucauldian theory begin to tell us what is *truly* wrong with the modern power-knowledge regime and why we ought to oppose it (Fraser, 238). Its refusal of all such norms, standards and essences means that all it can say is that power breeds resistance, and that resistance depends on power. It cannot provide an adequate description of resistance without the power it resists. It cannot specify the meaning of the terms struggle and opposition in a *positive* way, that is, without the implicit threat that struggle is capable of reproducing domination and repression—an orthodoxy of truth—in a new guise.

In this way, Foucauldian theory is accused of a lack of interest in the problem of how a properly dissenting political movement might be developed. It

is charged with ignoring those practical, organised resistance movements which actually occur in particular sites of opposition and which are often successful in impeding, if not actually stopping, the progress of tyrannical power (Said, 151). Because the emphasis of Foucualdian theory is on the productivity of power, it appears to sit *within* rather than *against* power; its concern with domination is critical, say the objectors, but not finally as contestatory or as oppositional as on the surface it seems to be. Foucauldian theory aims to reveal power's injustice and cruelty, but by its own theorisation lets it go on more or less unchecked (152). It fails to hypothesise a possible response other than the simple refusal of truth, and therefore of any justified (political) action. If it has a moral, it seems to be this: do not bother with politics at all; proceed instead with criticism that is always condemned to speak the truth of discipline.

Paradoxical. Passive. Quietist. Conservative. Deterministic. Nihilistic. What are we to make of these charges? Are they fair appraisals? Do they do justice to the claims made by Foucauldian theory about the power-knowledge regime and our capacity to act within it? What role does political action actually play in Foucauldian theory? What freedom for action does it attribute to individuals? And, more fundamentally, who are these individuals, these *selves*, who seem to want freedom from discipline*?* If, as we shall see, Foucauldian theory rejects the notion of a stable self as source of power-knowledge, what kind of self—if any—does it imagine to be implicated in power relations? *Who* is speaking and acting? *Who* is resisting?

While it would be difficult to deny that the overriding emphasis of Foucauldian theory is on the ways in which individuals are classified, excluded, objectified, individualised, disciplined and normalised, it would also be a misrepresentation to say that there are not distinctly Foucauldian strategies for resistance and activism (Best, 55). As we shall see, these strategies are based not on an ability to stand outside power but on a specific vision of selfhood in which *aesthetic* values act as bearers of personal and political freedom within the regime of power. The question of how Foucauldian theory comes to depend on aesthetics, and on *fiction* in particular, to advance its mode of personal freedom and resistance is where we shall now turn our attention.

To begin, we should try to get a proper grasp on what kinds of politics, action and resistance are actually thinkable in Foucauldian theory. We should do so not to defend Foucauldian theory from the above criticisms—our purpose is not to prove that Foucauldian theory is true or truer than any other theory—but to show how these criticisms are products of the same epistemological conditions as Foucauldian theory and are therefore always already built into Foucualdian theory's formulations.

Foucauldian theory anticipates the accusation that it precludes the possibility of organised or generalised political action by arguing that Marxism—the theoretical terrain from which the majority of such accusations are launched—is itself doomed to failure. For Foucauldian theory, the weakness of Marxism stems from its assumption of a knowledge of a true and desirable future state. The Marxist concept of political action leading to liberation or emancipation (first for the masses and subsequently for everyone) implies the establishment of a new world order. Once the workers have exerted their maximum power, and once their necessary dictatorship has withered away, then there will be a society free of exploitation. Foucauldian theory argues that this image ignores a simple fact: that to imagine a future society is really to extend our participation in the present one. Apparently novel institutions are in fact based on elements taken from (the pastness of) present systems. We cannot escape the conceptual conditions underlying our discourses; we cannot envisage a place, a time or a state that is totally new (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 231).

In line with this, Foucauldian theory contends that freedom in the absence of power does not exist; freedom without power is a mere (Marxist) abstraction. Just as it is impossible to conceptualise truth without falsity, it is likewise absurd to conceptualise a completely liberated, undisciplined society: such a society would have freedom without a genuine contrast; such a society would have only one view, one colour; 'freedom' would be the name given to absolute rule. For this reason, Foucauldian theory does not posit liberty as the opposite of power, the

result of overcoming power. Instead, liberty is implied *within* the power relation (Hoy, 'Power, Repression, Progress', 139). Freedom does not appear only when relations between forces are suspended. In fact, relations between forces are *never* suspended. There is no moment of freedom that does not refer back to a kind of power; there is no act of freedom that is not itself an exertion of power.

According to the Foucauldian view, Marxist programmes of revolutionary change rest on models that are no less idealist—no less *impossible*—by virtue of their being thinkable. In Marxism, the notion of 'the people' or 'the workers' apparently derives from direct observation of poverty and exploitation in factories and other workplaces, but it functions in Marxist thought as a transcendental signified, a covert reference to a non-existent thing. The term 'the workers' cannot really point to the common needs and desires of a precise number of human beings without denying the differences among and between them; it is a generalisation; it is a form of rhetorical dictatorship. Marxism gives a global explanation to what are in fact local phenomena; in Marxism, the global class struggle and its exigencies are used to explain the way people relate and come into conflict with each other in much smaller contexts, such as family, workplace and professional association (Taylor, 85).

This is what Foucauldian theory means when its says that the Marxist global model leads directly to further oppression (Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 181). Marxist revolutions, structured as they are around a central opposition between two generalised groups, each possessing pre-given and immediately recognisable values, achieve nothing but the restoration of the representative forms of centralism and hierarchical structure that they once claimed to be struggling against (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 212). Marxist revolutions, that is, do not change the power network; they simply take over the existing state apparatus, and then keep it running behind a new screen.

For this reason, Foucauldian theory questions whether the dialectic can actually serve as a rule of action in political struggle. It argues that, in the pre-modern world, when power was effectively centralised in a royal court and a few related institutions, a dialectical revolution might have been successful, but that in the modern age, characterised as it is by diffused micro-centres of power, it is

meaningless (Gutting, *Foucault*, 88). Knowing this should not lead to reactionary despair, however. Instead, this knowledge should be experienced as a kind of liberation: from the assumption that liberation requires global transformation. According to Foucauldian theory, the reason for the failure of Marxism, and the reason we have not been able to find adequate forms of resistance to replace it, is a result of the fact that we continue to conceive of power the Marxist way, as a centralised macro-force (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 213). Foucauldian theory is an attempt to think about power in a different way, in terms of a logic free of such generalising constraints. Rather than matching Marxism with a global systematic theory which holds everything in place, it sets out to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power as they occur from point to point, and thereby come up with a truly accessible way to resist it (*Power/Knowledge*, 143-44). For Foucauldian theory, resistance is always *local* because power is always exercised locally.

> Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings…Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships. (*The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 96)

In other words, power builds from the bottom up. We cannot hope to explain power in terms of a top-down war between dominators and dominated. There may indeed be identifiable classes or groups, some of which appear 'on top' and some of which appear 'on the bottom' at a given time, but such divisions can only be explained by focusing on the combinations, alignments, mutual effects, oppositions and side-effects that local relations of power produce (Taylor, 85).

Rarely is a binary between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations; rarely does an all-encompassing opposition serve as a general matrix. Accordingly, we cannot escape from relations of power all at once, globally, massively, by a radical rupture or by a flight without return; there is no locus of revolt or source of rebellion, no pure law of the revolutionary (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 142). On the contrary, power is exercised at innumerable points, in the interplay of local, non-egalitarian and mobile relations, such as economic dependencies, knowledge relationships and sexual unions. Power is played out as a plurality of autonomous struggles waged at localised points in society: in families, in factories, in offices, in prisons, in asylums, in hospitals, in schools. It is the effects of these micro-relations that are felt through the whole social body; it is the relay of effects at the local level that are often mistaken for global movements.

What this means is that, in the Foucauldian scheme, there can be many different kinds of resistance: as many kinds as there are possible power relations. Moreover, resistance is actually *stronger* by virtue of being varied and local. Resistance is all the more real and effective because it is formed right at the point where relations of power emerge (142). Resistance to power does not have to come from outside power and therefore has direct access to power; resistance has real life by virtue of being in the same place as power. And, because resistance and discipline are locked together in a permanent relation, it is always possible that power relations itself will be inverted, however temporarily (*Discipline and Punish*, 27). These real, local instances of inversion—these *micro-revolutions*—constitute subversive recodifications of the power relation itself. They can change material conditions locally, their effects can be felt at other points of contest, but even so, it is conceivable that they leave untouched larger power relations, such as those which form the basis for the state apparatus (*Power/Knowledge*, 123). A micro-revolution does not necessarily imply a new control of the state or a new functioning of institutions, but, on the other hand, a micro-revolution cannot become 'historical'—it cannot become generally recognised and analysed—except by the effects that it induces on the larger network in which it is caught up (*Discipline and Punish*, 27). Larger political movements are, in fact, relays of micro-revolutions.

In this vision of things, every exercise of power is accompanied by or gives rise to resistance, every subjugation is resisted *as it is experienced.* And what this does, in effect, is open a space for action in any context (Flynn, 36). No overarching plan is required to resist; no predetermined theory needs to be followed in order to subvert the dynamics of power in which we are implicated at every moment; all that is needed is an understanding of the stakes: *what are we resisting exactly? what would an inversion of this particular power relation mean for us?* In a sense, then, resistance is localised, but in another sense it is also generalised: all of us in our individual contexts are engaged in relations of power and resistance; all of us have the leeway, not to evade power completely, but to alter (or to leave unaltered) the dynamics of the power relation in which we are involved in each moment. In this way, the division between resistance and non-resistance, resistors and non-resistors, rebels and non-rebels is exposed as unreal. There are no 'good subjects' of resistance (Gordon, 257). We all fight each other all the time. There is always within each of us something that fights something else (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 208). We are all accidental resistors.

> [I]f you ask me, 'Does this new technology of power [discipline] take its historical origin from an identifiable individual or group of individuals who decide to implement it so as to further their interests or facilitate their utilisation of the social body?' then I would say 'No'. These tactics were invented and organised from the starting points of local conditions and particular needs. They took shape in piecemeal fashion, prior to any class strategy designed to weld them into vast, coherent ensembles. (159)

Here, there is no escape from power; there is no possibility of a standpoint from which we can view or evaluate power's sum. We experience power only in diverse and multiple ways at the micro-level when we find ourselves subjected to particular exercises of power, or indeed when we ourselves exercise power over other bodies and environments (Hoy, 'Power, Repression, Progress', 142). Neither our comprehension of power nor our attempts to change its dynamics depends on grasping its totality. To understand power, and thereby to subvert it,

we must study our everyday encounters with power, our particular confrontations with and resistances to impositions of power, our own wielding of power against others. Charting these micro-instances of power will reveal more general patterns of struggle beyond our immediate context. Change, however, does not occur by transforming the whole at once. Change occurs only by resisting injustices—or imposing justices—at the particular points where they manifest themselves (143). Since power is decentred and plural, so must our forms of political struggle be multiple and local. We must break with unifying and totalising strategies, and instead cultivate personalised forms of resistance (Best, 57). When resistance is directed against power *as it is*, then all of us who find intolerable the power as it is exercised in our immediate environment, can begin the struggle on our own terrain and employ actions that we recognise as our own. In engaging in a struggle that concerns our own individual interests, whose objectives we clearly understand and whose methods only we can determine, we enter into a revolutionary process (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 216).

At this point, then, we can identify three distinguishing characteristics of political resistance as envisioned by Foucualdian theory. Firstly, Foucualdian resistance is *continuous.* Inherent in the Marxist model is the assumption that political projects are capable of being finished. In Marxism, there is a final outcome. When things go wrong, when the revolution fails, it is the prior conceptualisation and organisation—the *planning*—that is blamed. In Foucauldian theory, by contrast, resistance is a constant of life, not just of special moments of revolutionary upheaval (Gutting, *Foucault*, 30). Power is always retreating, reorganising its forces, investing itself elsewhere; we are therefore engaged in a perpetual struggle against newly emerging manifestations of power (Taylor, 86).

Secondly, power is seen to build from local contexts to larger structures *without our guiding will.* It performs relays—it proliferates—without any conscious plan on our parts. Larger patterns of resistance emerge from our local strategies, but they do not adhere to any preordained programme.

Thirdly—and, as we shall see, most fundamentally—resistance is individualised. It is personal. Resistance comes in the form of detailed responses

formulated by those individuals concretely involved in the problems (Gutting, *Foucault*, 23). Universal systems of morality are not valid for judging the right or wrong of resistance; there can be no authority of resistance other than the judgement of those of us who are directly experience a situation (31). We must at all times refuse to assume the standpoint of one speaking in the name of others, no matter how oppressed or subjugated we believe them to be (Gordon, 256). That is to say, it is necessary to do away with spokespersons.

> I carefully guard against making the law. Rather, I concern myself with determining problems, unleashing them, revealing them within the framework of such complexity as to shut the mouths of prophets and legislators: all those who speak *for* others and *above* others. It is at that moment that the complexity of the problem will be able to appear in its connection with people's lives; and consequently, the legitimacy of a common enterprise will be able to appear through concrete questions, difficult cases, revolutionary movements, reflections and evidence. (Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 159)

In this context, the contribution of those of us who are not directly involved in a particular struggle can only extend to creating the conditions in which those of us who are directly involved can speak; the contribution of outsiders must always give way to the reflection and decisions of the resistors ourselves (Gordon, 258). Those of us who act and struggle must no longer be represented by others who stand as our conscience. By our local action we represent ourselves.

Good.

But here is the problem: Foucauldian theory *also* shows itself to be highly sceptical about the existence of a stable representing self: an 'I' that can represent the world (and its power relations) in an authentic or truthful way to him or herself. For Foucauldian theory, the weakness of Marxism stems from its assumption of a knowledge of a natural, essential human state (Hacking, 'Self-Improvement', 239). The Marxist concept of political action leading to liberation implies an inherent human essence waiting to be freed from the shackles of a repressive power. After the revolution, in a society of freely associating

individuals, we will all be living according to our nature. Without the forces of exploitation bearing down upon us and conditioning our needs and desires, we will have direct access to the self and what it really wants and needs. In the Marxist future, we will have self-knowledge. Foucauldian theory rejects this notion of an essential nature within us—a unified self—that must overcome power if it wants to come to full and true expression (Taylor, 77); it breaks with the Marxist conception of selfhood as a constant to be revealed.

> Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave that to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 17)

Indeed, in the Foucauldian scheme, it is our very acceptance of the notion that we have a self that *makes* us an object of control. Once we believe we have a self, it becomes our obligation to find it, and finding it requires a vocabulary with which to describe it, and part of finding such a vocabulary is to enlist the help of experts (teachers, politicians, doctors, psychologists and so on), and part of putting ourselves in the hands of experts is the requirement that we go on trying to describe ourselves, what it feels like to have our own particular self, and this plunges us deep into the disciplinary system. For Foucauldian theory, the idea of self is nothing more than a stratagem of power. It helps the cause of discipline by presenting us as enigmas who need external help to resolve ourselves (Taylor, 78). The disciplinary programme of self-knowledge, embraced as a vehicle for discovering one's uniqueness, merely re-enacts power-knowledge relations. The quest for freedom is channelled into a series of illusory liberations from repression (Bernauer, 158). We may think we are liberating ourselves when we declare our 'true' selves in the face of power, but in fact we are still being dominated by certain disciplinary images of what it is to be a free and fulfilled being (rich, thin, tanned, calm, rational, mobile and so on). Far from escaping power, we are assuming the shape it has moulded for us (Taylor, 79).

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert

> material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in doing so subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98)

Power does not attach itself to a nodal self; rather, power feeds into the modes of behaviour that we call the self (*The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, 11). There is no human nature. There is no objective self that has been or could be described by our theories. There is, instead, a construction, one continually being redesigned in an ongoing discourse generated by the imperatives of discipline. The self is no more than a jumble of theories about its own nature, theories through which power is defined and extended.

In this vision, the knowledge that is supposed to liberate us—the knowledge of our selves—appears as the primary instrument of our domination (Gutting, *Foucault*, 76). Discoveries about our own nature are actually just new social norms for behaviour (94). Our acceptance of the demands for liberation is no more an expression of our 'true' nature as, say, the demands for a traditional morality (98). Through the workings of discipline, increasingly nuanced classifications of the types and limits of normal behaviour take shape, which leads to a generalised, *public* definition of the normal mind, the normal body, the natural state of the self. It is according to (or against) this standard that our selves are formed (Hutton, 126). Discipline is the public expression of our essential activity as human beings: the construction of modes of discourse and of action through which we shape our conception of self. The self is the words and the deeds that we define ourselves by. The self is not a hidden reality to be discovered (through self-analysis or other means) but the aggregate of the forms we have chosen to provide public definitions of who we are; it is an expression, an *externalisation* of the norms we have spent our lives *internalising* (127).

> The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the

> element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98)

External authority shapes the structures of minds, which is subsequently externalised in our repeated avowals of normalised selfhood. In this way, we participate in the policing of ourselves and others; we act as forces of discipline; we create forms which imprison our own freedom and creativity (Hutton, 137); we become victims of our own 'self-knowledge' (Bernauer, 159). We are the objects and the instruments of the exercise of discipline. Discipline leads us to focus our attention on our selves. It places the self in front of the self: the self is the watcher and the watched, the potential liberator and the potentially liberated (if only 'we' could understand our 'selves' better). The self (the knowledge that may be gained of the self) is an effect of the productive power of power (194). The self is an illusion that power relies on to guarantee its own penetration and dispersion.

But if this is the case, if the self is really an illusion of power, who are these individuals, these *selves,* that Foucauldian theory calls on to speak and act for themselves? If there is no self that is not an effect of power, who does Foucauldian theory expect to speak or act? If there is no self to do the resisting, who (if not merely power itself) is resisting? At first glance, this appears to be an untenable contradiction: Foucauldian theory seems to allow some sense of self when it speaks of local resistance but then disallows all appeals to *a priori* self when it speaks of power as the producer of selves; it presents a picture of willed personal action that is, at the same time, deeply sceptical of the existence of a self from which such action can be willed. For the sake of coherence, should Foucauldian theory not take a clearer stand? Should it not come down on one side or the other, either as a believer in the self or as a negator of it? Perhaps. But the fact is that Foucauldian theory's apparently paradoxical view of the self is entirely coherent with present conditions of knowledge about the self. Foucault's disappearing and reappearing self is made thinkable by a epistemological field whose very configuration presupposes such a self/no-self paradox. Which is to

say: today it is impossible to think about the self without encountering, and probably at some point sustaining, this paradox.

At core, the question of the existence or non-existence of the self is a question about our *experience* of time and space; it is a question about *consciousness*. Today, when we wonder about the self, we are actually wondering whether it is possible to define consciousness, whether it is possible to articulate *what it is like to be us* (Nagel, 436). Implicit in any such inquiry is a conceptual division between the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective. On the one hand, there are our own experiences, which seem to be real and undeniable. Our experiences make up the world we live in; we cannot have any experiences but our own; they are all we have. On the other hand, there appears to be a physical world that gives rise to these experiences. We may have doubts about what the world is made of, what its essential nature is, but we accept that it exists apart from us (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 256-59). The cause of this experience of separation is our intuition that, because our consciousness and the world *seem* so different, they must *be* different: out there, there are physical things that we can measure and agree upon, while in here there are experiences that escape objective evaluation. This division of the inner and the outer, consciousness and the world, is fundamental to our present thinking about the self, even though most contemporary philosophers and scientists reject such a separation as illusory (Loc. 780-81). As we shall see, it is difficult to reject the inner/outer dualism without falling back on it as a useful fiction.

To accept the inner/outer dualism is to believe that there are two different realms or worlds: one of consciousness, which is non-physical and non-extended, and another of the physical world, which is made of extended substance. The question such a belief raises is: how do the two realms relate? How can immaterial consciousness be related to material objects in space? For dualism to make sense the interaction has to work in both directions: physical events in the world must somehow give rise to non-physical experiences of that world. In the

other direction, our mental life, our thoughts and our feelings, must be able to influence the physical world (Loc. 415-18). But how and where and when does this interaction take place?

Our brain consists of over a billion neurons, with many billions of interconnections among them (Loc. 440-43). When we are dualists, we believe that out of these connections a separate consciousness is born, one which then loops back to influence the brain itself. We find it relatively easy to argue for a relationship between separate consciousness and the brain because changes in the brain cause changes in consciousness, and vice versa. We find it much more difficult, however, to describe the precise nature of this relationship (when it takes place, where it takes place, how it takes place and why it takes place). Even with all our current understanding of brain function, we cannot understand how subjective experience arises from an objective world of living brain cells. We accept that, in order to affect brain cells, consciousness must be using some kind of energy or matter, but we cannot conceive of consciousness itself as having physical as well as mental properties. As a result, we simply have to believe in separate worlds of subjective experiences and objective substance; we have to believe that these two realms, though related in some way, are fundamentally and permanently divided (Metzinger, 'I Am the Content of a Transparent Self Model', 149).

Thus, as dualists, we believe consciousness to be something *extra* to matter, a presence that hovers over brain processes, an ingredient that we have in addition to our physical abilities. We believe that even if we knew everything there is to know about our body and its functions, our understanding would not be complete, there would be something left out, and that something would be consciousness itself. In our dualist opinion, to explain the nature of physical functions is not to answer the question of why the performance of these functions is accompanied by experience; to explain the nature of the body is to ignore the possibility that we *could* have evolved into beings that process information *without* any inner experience or feeling at all (Chalmers, 'The Puzzle of Conscious Experience', 63).

Given that consciousness is, in the dualist scheme, an added ingredient to biological activity, and that it is possible within this scheme to imagine that we

could have evolved without it, the question we dualists must ask is why we have it (what advantages does it give us?) and at what point did it appear (when did non-conscious matter become conscious?) (Blackmore, 'Introduction', 7). Our debates about why we have consciousness usually focus on its evolutionary benefits. Gaining consciousness, we argue, has helped us to avoid seasonal predators, to acquire mates, to gain charge of animals for farming and so on (Gazzaniga, Loc. 521). In terms of when consciousness appeared, we have a number of options to choose from, but most are based on the idea that the universe developed from a totally insensate mass, and then at some point consciousness lit up; that is, when biological organisms evolved to a certain state, when their brains attained a particular level of complexity, consciousness suddenly switched on. Of course, none of this actually explains how consciousness and matter might interact. We establish dualism as a means of answering the question of consciousness—*what is it like to be us?*—but in fact all we are doing is formulating the question a particular way: here is consciousness, there is matter, how do we connect the two?

Given that neither science nor philosophy has yet managed to come up with a set of fundamental laws to govern such a connection (Chalmers, 'I'm Conscious', 42), it is possible to deny that there is a dualism at all, and to argue instead that the world we move in and our experience of that world are one, that consciousness is intrinsic to matter and entirely inseparable from it. When we adopt this view, we stop being dualists and become monists. Monism is helpful because it has no use for the question of why consciousness evolved. According to monism, any creature that has come to have intelligence, perception, memory and emotions will necessarily be conscious as well. Indeed, in monism, there is no sense in talking about consciousness at all, for there is nothing extra that exists apart from physical functions: brain processes and bodily functions *are* consciousness. There is no longer a deep mystery of consciousness to solve. Rather, our task as monists is to explain why there *seems* to be such a mystery; why we *seem* to be having ineffable, non-material, conscious experiences (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 337-47).

In approaching this task, however, our options are limited and as problematic as those that face the dualists. For one, we could choose to make

consciousness fundamental (Chalmers, 'I'm Conscious', 42). We could doubt that real things actually exist out there and decide that only ideas or perceptions of things exist for us. This does away with dualism, but at the same time it makes it very hard to understand why and how there appears to be a physical world, why this physical world seems to have consistent, enduring qualities that we can agree upon, or indeed how science and philosophy are possible at all (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 348-51). Another option is to take *matter* as fundamental. We could contend that there is only matter, and that the physical universe is causally closed. In other words, we could argue that interactions between matter and energy exhaust all the forces of the universe, so there is no room for a non-material force such as consciousness to intervene. In such a view, mental states would be identical with physical states; there would be consciousness apart from or outside of matter (Loc. 352-56). Consciousness would simply be a fundamental function of the brain (Koch, 133). Experiences would simply be what brains do (Blackmore, 'Introduction', 4). At some point, however, we would have to face the problem of accounting for these experiences (*Consciousness*, Loc. 276-81). It is not enough to talk about perception, memory or intelligence as purely physical processes and then claim to have explained consciousness. If we are really talking about consciousness, then we must deal in some manner with subjectivity; if we claim that consciousness is identical with physical processes, we must explain why non-physical consciousness appears so strongly to exist (Loc. 324-28). How can thoughts and feelings and mental images be matter when they seem to be so different from matter? It seems that by claiming consciousness is physical, we are taking away the very phenomenon—subjective experience—that we are trying to explain; we are making it difficult to talk about consciousness in a way that does justice to the way it feels (Loc. 359-63).

A final option would be to reject dualism by claiming that the world is all made of one kind of stuff, a stuff that cannot be classified as either mental or physical (Loc. 375-76). This would involve imagining a kind of simple and undifferentiated consciousness found throughout the world, a basic field of consciousness that sometimes comes together into unified, coherent objects that

we think of as selves (Chalmers, 'I'm Conscious', 44). In this context, we could attribute a degree of consciousness proportional to the size and complexity of the brain under consideration (Greenfield, 97), though there would be nothing stopping us from asserting that all material things—creatures with brains but also water, stones, electrons and so on—have awareness, however primitive (Chalmers, 'I'm Conscious', 43). This would raise difficult questions, of course. Is a stone aware? If so, is each of its molecules also separately aware? What would it mean for something as simple as an electron to have consciousness? What would it be like to be an electron? (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 383-85). Presumably, only an electron can know.

At this point, what is interesting to note is how quickly our monist consideration of the question *what is it like to be us?* has led us to the question *what is it like to be something else*? Clearly, we need to be careful. Wondering what it is like to be someone or something else—an electron, a mountain, a tree, an animal, another person—implies that we have definite knowledge of what it is like to be *us*; it implies that we have a conclusive definition of our own consciousness against which we can contrast other possible forms of consciousness; it implies that the problems begin only when we start asking about what it is like to be an entity other than ourselves (Loc. 675-78). But is this really the case? Is accessing our own conscious experience really a simple task? What does it actually mean to look into our own experience and answer the question *what is it like to be us?* How can we look? Who is looking? What are we looking for? Is it possible to describe more than a tiny fraction of our lived experience? Does the process of trying to capture our experiences not also destroy them? (Loc. 670-71). When we catch ourselves in the middle of a train of thought, are we conscious then? Were we conscious at all before? Or are these just different levels or manifestations of the same overall consciousness?

This question of which experiences our consciousness has access to calls attention to a fundamental presumption in our current thinking: that there are *contents* of consciousness, that we have access to these contents at all times, and that these contents shape our actions. If it is true, however, that our consciousness contains things, then it seems unable to contain very much: most of what goes on

in our brains seems to be outside of consciousness; indeed much of it is *inaccessible* to it. For example, we have no conscious access to the pH in our enteric nervous system (our stomachs) or to the state of our immune systems, despite the fact that both systems contain millions of neurons (Koch, 132). Likewise, we see our hands performing tasks, but we are not conscious of all the rapid brain activity that precedes that perception. We work at our computers but are unconscious of how we type the words or where the words are coming from. We are not even aware of how our brains construct our sentences; we are only aware (and then vaguely) of the ideas we are trying to express and the words that emerge (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 461-65). In all of these cases every one of our brain's cells, with their billions of connections, are active; some respond or 'fire' faster and some slower, depending on what we are doing, yet most of this activity never makes it into our consciousness (Loc. 466-69).

This suggests that there must be an underlying difference in the brain between conscious and unconscious processes. But what could this mean? Most often it is taken to mean that some brain cells, brain areas or types of brain activity create or generate conscious experiences while the rest do not. But this throws us right back into the dualist problem, for if we accept the difference between conscious and unconscious brain functions then we not only have to explain what it means for a physical brain to 'create' or 'generate' an extra ingredient called consciousness, we also have to describe the relationship between the brain activity that generates consciousness and that which does not ('Introduction', 5). Moreover, we have to account for unconscious perception (intuitive, emotional or subliminal awareness); we have to study the ways in which we are affected by countless unnoticed events going on around us, and at some point we have to distinguish between information that we process consciously and that which we process without knowing it (*Consciousness*, Loc. 910-15). And where would we drawn the line?

For the fact is that what we normally call conscious experience is not always as conscious as we presume it to be. Our consciousness of, say, our visual surroundings is far more sparse than we intuitively believe (Ambinder, 48). When we look around we do not, and cannot, take in everything at once, even though we

are unaware of any gaps. Somehow the brain fills in the missing pieces, and as a result, we imagine that somewhere inside our head or mind there is a complete picture: everything we are perceiving now is entering us and forming contents in our consciousness (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 923-26). We imagine that experiences flow through our conscious mind as a stream of contents. The stream may break, change direction or be disrupted, but it remains a series of conscious events, always available to us. All we have to do is focus on an element in the stream—a particular piece of content—and then we know what we are conscious of in a particular moment. In other words, we ask ourselves the question, *What we conscious of now?,* and we get an answer because some of our thoughts and perceptions are in the conscious stream while the rest are not. For this reason, we leap to the conclusion that we are always conscious, that at every waking moment in our lives we must be conscious of something or other.

But what is happening when we are *not* asking ourselves the question, *What are we conscious of now*? The fact is we cannot know if we are conscious when we are not asking ourselves if we are conscious or not. Whenever we ask the question we get a definite answer, but we cannot know about those times when we are not asking the question (Loc. 1885-95). For instance, when we are driving a car, singing along to the music on the radio and thinking about what happened yesterday or about what might happen tomorrow, are we conscious of the road, of our feet as they press on the peddles, of our hand as it shifts the gear-stick? When we are not asking the consciousness any questions, it seems there are no contents of consciousness; it seems when we are not paying attention to something, we are not consciously perceiving it (Mack, 180). Instead, the brain carries on, doing multiple things in parallel, and none of them seems either to be in consciousness or out of it (Blackmore, 'There Is No Stream of Consciousness,' 26).

Experiments show that even though we have the impression of looking at a rich visual world, enormous changes can be made in that world without us really noticing them (O'Regan, 165). This casts doubt on the idea that our senses build up detailed inner representations of the world that can then be used to compare one moment of our experience to the next. Indeed, it might even be the case that consciousness is not about representation at all; it might be that the information

we need is actually stored outside of consciousness (in the brain or in the world), and that the actual experiences that we have really derive from the activity that we are involved in (166). In this view, our internal knowledge about what we are looking at is nil, or rather, it is limited to a simple semantic description. When we have our eyes open this description is enriched by visual material, and we have the feeling that it is real. If there is a part of the visual scene about which we want to have more information—say, for example, the route of a particular line on the palm of our hand—all we need to do is look at our hand, direct our attention to specific area of it, and that information will become conscious. In this picture, consciousness is not made up of contents; consciousness does not constitute a full and constant stream that runs through us. Rather, we have to inquire into the world to have consciousness of it; we have to wonder about the route of the line on the palm of our hand before that information becomes relevant to us; otherwise, it is simply not there. We are not conscious of anything other than what we are interrogating ourselves about. There is no consciousness other than that which corresponds to our inquiry into some aspect of our environment. What remains after we remove our attention from a scene is merely a semantic description of that scene, which is essentially *non-visual* (168).

Thus, though we might be seen by others to be gazing at our hand, we may not actually be conscious of our hand; our consciousness may be focused on other things. More than that, *we do not even know it is a hand* until we become conscious of it, or 'name' it. In the moment of naming it, our hand gains existence. When we move our attention away from the hand, it ceases to exist except as a memory, which, as information, is fundamentally different to our vision of it. By extension, we could say that there is no world until we focus on its parts and name them, and that in focusing and naming in this way, we create the world, and in creating it, we divide it and separate it from us. We could say that, until the moment of conscious naming, we are neither consciousness or unconscious of the world but *are* the world itself, we are the world being the world.

We will return to this conception of non-separation in a moment. Before that, it is important that we challenge a series of further notions upon which the

conscious/unconscious dualism rests. The first of these is that we need consciousness for performing actions. As we have seen, a natural way of thinking about consciousness is to imagine that information streams in through the senses and is processed as contents, which leads to our consciously perceiving a world which we can then act upon. In other words, it is natural for us to assume that we consciously perceive something before we act upon it. It turns out, however, that the brain is not organised in this way, and we could probably not survive if it were (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 600-9). Experiments show that the brain can bring about action without the need for the extra force of consciousness. We see, hear, breathe, control movements and perform countless other actions without any help from consciousness. We can jump out of the way of an obstacle long before our consciousness has recognised the obstacle; indeed, in terms of survival, it is not necessary that it *does* recognise it, ever. There is not even any proof that aesthetic appreciation, creativity or falling in love are done by consciousness; it is equally conceivable that they simply constitute the workings of our brain (Loc. 382-87).

This leads us back to a problem we have already discussed: time. We do not always experience things, or report their occurrence, in the order in which they actually happen in the world. What is more, it takes time—about fifty milliseconds—to transmit information from the retina to the brain's visual areas. What this means is that conscious events are at least half a second old. An object we observe may well have changed its position, shape, colour or place between an initial glance and a second registration of it (Libet, *Mind Time*, 58-59). It might be tempting to think about this delay in consciousness as something like this: a stimulus, such as a pinch on the arm, causes signals to pass through the body into the brain, where the information is processed in the relevant areas until it finally arrives in consciousness as the feeling of the pinch. In this view, we see two different kinds of phenomenon at work, each with their own timing. Firstly, there are objective events with physical times that can be measured with instruments, such as the time of the pinch or the time at which a certain brain cell fires. Secondly, there are subjective experiences with their own times, such as the time at which the experience of the pinch happens, or when the pinch comes into

consciousness. But this way of thinking about the delay in consciousness leads us into trouble. It forces us to isolate a place in the brain where physical events correspond to mental ones, or a time at which unconscious processes turn into conscious ones. Thinking this way, we are accepting that conscious experiences are something other than brain events, which brings us right back to the dualist problem (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 675-85). A different way to think about the delay in consciousness is to question the assumption that conscious experiences are events that happen at particular times, that is, to challenge the notion that conscious experiences can be timed at all. If we drop the assumption that there is one real time at which things happen in the brain and another real time at which they enter consciousness, we can imagine, for example, different streams of neural activity that can potentially elicit various responses, none of which is ever either in or out of consciousness (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 134). We can envisage, between the poles of brain activity and action, multiple parallel streams of processing, and no moment at which incoming information turns into outgoing decisions, that is, no measurable instant when consciousness happens (109).

The further we go with our monist challenge, the nearer we come to the awkward notion that consciousness is powerless, that it does not have a function, that it is useful for nothing (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 382-87). That is to say, the more we push our monist project, the closer we come to denying the existence of conscious will. We begin to wonder whether consciousness has anything at all to do with our actions, or even the decisions for our actions. When we raise our arm to look at our hand, who or what made the decision to do so, and who or what initiated the action? We know that the brain is involved. When making such a volitional act, neural activity flows through the brain. But experiments show that this flow begins over one-third of a second before we have the conscious desire to act. In other words, a lot of neural processing takes place before we consciously decide to raise our arm (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 1340-42). We have no idea when and where consciousness might intervene in the process (Loc. 1287-89).

> Free will in the metaphysical sense really implies that there is action without any physical precedents. Now as scientists, or even as any thinking person, we know that cannot be the case. There always have to be physical precedents. (Koch, 131)

From this, it is possible to conclude that to believe consciousness causes our actions is to invest in a delusion. This delusion comes about in three stages: firstly, unbeknownst to us, our brain receives information, on the basis of which it begins to plan for an action; secondly, although we are ignorant of the underlying mechanisms, we become aware of thinking about the action and call this an intention; and finally, the action occurs and we jump to the conclusion that our conscious thoughts caused it (Wegner, 'Don't Think About a White Bear', 251). This is what we might call the 'trick' of consciousness: the ability to interpret conscious thought as the cause of action, even though the action happens before the thought ('The Mind's Best Trick', 65). Realising that this is a trick brings us face-to-face with the possibility that our tendency to feel like a conscious agent comes at a cost of being technically wrong all the time (*The Illusion of Conscious Will*, 342).

If we accept that free will is a trick of the mind, what should we make of our actions? To what extent are we responsible for them? (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 1481-82). At one extreme, we could conclude that we might as well give in to the unconscious forces—the *power*—beyond our control. But what would this 'giving in' look like? How would it be lived? Lying on the floor all day, for instance, would not really giving be in; in fact, it would be an action, one very difficult to execute and with far-reaching consequences for your body, your environment and those around you. At the other extreme, we might argue that although consciousness cannot initiate an action, it can act to *prevent* it. In other words, although we do not have free will, we do have 'free won't' (Libet, 'Unconscious Cerebral Initiative', 536-37). This has important implications for our ideas of action and power. It suggests that, although we cannot consciously control our desires and impulses—although forces shape our desires and impulses before we become conscious of them—we can, in fact, consciously prevent them

from being acted out. That is, we have the power to consciously *resist* what we cannot consciously generate or initiate. But does this not get us caught in an another impossible spiral? Presumably, resistance to action is also an action, and therefore must itself be initiated before we are conscious of it. There is nothing to say that a battle between impulses and resistance to those impulses is not, at base, a battle between two unconscious forces. And anyway: who really *owns* this conscious veto? To what degree can we say that conscious resistance is *ours* while unconscious impulse is out of our control?

It is becoming clear that how we think about conscious free will depends on how we think about the self. It is common sense to think that we have a self. As the focus of our consciousness is fixed by our questions, as we make judgements, as we speak about what we are doing or what we have experienced, we have the real and powerful feeling that there is someone speaking, judging, experiencing (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 410). We do not feel like a body or a brain. Rather, we feel like someone who *owns* a body and a brain. We feel as though we —our selves—are somewhere inside our head looking out, asking these questions, making these judgements (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 1065-67). When we raise our arm to look at our hand, it seems to us that there must be someone having this 'hand experience'; it seems that there cannot be this hand experience without us, the experiencer. At the centre of any scene we are aware of at a given time, there seems to be *us*, and this inner identity seems to have unity and to be continuous from one moment to the next (Loc. 2399-2404). *We* are the subject of our experiences; *we* are the inner agent who carries out actions and makes decisions (or at least resists our impulses); *we* are our unique personality; *we* are the source of our selves. The self *is* us; it is the reason why anything matters in our lives (Loc. 2404-9).

But this feeling of having or being a self is deeply problematic (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 365). Is it actually possible to see or feel or hear the experiencer as opposed to the experienced world? (Blackmore, Consciousness, Loc. 2424). Is it possible to observe or measure the self? From a scientific point of view, there is actually no need for an owner of experiences; there is no need for an inner self to observe what we are doing. Our brain does not need 'us' to work.

In fact, our brain is causally closed: one neuron affects another, groups of neurons interact, one brain state leads to the next; there is no need for any further intervention by a self (Loc. 1068-74). In other words, we have experiences, but there is no requirement for us to *have* them; events happen, and also their consequences, but, scientifically at least, they do not necessitate a central unified agent (Parfit, 19-26).

When we believe in a self, we put implicit faith in the idea that there is a central 'theatre' (in the material brain or the non-material mind or both) where all the things currently 'in consciousness' come together. In this theatre, our conscious audience—our self—watches the incoming display and intervenes based on what it sees (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 165). But this theatre cannot be said to exist. Our science has found no place in the brain where consciousness gathers; there is no site or single region equipped to process, simultaneously, all the sound, movement, shape and colour we experience. In fact, the picture that our science presents is quite different: when information comes in from the senses, it is distributed in multiple places for different purposes (Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, Loc. 1847-51). In this picture, the brain is a radically *parallel* processing system. All kinds of mental activity are accomplished in the brain by parallel, multitrack processes, which keep the activity under continuous revision. Like the many drafts of a text, the activity is constantly revised and altered. At any point in time there are multiple drafts or narrative fragments at various stages of 'editing' in various places in the brain. Rather than a complete picture projected into a central theatre, there are multiple 'drafts' being edited in different places at once (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 407). None of these drafts are actually in or out of consciousness. The sense that there is a narrative stream or sequence comes about when the parallel stream is probed in some way, for example, by asking a question (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 1574-93). But up to that point—up to the point when we interrogate or inquire—it is impossible to say whether the stream is conscious or not (Loc. 842).

So, when we look at our hand, we consciously see it as a result of probing the stream of multiple drafts at one of many possible points. There is judgement in this act, and the event may be laid down in memory, but there is not a stable,

unified experience called 'seeing the hand'. On the contrary, impressions arise, get revised, affect behaviour and leave traces in memory, which then get overlaid by other traces and so on. All this produces various overlapping narratives, none of which tell us the 'truth' about our experience of the hand (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 407). In other words, if we ask, *what was I actually experiencing when I looked at my hand?*, there is no right answer because there is no theatre, and no coherent show (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 1593-1600).

This suggests that there is no proposition about our own conscious experience that is immune to error, unlikely as that error might be. We cannot have infallibility about our own consciousness, even if we can come close enough to explain why it seems so powerfully as if we do (Dennett, 'How Could I Be Wrong?', 13). In everyday life we can usually discriminate between our own internally generated thoughts and our current vision of the world. We can be tricked, however (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 7267-76). Our capacity to discriminate between the images of vision and those of memory or imagination are affected by, for example, whether we expect something to be 'real' or 'imagined'. Distinguishing memories of events that happened from events we have imagined can be difficult in certain circumstances. Failure to make such distinctions results in false memories, that is, convincing memories of events that never actually happened (Loc. 7280-85). We all hold false memories of various kinds, and even valid memories may consist of accurate elements mixed with plausible concoctions and embellished with invented details (Loc. 7290-92). In fact, we cannot really draw a sharp dividing line between 'real' and 'false' memories, particularly when they concern experiences for which there can be no public corroboration (Loc. 7299-7301).

All of this undermines our conviction that we know exactly what we are conscious of at any time; it urges us to be agnostic about the reality of conscious experiences; it makes it difficult for us to either challenge or accept as entirely true our own assertions about what we see or what we believe we saw; as we listen to our descriptions of our experiences, the best we can do is maintain a constructive and sympathetic neutrality, in the hopes of compiling a definitive description of the world *according to us* (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained,* 83).

We may protest to ourselves; we may argue that we are really having these experiences, to which we can only reassure ourselves that we believe we are being sincere (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 9547-51). Deep down, however, we know the most we can hope for is a believable fiction (Loc. 9563-65).

If all we can be certain of is that what we are conscious of is a plausible fiction, it becomes difficult to maintain a belief in an enduring self who has access to truth. It must be that the feeling we have of a continuous, unified self that overlooks ourselves and has direct relationship with the world is also a mental fiction. It must be that, ultimately, we have never had or been a self (Metzinger, *Being No One*, 1). Accepting this requires us to throw out any idea we might have that we are single entities who live the life of this particular body. Instead, we must accept that the word 'self' refers to nothing that is real or persisting; we must accept that the self is only a series of experiences linked loosely together in various ways, a fleeting impression that arises along with each experience and then fades away again; we must accept that the self is a word, an idea, a construct (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 1102-7). In such a view, every time 'we' seem to exist, it is just a temporary fiction and not the same 'we' who seemed to exist a moment before. 'We' are constituted by the discourses in which we are involved in a given moment (Harré, 104). Our self is born as the story of our life is told; we are the music while the music lasts (Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 313).

> The aspects of self, which we designate as self, are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our ways of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice. (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 127)

So—the question we must now ask—what might this fictional self be for? To what end might the fiction exist? It might be the case that the self is just a tool we have developed for social convenience; it might just be a construct that allows us to describe the things that we do, a practical way of thinking about things and of talking about things to others (O'Regan, 169). In other words, we might need a

self that thinks it knows in order to think that we know; without the self, we might not be able to know (Ramachandran, 190). Equally, we could argue that the self did not emerge in order to know anything; rather, we could say, it is a biological product which, like spiders' webs, appeared gradually during evolution in order to help us to survive. We make our own selves—we spin our webs out of words and deeds—but we do not know why we are doing it, nor do we have to know (Loc. 3064-71). We just spin, and the result is the belief in our own existence as a self and the conviction that that this self is actually worth preserving, which is a useful belief to have if our aim is to copy genes (Metzinger, 'I Am the Content of a Transparent Self Model', 151-52). In other words, evolution has not only given us bodies that are determined to stay alive even if we find living painful, but has caused those bodies to produce an illusion of self, which we will go on defending because it helps pass on the genes of our ancestors.

But perhaps it is even wrong to say that 'we' build our narratives. Does not the idea of selves building narratives of ourselves let the self in through the back door (and free will along with it)?

> Our tales are spun, but for the most part we don't spin them; they spin us. Our human consciousness, and our narrative selfhood, is their product, not their source (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 418).

Here, we return to the idea (advanced, as we saw, by Foucualdian archaeology) of discourse as a force operating independently of those who appear to speak for themselves.

> We can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author. Discourses, whatever their status, form or value, and regardless of our manner of handling them, would unfold in a pervasive anonymity. No longer the tiresome repetitions: 'Who is the real author?' 'Have we proof of his authenticity and originality?' 'What has he revealed of his most profound self in his language?'
> New questions will be heard: 'What are the modes of existence of this discourse?' 'Where does it come from;

> how is it circulated; who controls it?' 'What placements are determined for possible subjects?' 'Who can fulfil these diverse functions of the subject?'
> Behind all these questions we would hear little more than the murmur of indifference: 'What matter who's speaking?'
> (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 138)

Here, our self ceases to be the cause of discourse and instead becomes an abstraction of it. Here, we are not speaking but are *being spoken*; here, speaking is an action of the world, it is the world describing itself to itself.

> I am a strange loop. I am a mirage that perceives itself.
> (Hofstadter, 363)

But there is a problem: even if we accept—even if we are entirely *convinced*—that the inner/outer dualism is false, and that the self is a fiction, our sense of a separate, experiencing, speaking self persists. Infuriatingly, the illusion does not collapse, the fiction does not disappear. Firm in our new belief in the no-self and in the unity of consciousness and the world, we still feel like we are speaking for ourselves, and the world continues to appear to exist independently of us; we stay inside and the world stays outside. This persistence of a sense of separation, even after we have exposed it as false, forces us into a strange position: perhaps we have to *train ourselves* to experience non-separation; perhaps we have to think counter-intuitively—or perhaps not think at all—in order to understand what it means to be a non-separate no one. But what would this training consist of? What would it mean to experience something other than the fictional selves we experience, and how would we teach ourselves to gain access to it? What would it mean to step outside of the story that is being told by or through 'us'? Who or what would we be, if not our stories?

If we are true monists—true believers in unity—we believe that *nothing* can be separate, independent or free; we believe that nothing can break from the forces of the world and simply do as it pleases. Moreover, we believe that nothing *does* at all; rather, it is *being done*. Our task, then, is to free ourselves (presumably, in some non-doing way) from the illusion that we are *doers*, that we

can *do*. While it might be possible, intellectually, to achieve this freedom, it is another matter to accept all the consequences of it (Blackmore, *Consciousness*, Loc. 2759-60). For example, to believe that we are not *doing* is to take a neutral stance on life and death, for to live or to die is out of our hands, it is not our doing.

> Suppose we take ourselves to be individual snowflakes with a particular crystalline form. Certainly there is a difference between the two, they have different structures. And here one snowflake is falling into the ocean; what does it fear? 'I am about to be annihilated, I shall disappear, I shall be gone, nothing.' But perhaps what happens instead—and this is a metaphor for death or enlightenment—is an infinite expansion, as you remember that you are not just that one drop of frozen water, but that you are water. So this metaphor of substance is another level that is simultaneously present with the form; the separation does not disappear: it is just that it is only the form; the substance is unity. (LaBerge, 146)

But how might it be possible to live according to this conviction? What can we do, practically, with the knowledge that there is no separate existence for what is sitting in the chair right now? How can we function socially when we know that we are separate, nameable, thinkable only by virtue of our fictional discourses about 'us'? How can we run our everyday lives when we know that, beyond our forms, we are the same as everything? Is it possible to resist situations that appear unbearable to us when we know that we cannot step outside of that situation, when we know that we are also part of it, and more than that, *equal* to it?

Silence is one option. If the aim of our speech is truth but every word we utter is an act of separation—the creation of a separating fiction—then speaking becomes a difficult task. 'Arm' is a fiction. 'Hand' is a fiction. 'Line' is a fiction. Every word names the world and thereby separates it, and in the process teaches us to believe in what does not exist except as a fiction. Another option is to speak without personal or possessive pronouns. At first, this appears like a valid compromise. Instead of saying 'We are are looking at our hand,' perhaps we would say, 'It is looking at its hand'. Or perhaps we can continue to use 'we' and 'our' because we want to join with others and communicate with them. That is,

perhaps we can surrender to the limitations of language out of practical need, or a desire to be accepted and understood.

Perhaps 'truth' should not be our aim at all; perhaps unity should not be something we strive to think about or understand, but rather something we agree to accept. If we cannot get rid of the conscious mind in order to live as totally non-separated no ones, then perhaps the best we can do is to question the fictions that consciousness offers us, to take our stories with a pinch of salt. Which is to say: perhaps we can behave *as if* dualism is a fact, *as if* we are a self who acts, *as if* we have free will, *as if* there is a world outside ourselves; and perhaps we can, in turn, treat others *as if* they, too, are separate selves with free will and a world outside themselves. This way we might be able to live honestly, without really believing in something we know cannot be true. Living in this mode, 'freedom' would not mean the freedom to be free; rather, 'freedom' would be to delight in the fiction of freedom; our freedom would be to move through the illusion of the real, and to notice how, in reality, we are being moved. In all the things that matter to us we could make decisions based on our consideration of what counts the most, and in the process we could celebrate the fact that, finally, none of it can be for us or by us, and none of it can be true.

If we believe the fiction, it is not a fiction, and we are subjects with the power to affect change and to determine final truths; if we recognise the fiction as fiction, we cease being subjects and become *subject* to ever changing fluxes, whose shapes and volumes and contours we have the capacity to relish, whose meaning and consequence we can evaluate and discuss, without needing to find out the ultimate truth, for we would know that 'we do not know' is really the only possible position, and that there are no such thing as mistakes (for knowing a mistake implies knowing the truth).

> I would have to say that [knowing I have no free will] gives me a sense of peace. There are a whole lot of things that I do not have to worry about controlling because I know that I am really just a little window on a lovely machinery that is doing lots of things…I was recently faced with a major life decision, and part of the process of deciding in advance was the knowledge that after I had made the decision there might be a period of regret

> but then I could start looking forward to things falling into place, that I would decide that I had done the right thing, and that people around me would help me continue to believe that I had done the right thing. (Wegner, 255)

We can now see that Foucauldian theory forms part of an epistemological field in which a deep scepticism about the self coexists with a practical agreement to act and to think *as if* this self existed. Foucauldian genealogy constitutes an attempt to overcome the dualism of discursive and non-discursive realms (matter and consciousness) established by archaeology. The result is a theory which uses a force called 'power' to dissolve dualism, but which, in the end, falls back on dualism in order allow for the possibility—however limited—of willed personal resistance. In other words, genealogy is a theory that exposes the fiction of dualism but finds that, in the final account, it cannot do without it. If it is to attribute even a minimum of free will to resisting parties in local struggles, genealogy has to behave *as if* the fiction of dualism had *some* practical worth at the micro-level.

This *as if* perspective is most evident when Foucauldian theory takes it upon itself to act as an enabler of locally resisting selves. That is to say, Foucauldian theory's ambivalent position in relation to the self is brought into sharp relief when it harnesses its own cultural influence in order to call attention to overlooked historical texts, thereby creating the conditions in which marginalised figures from the past appear to speak for themselves. In *I, Pierre*, for example, a group of Foucauldian theorists, including Foucault himself, presents a dossier of documents relating to an 1835 case of parricide in a small village in Normandy. The dossier consists of three medical reports, a collection of court exhibits including statements by witnesses, and most importantly—the reason for the group's interest in the case—a memoir by the murderer himself, a young peasant called Pierre Rivière. In a series of notes appended to the dossier, the group makes it clear that what motivated them to edit and publish the dossier was, above all, Rivière's memoir (Foucault, 'Tales of Murder', 199). This memoir, they say,

is the voice of the normally silent party in a common power relation: the poor criminal versus the community, judicial and state apparatuses (the judge, the prosecutor, the Minister of Justice, the country practitioner, the villagers, the mayor, the parish priest, and so on). But not only that. For the group, the memoir is also the *articulate* voice of a man who claimed that he could only barely read and write; here, they say, is the self-proclaiming, myth-building, *life-affirming* voice of a murderer.

> [More than anything] what led us to spend more than a year on these documents was simply the beauty of Rivière's memoir. The utter astonishment it produced in us was the starting point. (Foucault, 'Forward', x)
>
> After nearly 150 years Pierre Rivière's memoir strikes us as a text of singular strangeness. Its beauty alone is sufficient justification for it today. ('Tales of Murder', 199)

The implication is that, though the fate of Rivière's body is sealed (be it through imprisonment or death), his discourse grants him immortality: his fiction of self ultimately wins out against the discourses of discipline. And how does it do so? By being beautiful.

As the Foucauldians make clear in their notes, it was the *beauty* of Rivière's words that worked to upset the relations of power in which Rivière found himself: first this beauty was taken by the legal authorities as proof that Rivière was *not* mad (and hence grounds for condemning him to death); subsequently this same beauty became, in the hands of the doctors, proof that Rivière *was* mad (and hence ground for shutting him up for life) (xiii). The categories into which Rivière was slotted—simpleton or schemer, sane or insane—was to determine what was to be done with him, and it was the aesthetic quality of his words that ultimately governed this determination. The question that the judges and the doctors asked themselves was not, 'What is Rivière's crime?' but rather, 'What is Rivière? What kind of person speaks so?' In other words, it was less the facts about Rivière's actions than the possibility of thinking about him in a certain way that fixed his fate (Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', 33). And, more than

anything else, what rendered this task problematic was the beauty of his words: on one hand, Rivière must be mad because his speech cannot be said to form part of the everyday discourse of men; on the other hand, he must be sane because he demonstrates the capacity to lift his diction above the level of common speech. Making this decision—eradicating this doubt—was crucial: depending on which way the judgement fell, Rivière's memoir would be ignored as the nonsensical ravings of a maniac and would disappear into non-history, or it would be taken seriously as a rational justification and would therefore be a valid document, an acceptable part of history; it would in some sense be *true*.

It is clear, then, that the Foucauldians' interest in Rivière is, at base, an interest in the processes by which selves are constructed in history, and that this interest is, in turn, an interest in 'truth', specifically, the kind of truth the self (which, as we have seen, is always fictional and always historical) might be said to 'hold' or 'contain'. The Foucauldians suggest that attributing 'truth' to the world or other selves is the same process—the same power relation—by which we attribute 'truth' to our own self; that is to say, in the very moment we attribute truth externally, we attribute truth internally: we are a mirror of the truth we project out onto the world. In the Rivière case, the Foucualdians show that, at the very moment in which 'madman' took shape as a possible self for Rivière, there was also constructed a self capable of recognising and understanding madness: the madness experts (*Remarks on Marx*, 65). Like critics determining whether a certain painting or sculpture is indeed art, the experts in the Rivière case marked the limits of sanity that should bound the self, and in the process, attributed selves to themselves. Rivière, meanwhile, by producing a memoir that through its beauty confounds simple classification, made it difficult for the experts to recognise him and therefore to recognise themselves. *If we cannot judge Rivière one way or the other, then what kind of judges are we? Have we ourselves gone mad if we cannot recognise the madness in this murderer's words?* As a result, the experts entered into battles with each other—authority struggles—over what Rivière was and what ought to be done with him. Before it was finally decided that he was indeed insane—before they turned his fictional self into 'fact' and thereby produced the proof of the 'truth' of madness—Rivière was, in a real

sense, unthinkable. He did not have 'truth'; he did not belong to 'proper' knowledge; he was just what he actually was: a beautiful fiction.

By re-presenting the Rivière memoir as historical fiction, the Foucauldians seek to re-enact and once again destabilise this power relation between self and authority, between fiction and fact. By allowing Rivière to speak for himself ('Forward', xiii), they seek to give renewed authority to his discourse of self; they wish to reclaim Rivière's words from the madness experts and re-propose them as a reasonable kind of knowledge. Conversely, they wish to undermine the truth claims made by the authorities in their interpretations of Rivière's memoir. They aim to show that, although Rivière's self is nothing but a fiction, it is still a kind of knowledge: it does not tell us whether Rivière was mad or not, nor does it express the essence of evil; rather, it offers some useful insight into the position of the resisting power in a specific power relation, and the capacity of the resisting power to harness aesthetics in order to problematise that relation.

But—a question the Foucauldians are shy about addressing—is Rivière really speaking for himself? While the Foucauldians claim not to interpret Rivière's memoir or to subject it to commentary—

> We could hardly speak about [Rivière's memoir] without involving it in one of the discourses (medical, legal, psychological, criminological) which we wished to use as our starting point in talking about it. If we had done so, we would have brought it within the power relation whose reductive effect we wished to show, and we ourselves should have fallen into the trap it set. (xiii)

—they do not refrain from appending to the dossier their own notes, in which lie a multitude of meanings and interpretations. These notes may be 'on Rivière's side' in the sense that they purport to resist the discourses of official authority, but the cost is that they preclude Rivière from doing what they want him to do: speak for himself. In the dossier, Rivière's urgent 'I' becomes a studied Foucauldian 'we'. Indeed, even if the Foucauldians had not included their notes; even if Rivière's text had been allowed to stand alone as a single voice speaking against the doctors and the judges, the very act of publishing the dossier in Rivière's name

a century and a half after the events constitutes a statement in itself. The presentation of the text as 'also historical' (not only a personal account but also one with wider ramifications) is itself a discourse; it is power demanding space for a new voice within the discourses of power; it is power working against itself; it is power resisting.

> When all is said and done, battles simply stamp the mark of history on nameless slaughters, while narrative makes the stuff of history from mere street brawls. The frontier between the two is perpetually crossed. ('Tales of Murder', 205)

The Foucauldians suggest that what allows Rivière's humble narrative to cross this frontier into history—what singles it out for our attention now—is its beauty. But this beauty is a judgement that the Foucauldians—the new beauty experts—have made on its behalf. Their external judgement is as much the author of Rivière's text as Rivière himself: today, would we know about Rivière if the Foucauldians had not decided he was beautiful?

Furthermore, if, as we have seen, the self is an historical fiction, then in the name of *what* is Rivière supposed to be speaking? What truth are his words capable of revealing? This question highlights the now familiar paradox inherent in Foucauldian theory and practice: the desire for the self to speak for itself (the desire for the self to express its truth), combined with the knowledge that the self's claim to speak for itself (to speak any truth of self) is a fiction.

Foucauldian theory's response to this contradiction is to offer aesthetic cultivation of the fictional self as a form of liberty open to the self, and therefore as a means of resistance within the power system. This idea sees the self recognise itself as fiction (or at least as something unfixed and malleable), and subsequently mould itself into new forms that are both more *transgressive* and more *intense* than before. This transgression is neither a denial of existing truths and the limits corresponding to them, nor is it an affirmation of some new realm of truths. Rather, it is an aesthetic contestation that carries those truths to their fictional limits. It is an affirmation of self—an *intensification* that places the self

beyond the deadening certainties of conventional life—but one made with the knowledge that there is actually no single unchanging self (Gutting, 'Michel Foucault: A User's Manual', 22). In this framework, self-knowledge stops being a search for truth and becomes a search for alternative aesthetic forms of existence (24). Here, it is not necessary to know 'what' we are but to become something we were not before (Foucault, 'Truth, Power, Self', 9).

According to Foucauldian theory, such a search for new forms of self would require us to analyse the practices (such as voicing opinions, writing memoirs, taking confession, undergoing psychoanalysis, partaking in meditation or performing physical training) by which we are led to focus our attention on ourselves, by which we decipher, recognise and acknowledge ourselves *as* selves. In other words, we would analyse those practices of telling the truth—those *games of truth*—by which we propose to think about our own selves as sane or insane, healthy or sick, victim or criminal, and so on. This would be done in order to recognise the fiction of both the studying and the studied self (*The History of Sexuality. Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, 6-7). Then, in those moments when the self fabricates a coherent, unified identity—say 'criminal' or 'victim'—we would set out to experiment with that identity, push it to its limits, risk its destruction, and thereby call into question the categories of 'criminal' and 'victim', and then, by extension, the category of the self itself. To call the self into question in this way would mean to live with the possibility that the self can at any time be turned into something radically other, a newer, more powerful form of fiction (*Remarks on Marx*, 46-48).

In this scheme, then, we partake in resistance to power when we take our selves as our subject, that is, when we take power for our selves and thereby power takes us for itself (Deleuze, 92). This conception of the self-forming self challenges the idea that what we now imagine our selves to be is the only form of existence possible. It urges us to seek out experiences in which the self is not a given, in which it is possible to lose identities and form new identities (equally fictional but perhaps more intensely aware of this fictionality).

> [I]n the course of history, men [have] never ceased constructing themselves, that is, to shift continuously the level of their subjectivity, to constitute themselves in an infinite and multiple series of different subjectivities that would never reach an end and would never place us in the presence of something that would be 'man'. Man is an animal of experience, he is involved *ad infinitum* within a process that, by defining a field of objects, at the same time changes him, deforms him, transforms him and transfigures him as a subject. (Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 123-24)

We are animals of experience; we are nature with consciousness; we are the world looking at itself and always changing what it sees. To enter a process of self-transformation is to enter a process with no end. No form we give ourselves can be perfect. Even in the deepest recesses of our psyches there are no experiences which, if evoked, will reveal a true, final identity. Every expression of self is historical fiction: an image of what we believed our self to be a moment ago. In this sense, we cannot be a finished work but must always be a work to be accomplished, a work that needs further work (Veyne, 'The Final Foucault and His Ethics', 231).

This perpetual working on the self is, in the Foucauldian view, a form of self-care (Hutton, 140). It is the process by which the self recognises the fiction of itself, which is a form of kindness, for it allows us to give meaning and beauty to the persisting illusion. For, as we have seen, the *feeling* of self does not disappear when its fictionality is exposed; the self is not annihilated; emptiness does not fill its space. Rather, the *masquerade* of self finishes.

> [A]n experience is neither true nor false: it is always a fiction, something constructed, which exists only after it has been made, not before; it isn't something that is 'true', but it has been a reality…[T]he difficult relation with truth is entirely at stake in the way in which truth is found used inside an experience, not fastened to it, and which, within certain limits, destroys it. (Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 36)

The aim is to drop our attachment to a 'true' self and instead to create ourselves as works of art (Bernauer, 161). This requires us to formulate an aesthetics or style of existence. The capacity to resist in the power regime differs for everyone, and the stylisation of the self invites us to engage in a struggle according to our own understanding of the world. Far from promoting self-absorption, it deprives us of the illusion that we can separate ourselves from the world and its forces (162): we are in the fight already, so how are we going to appear for battle? The point is not to pursue an aesthetic ideal but to resist those forces that work to prevent us from transforming ourselves, those forces that want us to stay the same (productive, obedient, docile).

Thus envisaged, self-creation is not the eradication of power but a *problematisation* of power (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, 10).

> Problematisations formulate the fundamental issues and choices through which individuals confront their existence. The fact that my existence is problematised in a specific way is no doubt determined by the social power relations in which I am embedded. But, given this problematisation, I am able to respond to the issues it raises in my own way, or, more precisely, in a way by which I will define what I, as a self, am in my historical context. (Gutting, *Foucault*, 103)

We define our selves according to each struggle we encounter; we are equally defined by those struggles. This form of self-definition does not mean replacing one truth with another (the 'truth' of domination with the 'truth' of resistance); rather, it is the process by which we assume the responsibility for how we are defined. It is the inward deployment of power in an effort to alter the rules of conduct in such a way that they match our personal needs in that moment. It is the crafting of the historical fiction of self in a manner that transgresses externally imposed traditions and conventions. And, as a result, it is the destabilisation of the relation of power.

> [It is] not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 133)

To problematise, therefore, is to use power to make our self an *oeuvre,* one carrying aesthetic values and stylistic criteria associated with transgression (*The History of Sexuality. Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, 10-11). To problemsatise is to act upon ourselves, and in the process, constitute ourselves as selves acting on other selves (Hacking, 'Self-Improvement', 235). To problematise is to discipline ourselves in a way that we would wish others to discipline us. Viewed in this way, as a form of transgressive morality, discipline can be understood in terms other than domination; it can be understood as a means to achieve, if not self-knowledge as truth, then self-knowledge as fiction (and thereby our capacity to modify and refine it). Here, then, fiction represents a kind of knowledge; knowledge of the fiction of the self leads us to ask what knowledge we might need to improve this fiction, to *master* it. And because a fiction can never be truly mastered, the process of mastering is ongoing; each product of self-discipline can in turn be further stylised; there is no final outcome, no moment of completion. The task is not to 'discover' our secret inner being, but rather to identify and accentuate individual differences, to exhibit personal styles as different as possible from those around us, to continually produce radically different selves (Best 67).

So, although *liberation* from the regime of truth is impossible—although we cannot think the unthinkable—we have the *liberty* to channel power into the ongoing practice of mastering the fictional self, which in turn can change the rules of truth. This vision of personal inner work might appear to preclude solidarity or shared experience; it might seem to go against all ideas of community, school or tribe; but in fact it is meant to implicate all of us: not just artists, philosophers or mystics who supposedly live on the fringes of society, but all selves. It certainly undermines universal necessities and global models of freedom, and it does imply that we do not need others in order to master our fictional selves (Foucault, 'Truth, Power, Self', 18), but it also suggests that the creation and celebration of

personal difference *enables* communion with others, facilitates the joining or crossing of individual fictions, and as a consequence brings about a kind of truth.

> [Such an] experience is, of course, something one has alone; but it cannot have its full impact unless the individual manages to escape from pure subjectivity in such a way that others can—I will not say re-experience it exactly—but at least cross paths with it or retrace it. (*Remarks on Marx*, 40)

Thus, whatever appeal this picture of aesthetic liberty might have, it remains locked to an *as if* conception of self. Active within it are the old dualisms: in the first instance, a division between the inner and the outer (the inner now becoming a site where an aesthetic rebellion against normalising external forms can take place), and in addition, an interaction between two separate types of self (the constituting self and constituted self, the fiction-maker and the historical fiction). Foucauldian theory seems willing to declare disbelief in the self as anything other than a historical fiction, and yet it simultaneously demonstrates a reluctance to consider the possibility of a self entirely devoid of liberty and free will, or a system of discourse that does not require some notion of truth, however deflated.

> The subject should not be entirely abandoned. It should be reconsidered, not to restore the theme of an originating subject, but to seize its functions, its intervention in discourse and its systems of dependencies. We should suspend the typical questions: how does a free subject penetrate the density of things and endow them with meaning; how does it accomplish its design by animating the rules of discourse from within? Rather, we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse? (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 137-38)

So the self remains, but as a fiction. And therefore as a kind of fact: the fact of being an historical fiction. At this point, the Foucauldian idea of self reaches its

limit: the self is not allowed to hold any truth *except* the truth of its own historicity, its own fictionality. Foucauldian theory questions the notion that a self can hold truth, that truth can be part of the 'contents' of self, but it does not disavow all faith in the possibility of agreement among selves about their own historical fictional nature; it does not preclude the truth of the historical fiction. In a single movement, it dissolves the epistemological difference between aesthetic, philosophical and scientific discourses by showing that they are, in fact, equally historical and equally fictional, but, in the final account, it attributes to historical fiction a special capacity for truth which the self can exploit in its quest for liberty and resistance within the regime of truth.

Ultimately, then, in the Foucauldian scheme, truth does not mean a true proposition to be discovered or accepted but the set of rules that make it possible to utter and to recognise those propositions held as true (Veyne, 'The Final Foucault and His Ethics', 227). We cannot escape these rules of truth, but we do have the capacity to bend them, to transgress them, to intensify our experience as it plays out in and around them. So although there are no lives to which we should aspire—no *true* life—there are truths we can tell about the fiction of ourselves.

> I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that it 'fictions' it. One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth. (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 193)

For Foucauldian theory, if something is thinkable as an historical fiction, it *is* a truth: it claims the right to refute error and inconsistencies, and to oppose itself to falsity. The conditions under which we attribute truth to an idea or an event are precisely those under which we make an historical fiction of it. We cannot distinguish between the two—truth and historical fiction—even though we behave

as if we can. The concept of truth is itself an historical fiction. 'Truth' coincides with our *feeling* that the world demands to be represented one way or another. We know, however, that our representation of the world cannot really be true, and that not even *that* is true, for everything we represent can, in all truth, be called historical fiction, which does not mean the world we represent does not exist; rather, it means that the world is simply not what it appears to be.

Conclusion

There is a story that tells of a Cambridge professor called G. E. Moore who, fed up of sceptical attacks on common sense as he understood it, held out his hand and claimed that any argument that he did not know he had a hand must be rated less convincing than his immediate certainty that he did (Blackburn, 28). After what we have seen, what might we say about this scene? How might we interpret this historical fiction in light of what we have learned about time, space and truth?

To begin, we might say that the very fact that someone feels the need to hold out his hand and declare the reality of it is the product of an epistemological field in which the reality both of his hand and his self as an owner of that hand is far from certain. This character Moore thinks he knows he has a hand because, at this historical juncture at least, we have agreed that at the extremity of our arm there is a hand; we have agreed that at some point (we cannot say precisely where) the arm becomes a wrist, and then at some further point, the wrist becomes a hand. Moore calls this naming 'truth' because he agrees not to think about what a hand actually is: what it contains, where its limits lie, what differentiates it from what lies around it (atoms that we do not call 'hand'). That is, he has agreed not to consider why, at some point in history, we found it necessary to separate the hand from the wrist and the wrist from the arm, and thereby to fabricate the fiction of the hand, and to make ourselves experts in this fiction; hand experts, such as Moore shows himself to be. (Is it not possible, after all, to imagine another kind of fiction, one in which the hand and the arm cannot be thought of as separate but necessarily form a single unit?)

What is more, Moore thinks he knows he has a hand because it *feels* to him that he owns it: *there* it is, a part of his body, obeying the orders of his brain,

therefore it *must* belong to him. But here, again, he is agreeing not to ask the question of who is doing the owning. Does his brain own his hand? Does his mind own it? Does it belong to his psyche, his self? Does he still own it when he is not conscious of it (that is, when he is not holding it out in order to make common sense arguments about it but is using it to garden, say, or to type on his computer)? And who is to say that the hand is not using the brain? Or that the world is not using the hand? How can we draw lines between these things—brain and hand, world and hand—in any way that is fundamentally *true*? Is truth simply a practical agreement not to ask too many questions? Is truth just what it is useful to believe?

> In the course of my works, I utilise methods that are part of the classic repertory: demonstration, proof by means of historical documentation, quoting other texts, referral to authoritative comments, the relationship between ideas and facts, the proposal of explanatory patterns etc. There is nothing original in that. From this point of view, whatever I assert in my writing can be verified or refuted as in any other history book. Despite that, people who read me, even those who appreciate what I do, often say to me laughing: 'But in the end you realise that the things you say are nothing but fictions!' I always reply: 'Who ever thought he was writing anything but fiction?' (Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 33)

The catagories of 'truth' and 'fiction' do not spring naturally from some knowing essence in the world—an essence such as 'hand'—but are discourses within a system of power relations dominated by those in charge of classification: those who become experts in 'truth' or in 'fiction' by defining what fits into these categories and how those entities thus categorised should look and behave. But, of course, to create a category is also to create resistance to that category—already built into a category is the anxiety that it is impossible to know what that category actually *is*—and the result is a system of learning that is deeply uncertain about its own capacity to 'teach' the knowledge that categorisation purports to establish. To talk about the boundaries, the overlaps, the dialogues between categories such

as ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’—or indeed between ‘science’, ‘literature’, ‘history’, ‘fact’, ‘evidence’, ‘theory’, ‘art’, ‘critical’, ‘creative’—is to make a knowledge out of what our institutions fear does not constitute a knowledge at all. ‘We do not really teach,’ say the professors of fiction, but the grades are still assigned and the degrees are still rewarded, and the fiction of knowledge continues.

To illustrate:

Fig. 8. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Collected Works: Volume 45*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991. Plate 2.

This photograph *is*, so it must be that Lizzie Burns *was*. And if she *was*, she must be available to us in some way; there must be some truth about her that we can grasp and hold onto and teach thereafter? But consider again our opening proposition: she *was*. Looking at this photograph, it certainly seems so. But is it *true*? *Was* she? Truly? The fact—or rather the *historical fiction*—is that Lizzie Burns only *thought* she was Lizzie Burns; there was no true Lizzie Burns underlying her own thoughts about herself (thoughts which themselves formed

part of a complex system of discourses within a regime of power). Every thought Lizzie Burns had—every story she told—was about identification to an historical, fictional self. Without her historical fiction, there was no self. Every thought she had referred back to 'her': that is how 'she' (her self) survived.

But perhaps we cannot actually speak for Lizzie Burns. If we want to go about questioning selves, should it not be our own that we question? All right. Let me take a look at my own self, then. I can see that I *feel* like I know that I am. I can see that when I think, I have the impression that my thoughts are my own; they appear to be *my* authentic expression; mine and mine alone. But how authentic, how *personal*, can a statement like 'I am' or 'I feel' or 'I think' actually be? I appear to be thinking for myself, but to what extent is it even possible to do so? My thoughts and my words are always already products of some other statement; they do not come pure; they are not the originators of new meaning; they come already caused; they come *always already spoken*. And so my self, which relies on these thoughts and words to define itself, comes already thought. Fundamentally, my self is not doing the thinking but is being thought. And I can only presume that it is the same for all selves. The possibilities of thought—what is thinkable as a self—are the same for me as they are for you, even if we are thinking differently at a particular moment; even if we think differently for our entire lives. At a fundamental level, there are no new thoughts, no *true* thoughts, only perpetually changing conditions in which certain thoughts are rendered thinkable and others not. As a self, I do not have a special access to truth (about myself or anything else), though in practice I behave as though I do. When I come to realise the historical fiction and the historical fiction persists, then my liberty consists in delighting in what appears to be but really is not. And in this I am no different from you.

We are, then?

Well, *are* we?

Only when we think we are some aloof species that is in charge of something can we say that we are doing or being anything. If, on the other hand, we begin to think of ourselves as part of the world as opposed to separate selves inspecting it, then we see that we have no choice but to go where everything else

goes; the cause and effect of everything and 'nothing'. The universe—energy—is all of it. We have no options. We can protest all we want, but if the world moves (planet, sea, earth, hand), we move.

There is no separation that is not discursive. Our limited senses determine what we perceive, and our language separates it all out. Any apparently separate thing cannot ultimately be true, since consciousness has created it with names. We name what cannot be named and try to make it real through a name. We believe that our names—our divisions—are true, that there is a world that is separate from itself. This is the historical fiction.

> The secret of theory is that truth [like time and empty space] does not exist. You cannot confront it in any way. The only thing you can do is play with some kind of provocative logic. Truth constitutes a space that can no longer be occupied. The whole strategy is indeed not to occupy it. It means creating a void so that others will fall into it. (Baudrillard, 130)

Historical fiction is what happens when we *try* to be someone when in fact there is no one to be. All the truth that we think we know is born in this process of trying. Really, there is no truth for what is sitting in the chair right now. We are the experience of the universe, and even that cannot be true. If, in a flash, the origin of the universe and the ultimate meaning of life were revealed to us, still it would mean nothing because ultimately everything in the universe is 'nothing' imagined as something, and the energy that we are exists prior to everything 'we' think we are. If we saw everything anyone has ever longed to see; if we experienced all the dimensions within one thought, still it would only have meaning as a thought, that is, an historical fiction.

And, of course, 'historical fiction' is itself a story: possibly the last story. Once we have admitted that nothing can be true except as historical fiction, the next step is to question the truth of historical fiction itself. Can we truly say that things exist *as* historical fiction? There is only the story appearing now, but is there even that? It would take a lifetime to describe this moment, this 'now', which does not even exist except as our story, and our story does not even exist.

Fiction is the story of having arrived somewhere, on our way from an imagined past to an imagined future. In fact, ultimately, there is not even this story, so we do not have to pretend. To think that we know something—anything—is to believe a story of the past.

Works Cited

Ambinder, Michael S. and Daniel J. Simons. 'Change Blindness: Theory and Consequences.' *Current Directions in Psychology Science*. 14 (2005): 44-48.

Arnold, John H. *History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

Aristotle. *Physics*. Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

Augustine. *The Confessions*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

Bailey, Richard W. *Nineteenth-Century English*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999.

Baker, Keith Michael. 'A Foucauldian French Revolution.' Goldstein 187-205.

Barrow, John D. *The Book of Nothing*. London: Vintage, 2001.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Forget Foucault*. Trans. Nicole Dufresne. New York: Semiotext(e), 1987.

Bell, Vikki. 'Dreaming and Time in Foucault's Philosophy.' *Theory, Culture & Society*. 11 (1994): 151-163.

Bernauer, James W. and Michael Mahon. 'Michel Foucault's Ethical Imagination.' Gutting 149-175.

Best, Steven, and Douglas Kellner. *Postmodern Theory*. New York: Guilford Press, 1991.

Blackburn, Simon. *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Allen Lane, 2005.

Blackmore, Susan. *Consciousness: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition. London: Hodder Education, 2010. *Kindle* ebook file.

___, ed. *Conversations on Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

___. Introduction. *Conversations on Consciousness*. Ed. Blackmore. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

___. 'There Is No Stream of Consciousness.' *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 9.5-6 (2002): 17-28.

Blakemore, C. and S. Greenfield, eds. *Mindwaves*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

Bostock, David. Introduction. *Physics*. By Aristotle. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

Boyne, Roy. *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.

Canguilhem, Georges. 'The Death of Man, or Exhaustion of the Cogito?' Gutting 74-94.

Carr, E. H. *What is History?* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.

Carroll, Sean. *From Eternity to Here: The Quest for the Ultimate Theory of Time*. New York: Penguin, 2010.

Chadwick, Henry. Introduction. *The Confessions*. By Augustine. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

Chalmers, David. 'I'm Conscious: He's Just a Zombie.' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness,* 35-50.

___. 'The Puzzle of Conscious Experience.' *Scientific American*. Dec (1995): 62-68.

Chartier, Roger. 'The Chimera of the Origin: Archaeology, Cultural History, and the French Revolution.' Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Goldstein 167-186.

Clark, Stuart. 'The Origin of Time.' *New Scientist*. 2833 (2011): 38-39.

Close, Frank. *Particle Physics*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.

___. *Nothing*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Coles, Peter. *Cosmology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Damasio, Antonio. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*. London: Vintage, 2006. *Kindle* ebook file.

___. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*. London: Heinemann, 1999.

Davidson, Arnold I. 'Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics.' Hoy 221-233.

___, ed. *Foucault and his Interlocutors*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

___. 'Structures and Strategies of Discourse: Remarks Towards a History of Foucault's Philosophy of Language.' Introduction. *Foucault and his Interlocutors*. Ed. Davidson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. 1-17.

Delaporte, François. 'The History of Medicine according to Foucault.' Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Goldstein 137-149.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Dennett, Daniel. *Consciousness Explained*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1991.

___. 'How Could I Be Wrong? How Wrong Could I Be?' *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 9.5-6 (2002): 13-16.

Deutsch, David. 'A Most Familiar Mystery.' *New Scientist*. 2833 (2011): 5.

Flynn, Thomas. 'Foucault's Mapping of History.' Gutting 29-48.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979.

___. Forward. *I, Pierre, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother… A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*. Ed. Foucault. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975. vii-xiv.

___, ed. *I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother… A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*. Trans. Frank Jellinek. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975.

___. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

___. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marhsall, John Mepham and Kate Soper. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980.

___. *Remarks on Marx*. Trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991.

___. 'Tales of Murder.' *I, Pierre*…. Ed. Foucault. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975. 199-212.

___. 'Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault.' Martin 9-15.

___. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

___. *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.

___. *The History of Sexuality. Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London: Penguin, 1992.

___. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage, 1973.

Fraser, Nancy. 'Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions.' *Praxis International* 1 (1981): 237-259.

Gazzaniga, Michael S. *The Mind's Past*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. *Kindle* ebook file.

Gefter, Amanda. 'Countdown to the Theory of Everything.' *New Scientist*. 2833 (2011): 41-42.

Genz, Henning. *Nothingness: The Science of Empty Space*. New York: Perseus, 1999.

Goldstein, Jan, ed. *Foucault and the Writing of History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

___. Introduction. *Foucault and the Writing of History*. Ed. Goldstein. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. 1-15.

Gordon, Colin. Afterword. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. By Michel Foucault. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980. 229-258.

Greenfield, Susan. 'The Really Big Questions Are Sliding Past.' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 92-103.

Gutting, Gary. *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

___. 'Foucault and the History of Madness.' *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Ed. Gutting. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 49-73.

___. 'Michel Foucault: A User's Manuel.' Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Ed. Gutting. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 1-28.

___, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.

Hacking, Ian. 'The Archaeology of Foucault.' Hoy 27-40.

___. 'Self-Improvement.' Hoy 235-240.

Harré, Rom and Grant Gillett. *The Discursive Mind*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994.

Hofstadter, Douglas R. *I Am a Strange Loop*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.

Holford-Stevens, Leofranc. *The History of Time*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

Hoy, David Couzens, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

___. Introduction. *Foucault: A Critical Reader.* Ed. Hoy. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. 1-25.

___. 'Power, Repression, Progress: Foucault, Lukes, and the Frankfurt School.' *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Hoy. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. 123-147.

Huppert, George. '*Divinatio et Erudito:* Thoughts on Foucault.' *History and Theory*. 13.3 (1974): 191-207.

Hutton, Patrick H. 'Foucault, Freud and the Technologies of Self.' Martin 121-140.

Jenkins, Keith. *Rethinking History*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Jenkyns, Richard. Introduction. *The Nature of Things*. By Lucretius. London: Penguin, 2007.

Koch, Christof. 'Why Does Pain Hurt?' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 126-135.

LaBerge, Stephen. 'Lucid Dreaming is a Metaphor for Enlightenment.' Blackmore 136-148.

Le Goff, Jacques and Pierre Nora, eds. *Faire de l'histoire: Nouveaux problèmes, I.* Paris: Gallimard, 1974.

Lucretius. *The Nature of Things*. Trans. A. E. Stallings. London: Penguin, 2007.

Libet, Benjamin. *Mind Time: The Temporal Factor in Consciousness*. Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2004.

___. 'Unconscious Cerebral Initiative and the Role of Unconscious Will in Voluntary Action.' *The Behavioural and Brain Sciences*. 8 (1985): 529-539.

Mack, Arien. 'Inattentional Blindness: Looking Without Seeing.' *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 12 (2003): 180-184.

Malament, Barbara C., ed. *After the Reformation: Essays in Honor of J. H. Hexter*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1980.

Martin, Luther H. et al, eds. *Technologies of the Self*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *Collected Works: Volume 45*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991.

Megill, Allan. 'The Reception of Foucault by Historians.' *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 48.1 (1987): 117-141.

Metzinger, Thomas. 'I Am the Content of a Transparent Self Model.' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 149-160.

___. *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003.

Midelfort, H. C. Erik. 'Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal of Michel Foucault.' Malament 247-64.

Munslow, Alun. *Deconstructing History*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Nagel, Thomas. 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?' *Philosophical Review*. 83 (1974): 435-450.

O'Connell, Robert J. *St Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of a Soul*. Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1969.

O'Meara, John. 'Augustine and Neoplatonism'. *Recherches Augustiniennes 1*. 4 (1958): 91-111.

O'Regan, Kevin. 'There's Nothing There Until You Actually Wonder What's There.' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness,* 161-172.

Parfit, Derek. 'Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons.' Blakemore 19-26.

Partner, Nancy F. 'Making Up Lost Time: Writing on the Writing of History." *Speculum* 61.1 (1986): 90-117.

Polkinghorne, John. *Quantum Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

Ramachandran, Vilayanur. 'You're Part of Shiva's Dance.' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 186-197

Rouse, Joseph. 'Power/Knowledge.' Gutting 95-122.

Said, Edward W. 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power.' Hoy 149-155.

Sorabji, Richard. *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. London: Duckworth, 1983.

Taylor, Charles. 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth.' Hoy 69-102.

Trombadori, Duccio. 'Beyond the Revolution.' Introduction. *Remarks on Marx*. By Michel Foucault. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991. 15-24.

Veyne, Paul. 'Foucault Revolutionises History.' Trans. Catherine Porter. Davidson 146-182.

___. 'The Final Foucault and His Ethics.' Trans. Catherine Porter and Arnold I. Davidson. Davidson 225-233.

Vilar, Pierre. 'Histoire marxiste, histoire en construction.' Le Goff 188.

Walzer, Michael. 'The Politics of Michel Foucault.' Hoy 51-68.

Wegner, Daniel. 'Don't Think About a White Bear.' Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness,* 245-256.

___. *The Illusion of Conscious Will*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002.

___. 'The Mind's Best Trick.' *Trends in Cognitive Studies*. 7.2 (2003): 65-69

White, Hayden. 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.' *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (1980): 5-27.

___. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1978.

Young, Robert. *Untying the Text*. London: Routledge, 1981.