

*The PIT: A YA Response to Miltonic Ideas of the Fall in Romantic Literature*

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## Abstract

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This project consists of a Young Adult novel — *The PIT* — and an accompanying critical component, titled *Miltonic Ideas of the Fall in Romantic Literature*.

The novel follows the story of a teenage boy, Jack, a naturally talented artist struggling to understand his place in a dystopian future society that only values ‘productive’ work and regards art as worthless. Throughout the novel, we see Jack undergo a ‘coming of age’, where he moves from being an essentially passive character to one empowered with a sense of courage and a clearer sense of his own identity. Throughout this process we see him re-evaluate his understanding of friendship, love, and loyalty to authority.

The critical component of the thesis explores the influence of John Milton’s epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, on a range of Romantic writers. Specifically, the critical work examines the way in which these Romantic writers use the Fall, and the notion of ‘fallenness’ — as envisioned in *Paradise Lost* — as a model for writing about their roles as poets/writers in periods of political turmoil, such as the aftermath of the French Revolution, and the cultural transition between what we now regard as the Romantic and Victorian periods.

The thesis’s ‘bridging chapter’ explores the connection between these two components. It discusses how the conflicted poet figures and divided narratives discussed in the critical component provide a model for my own novel’s exploration of adolescent growth within a society that seeks to restrict imaginative freedom. This chapter will also address specific areas of craft used within the novel, including the use of place, metaphor, and characterisation.



## **Acknowledgements**

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# **The PIT**

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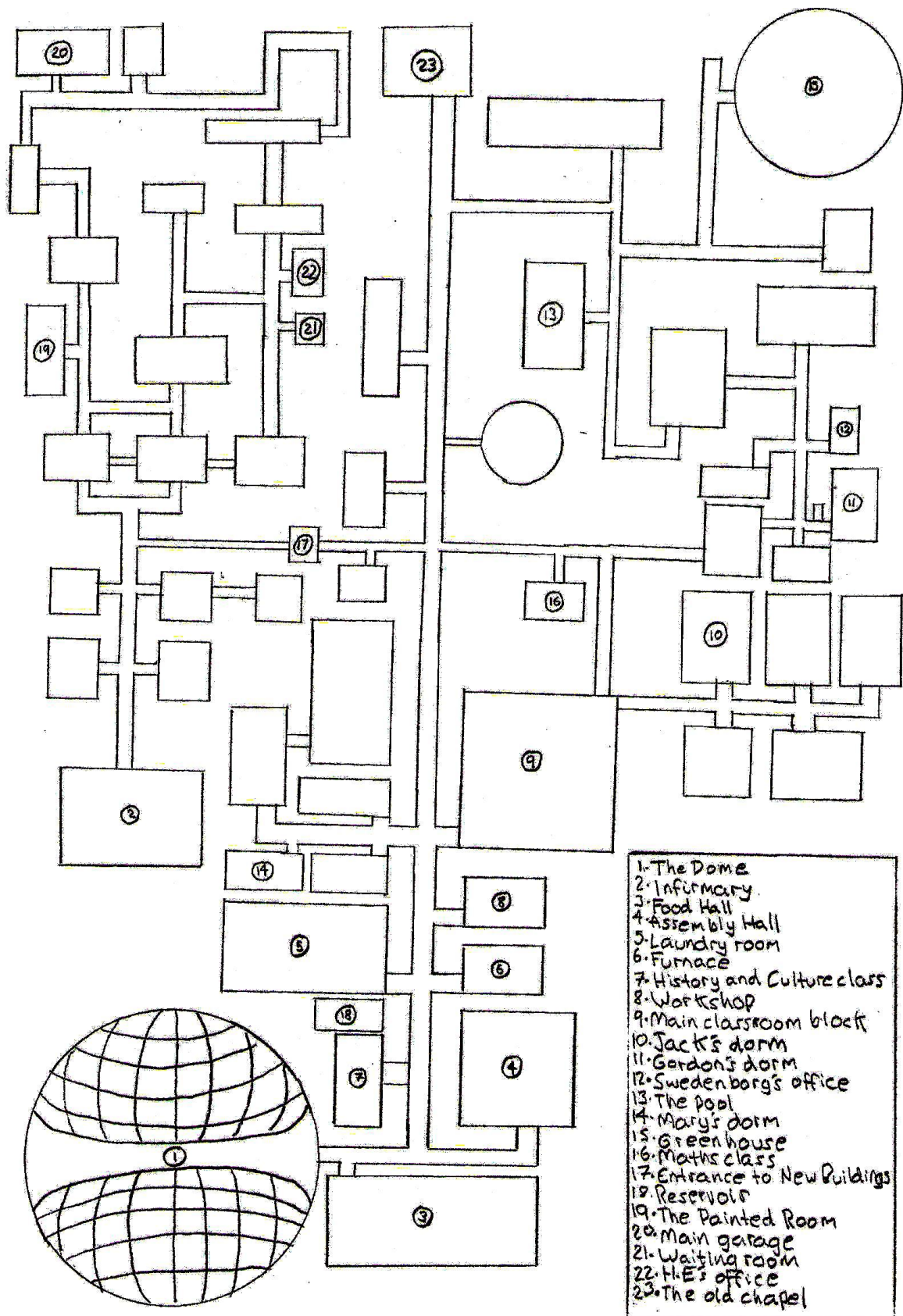


Figure 1.

## Chapter 1. Back of the Line

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*'Fall'n cherub, to be weak is mis'erable'*

*John Milton – Paradise Lost*

The morning bell was ringing. Jack buried his head and counted to twenty. He could already hear the Wing Matron banging her way along the corridor, running her stick against the iron radiators while shouting out the day's schedule. It wasn't necessary. Jack had memorised his weekly timetable on his first day in The PIT — it hadn't changed since.

He sat up and looked around the dorm. He'd been in this one for about a month, and it was much nicer than the old one. It only had twenty beds for a start, and the floor had proper wooden boards instead of the stringy carpet they seemed to use everywhere else. There were windows here too, set high up in the vaulted ceiling — little round portholes that let in the early morning light. In his old dorm there'd only been fluorescent tubes.

A lot of the others were already getting up, pulling on their uniforms or queuing for the water basin. Jack gave himself a sniff. He would be okay for another day or so. If it came to it, he still had that sliver of soap that Billy gave him. Jack put on his uniform and packed his Day Bag. His uniform was blue, just like the ones everyone else wore, and it was way too big for a five foot tall, eight stone fourteen year old. With his greasy brown hair and long, pointed nose, Jack looked like a rat dressed up in human clothes. Nobody ever pointed this out though, because of the one part of his uniform that wasn't blue — the piece of red rag tied around his bicep. Nobody else in the dorm had one of those.

Jack's Day Bag also had things in it that nobody else had. Drawing was Jack's chief way of passing the time, and so he'd made his own set of charcoals, using the embers of a cooking fire Billy made after catching a seagull. It was a treat to get freshly cooked meat, and birds didn't often get through the wire mesh of The Dome. Jack had enjoyed the meal, but he wished that Billy would've let him draw a picture of the bird before he cooked it. In The PIT, you didn't get to see many animals that weren't mice or insects.

He also packed his whittling tools. The others definitely didn't have those in their Day Bags. It was only a couple of small blades, basically sharpened potato peelers, but in the wrong hands they could still do some damage. Jack was using them to make draughts pieces from bits of an old chair leg. He was almost halfway through, but it had taken him weeks. He'd begun by doing the black pieces, and it took ages to sit and gently darken them over a lit match. If you went too far they started to crumble, and you had to start all over again.

As he was sliding his blades in to the lining of the bag, one of the other Claimants nudged Jack in the back. The Potestates were coming to take them to lessons. Jack finished his packing and made his way to the counting door. He was always the first in line for counting. In fact, he was first in line for everything. The shutter of the door rolled open and four Potestates came though. One of them barred the entrance, while the other three herded the line into shape. Jack recognised the one guarding the door as Reaver, an older man with a bent face and watery eyes. The Potestates didn't really have a hierarchy — they all wore the same grey shirts and black trousers, with the same leather belts overburdened with keys, torches, collapsible batons, talk-boxes, cable-ties, shock-prodders etc. But Reaver always tried to convey the impression that he was in some way more indispensable than his colleagues. If there was clipboard to be held, he would be the one holding it. If there was a Claimant to be restrained, he would be the one to yank the cable ties around his ankles.

After a couple of minutes of shuffling, the line was ready. And sure enough, Reaver had the counting list fastened to a clipboard. He looked down at the list and called out the first name.

“Charles!”

Jack heard a few sniggers. He managed to keep his own face straight, despite the obvious mistake. Reaver glanced down at his list, and then up at Jack. He looked confused, but couldn't resist a brief upward curl of the lip.

“Charles,” he repeated.

“Excuse me, sir,” said the boy directly behind Jack. “I'm Charles.”

“Then why aren't you at the front of the line?” said Reaver. “You're the first name on the list.”

“Sir, it's usually Jack. He's a *Favourite*.”

This last word was uttered in a whisper, though Jack was sure everybody in the dorm heard it. Reaver certainly heard it — you could tell by the way his face locked down. Officially, the Potestates did not know about *Favourites*, and that was the way they liked it.

“Maybe,” said Reaver, “maybe there has been a mix up with the counting list. I'll have it checked tonight, but for now we have to follow the rules. So, Charles, you're first. And you,” he looked at Jack, and this time totally failed to conceal a full-blown sneer, “are number twenty.”

Some of the others actually gasped. Jack could feel himself blushing with anger and embarrassment. He stood in silence for a moment while he calculated his response. It was obviously a mistake, and mistakes could always be fixed. He mustn't lose his temper. If he

lost his temper, then he would also lose control. Remember the motto of The PIT, he told himself: Opportunity in Adversity.

Jack smiled, thanking Reaver loudly and graciously for taking the time to look into the issue. As he made his way to the back of the line, Jack twisted his face and scrunched up his eyes in an imitation of the elderly Potestate, raising a few smiles from the others. Everybody knew Reaver was a moron — he'd probably misread the list, or couldn't read it at all — and now Jack looked like the one in charge. Jack felt so upbeat that he nudged the boy in front of him and joked that he preferred being at the back anyway. The boy scowled, and muttered something under his breath. He was the New Boy — that was why he was at the back of the line. The others called him Mole-face. He looked about fourteen, the same age as Jack, but much taller, and broader across the shoulders. Obviously he didn't know about Favourites yet, but no doubt somebody would tell him soon enough.

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The first lesson was maths. Jack liked maths. It was one of the only classes where he didn't feel the need to distract himself with drawing, or with trying to slip notes to Billy. He liked problem solving, the way that you could stick a bunch of random numbers together and end up with an answer that was either right or wrong. They'd been having fewer maths lessons recently, replaced by 'Vocation Activity' — the brainchild of the incoming Chief Administrator — the effective head of The Paradise Institute for Transformation. The old Chief had been sacked, apparently, but for the last few years he'd never changed much about lessons and stuff. It seemed like this new one was going to be different.

The first maths problem of the day was an easy one. 'If there are five hundred and eight Claimants who need to be housed, but only two hundred and forty six beds available in The PIT, how many Claimants will need to be deported?'

*Easy. Two hundred and sixty two.*

The next problem was more complicated: 'If three hundred of the five hundred and eight Claimants are girls, and only one hundred and six of the available beds are in the Girls' Wing, what percentage of the remaining Claimants will be girls, and what percentage will be boys?'

Jack needed to use his smuggled paper and charcoals for this — scribbling discreetly under his desk. You weren't supposed to use paper in lessons, except for in exams, but there was no way he could do percentages in his head. He was still scribbling when somebody at the back of the room coughed and raised their hand.

"Why can't they just move some of the beds from the Girls Wing into the Boys Wing?"

Jack laughed out loud — he couldn't help it. *That's not maths, that's just cheating. Maths questions have got rules. You can't just change the rules.*

Mr Cripslock frowned for a moment, casting an angry look towards Jack, before turning to the boy who'd spoken and saying, "That's very good indeed, Claimant. You have identified the problem within the problem — too many girls — and solved it using logic. The Opportunity, as ever, is concealed within Adversity."

"But, sir!" Jack just had to interrupt. "What about the answer, sir?"

"Claimant Paul has given it to you."

"But the *real* answer, sir..."

"Is that a piece of paper in your lap?"

"No, sir."

"I didn't think so."

The next lesson was steel-work. Mr Cripslock taught that too. Nobody liked steel-work: it was hard and boring, and the workshop was in the basement room next to the furnaces, so it was always too hot. Unfortunately, it counted as a Vocation Activity, so they were doing more and more of it. This week they were making barbed wire, so there had to be at least two Potestates in the room at all times. Once, the year before, they made coat hangers, and one boy had managed to steal a big coil of wire. Nobody was sure what he'd done with it, but a week later the Potestates took him away, and now they always had extra supervision when they worked with wire.

Jack had been partnered with the New Boy on one of the spools. When you made barbed wire you had to twist two lengths together, with one boy turning the spool handle and the other twisting the cables together as they were fed out, using a set of pliers to put in the spikes at regular intervals. The spikes were made of two little pieces of sharpened wire. Jack was on the spool handle. He'd wanted to be a twister, but Mr Cripslock had said no. It was probably the notepaper. Usually Crippy pretended not to notice that kind of thing, especially when it was Jack doing it. He'd also wanted to be Billy's partner, but he'd been made to go with Mole-face.

"Should I go slower?" asked Jack. "I've never done the spool before."

"No," said Mole-face.

"I guess you've not done it either."

"Done what?"

"The spool. You're a New Boy aren't you? You've never done wires before, I guess."

"No. I never done wires before."



“It’s crap isn’t it?” Jack sighed. He looked across the room at Billy, who was laughing and making faces at Mr Cripslock. “What did you do before The PIT? Went to a proper school or anything? You’re a bit older than most New Boys. ”

“Don’t you ever shut up?”

“What? Screw you. Did you just tell me to shut up?”

“Just turn the crank.”

“Listen *Mole-face*, do you know what happens to lippy...”

“Call me Mole-face again and I’ll break your fingers.”

He hadn’t shouted it. He’d said it low and quiet, but it carried. Jack heard the spoons around him slowing down, and felt the eyes that were very deliberately *not* looking at him. The Potestates by the door hadn’t moved, but one of them was muttering something into a talkbox. Jack breathed in through his nose, and out through his mouth.

“I don’t think I heard you right.”

“Yeah, you did.”

“Has nobody told you about *Favourites*? Or are you as stupid as you are ugly?”

“Yeah. They told me. But you’re not one anymore are you? You’re at the back of the line. With me.”

“That was a mistake.”

Mole-face grinned as he twisted another barb into place. “Whatever you say...”

The bell rang, and the Potestates started gathering up the line for frisking. Jack’s name was last on the list again.

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Jack was pleased to get into the Food Hall, even though he was the last to get served. This was part of the Old Buildings, like his new dorm, and it had the same high windows and wooden furniture. The long tables had been there for years before Jack arrived, carved with so many names and rude scrawls that it was sometimes difficult to balance your bowl.

“I could hit him for you,” said Billy, when Jack told him about Mole-face.

“Eat your slop.”

“I’m serious. He shouldn’t talk like that to you! I should hit him just for that. Else how is he gonna learn?”

Billy was fifteen, around eight months older than Jack, and he was taller and hairier, with scars on his knuckles. He looked like he belonged in a place like The PIT. Billy wasn’t a Favourite — he didn’t have the brains, or if he did he was too stupid to use them. Jack liked having Billy around, though, and he tried to encourage him to use what intelligence he did have. He liked teaching him how to count, and how to make things with his hands. Billy had

been Jack's best friend — except maybe for Gordon — since the first day he turned up at The PIT. He still wasn't really sure how it'd happened. One moment Jack was walking along a corridor by himself, and the next moment Billy was there at his shoulder, and he'd pretty much stayed there ever since.

"Nobody needs to get hit, Billy. It's a mistake, that's all. I'll fix it tonight and someone can go talk to Mole-face. A nice *quiet* talk. Not one of your little chats."

"He fell down the stairs."

"Who did?"

"Dobson — isn't that what you mean? He called me a Hagger."

"And then he fell down the stairs?"

"They should put some banisters in."

Jack shovelled some porridge into his mouth so that Billy wouldn't see him frown. He would have to see if he could do something for Dobson. He was a bit of a slimeball, but he didn't deserve what Billy would've done to him. It was that word 'Hagger' that did it: a Favourite's Favourite, a hanger-on to a hanger-on. Not a smart thing to call a guy like Billy, even if it was kind of true.

In many ways, Billy was a boy just like hundreds of others in The PIT — a street kid picked up by a Child Vagrancy Patrol — or the PIT Bulls as most people called them. When they found Billy he'd been sleeping under an abandoned car in some little factory town Jack'd never heard of. According to Billy, it had taken two Bulls just to pull him out, and another two to get him in the back of their van. That was when he was just eight years old.

And yet, despite his brutish strength and fearsome appearance, Billy was also capable of tenderness. His big, clumsy fingers tended to break most things they touched, but when he played with Felix, his pet spider, he was capable of the utmost delicacy and care. Even as he and Jack were talking, Billy was ever so gingerly feeding the creature from a matchbox full of flies.

On the other side of the dining hall, Mole-face was eating alone. Well, not alone exactly — there wasn't enough space in The PIT for anyone to ever be really alone — but his bowed head and squared shoulders sent out a clear enough message.

"Seriously, though," said Jack. "Do you think Mole-face is going to be a problem?"

"He's a New Boy. He's just trying to make himself look tough. Are you gonna finish your slop?"

"Here — take it."

"So you don't want me to hit him then?"

“No more hitting for God’s sake! You’ll bust a knuckle. And anyway, what if you get caught? I’m at the bottom of the counting list — who knows what other lists I’m at the bottom of? You really want to rely on me getting you out of trouble?”

Billy shrugged. Jack had always taken care of him before.

After they’d eaten they went to The Dome. You only got an hour of Dome Time nowadays — another New Initiative — but it was all Free Time. When Jack first arrived at The PIT, they had a proper PE instructor, but he was dismissed within a few months after he tried to introduce a football league. Initially it had gone well, but then Dorm BF/15 played Dorm BF/09 for the championship — BF/15 won 3-2 with a last minute goal. Everyone had been really excited about the trophy presentation, until it emerged that there was no trophy, or any other kind of prize. There was a small riot, and the Potestates had to intervene to rescue the instructor. Now they weren’t allowed any organised sporting activity, and being caught with a ball was regarded as a serious offence.

Although Jack liked sports, he was quietly pleased with the current Free Time arrangement. The Dome was the only real outside space they had, and even though the steel mesh obscured a lot, you could still see the sky and even some hills. Billy reckoned he’d seen a horse once, but Jack thought this was probably a lie. There was some scrubby farmland next to The Dome, but all Jack had ever seen was some big mechanised harvesting equipment. What it was harvesting he couldn’t say — some dumpy brown crop that smelled like burnt hair. He’d heard some of the country boys calling it Scud, but that sounded like slang. Nobody would eat something called Scud.

Jack didn’t dare draw anything in The Dome itself. Art was officially banned as a Non-Profit Activity, and the other Claimants would think it was sissy to draw when you could be playing. Once people started making fun of you they lost respect, and without that you might not be a Favourite much longer. Instead, Jack tried to spend as much time as he could just looking at things. He found that if he stared at something long enough, like a landscape, or a bird perching on the roof of The Dome, he could remember it exactly, like someone had scratched it into the back of his skull. It didn’t last forever, but long enough for him to sketch it down in class, or in the dorm before the lights went out. When he woke up the image would be gone, but the sketch would still be there — permanent and unchanging.

Today, he decided to stare at the clouds. Billy sat behind him, letting Felix run up and down his fingers. It was a warm day, but not far off he could see a knot of thunderclouds. They weren’t a particularly interesting shape, but they were huge and dark, and they were skidding along close to the tops of the hills. It was better than drawing another empty field of Scud.

He stared at the clouds. Someone passed in front of him, but he ignored it. After a few minutes, another figure passed by, and this time his eyes were dragged along with them. It was Mole-face. He was doing laps of The Dome. Not running, just walking along in slow, spiralling circles. Jack was roughly in the middle of the yard. Eventually Mole-face would end up standing right next to him. He tried to concentrate on the clouds, moving along the hills in a tight ball of darkness, heading east, towards The PIT.

The afternoon bell rang just before the rain started.

Jack spent the rest of his lessons trying to draw under the desk, but every time he tried to drag out the picture from the back of his mind all he got was Mole-face. It was so stupid. He was just a New Boy. The counting list was a mistake. It would get fixed. At the evening meal he sat in silence while Billy told him stories. He'd heard them all before. He sat with his back to Mole-face, but he could feel him on the nape of his neck. *The back of the line. With me...*

When they returned to the dorm, Jack was starting to feel frantic. He needed to get a message out. He would write it down and pass it to one of the Laundry Dollies — they would take it where it needed to go along their rounds. But when he reached his bed all thoughts of messages evaporated. There were four Potestates standing over it — the sheets thrown across the floor along with the contents of his locker. Reaver was standing by the scattered pieces of his draughts set, carefully grinding each piece under his boot.

“You’re top of the bed search list,” he said.

“You can’t do this.”

“Tell me that again, my lad,” said Reaver, his hand hovering over the truncheon on his belt.

“I’m one of Gordon’s Favourites!” Jack said, pointing to the rag around his arm.

Reaver flinched a little at that. But then his eyes narrowed, and his voice dropped to a hiss. *“He ain’t in charge here.”*

Jack’s mouth opened, but he couldn’t make the words come out. There had to be some magic word he could say to stop this happening, but he had said the only one he knew.

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Jack had never been in the Head Employer’s waiting room before. There was a proper rug on the floor, and a little table with a vase on it. There wasn’t a window, but there was a painting of a horse hanging on the wall. It was strange to see art in The PIT — Claimant’s weren’t allowed any pictures, and creativity was usually dismissed as being a waste of time.

After Reaver collected up all of Jack’s ‘contraband’ in a big plastic bag, the Potestates had brought him straight here. The H.E was in charge of disciplinary matters relating to bed

searches, apparently. Jack wasn't sure if this was true — Favourites never had their beds searched. He hadn't seen the H.E since his first day in The PIT, and he didn't know anyone who'd been taken to see him for anything less than a stabbing. And those people never came back.

At first he just tried not to panic. He breathed in through his nose and out through his mouth. Gordon had taught him that. Unfortunately, all it did was remind him of Gordon. In normal circumstances this kind of situation would hold no fear for Jack, as he could safely rely on Gordon to have a quiet word with a Potestate, who would in turn have a quiet word with a junior clerk, who would have a word with a senior clerk, and so on and so on, until eventually somebody important enough to do something about it would intervene.

But something had happened — Gordon's influence seemed to have been withdrawn, and there was nobody else to protect him. And why? What had he done to deserve this? Since coming to The PIT he'd given his life to Gordon. Not that Gordon didn't deserve it of course — Jack would never have survived without him in the early days. The only thing Gordon demanded of his Favourites was loyalty and friendship, and that was a bargain Jack had been happy to honour. He would have been Gordon's friend even if he wasn't, well, Gordon. There had to be an explanation.

After a while he found that focusing on the painting helped him to calm down. The horse in the picture was white, and there was a man standing next to it wearing a red jacket. The artist seemed to have taken a lot more care painting the horse than the man. Whereas the horse had graceful, curving muscles and finely-detailed hair and eyes, the man looked square and blockish. His face was mostly covered by a low black hat and a beard, and his hands were behind his back. Jack knew that hands could be difficult to draw, and it seemed as though the artist couldn't be bothered to put them in. The background was a green field and a blue sky. It almost seemed like the horse belonged in a different painting, but had got lost somehow and ended up in the wrong place.

The door swung open, and another Claimant was shoved into the waiting room. Jack breathed in sharply. It was a girl. Boy and girl Claimants were never supposed to be together in the same room. Of course, the Laundry Dollies were girl Claimants, and some of the kitchen workers, too. But there were always other people around: Matrons, Potestates, other Claimants. You never got left properly *alone* with one.

She didn't look at him, and quickly sat down in the corner. She was bigger than Jack, and probably older. Her hair was knotted into tight dreadlocks, and she had wide, deep brown eyes. She also had a fresh cut on her lower lip that was bleeding freely onto her uniform. Likely she'd been fighting, or maybe one of the Potestates had done it. Either way, she wasn't

making any effort to stop the bleeding, or even making a sign that she realised she was hurt. She just stared straight ahead of her, her hands in her lap.

The girl carried on gazing into the middle distance for some time, and Jack suddenly felt very aware that he'd been staring at her. Blushing, he tried follow her example and looked at the painting. The more he looked at it the odder it seemed. The man wasn't even in proportion to the horse. He was too big. If he'd sat on it, his feet would've dragged along the ground. Jack had never seen a real horse, but he knew that they were big. The country boys sometimes talked about racing them, and how if you fell off and didn't roll away in time you could get trampled to death. The man in the painting could probably have trampled the horse. It wasn't right — it didn't make sense.

“It bugs you, doesn't it?”

Jack jumped. The girl was looking at him.

“It bugs me, too,” she continued.

“Yeah.” Jack wondered if Reaver was listening at the door. “The man's too big for the horse.”

“Yeah. It's stupid.”

They sat in silence again. Jack felt too awkward to look at the painting now, and he couldn't look at her without feeling a strange kind of embarrassment. He looked at his feet instead. His boots were nice and shiny — Jack was probably the only Claimant who had his own shoe polishing kit. Everything in it he'd made himself. The bag he kept it in was stitched together out of an old rain poncho; the brush was stolen from a Potestate's shaving kit; and the polish itself he'd cooked up in the kitchens from soot, grease and candle wax, set in an empty tobacco tin. He hoped that Reaver hadn't picked it up with the rest of his stuff.

The girl was still looking at him.

He looked up at her. Her lip was a mess.

“Here.” He pulled off the red rag around his arm and walked towards her. It was the only thing he had to hand that was anything like a bandage. “Put this on your lip.”

“It's fine. Don't worry about it. I want that fat H.E to see what those goons did to me. They said I was stealing from the infirmary, but it was them. I walked in on them popping their way through a month's worth of pain pills, and when I tried to call the Matron they did this to me.”

“Please. Just take it.”

Jack leaned forward and tried to press the rag to her face. She grabbed his wrist and yanked it aside.

“I said no, alright?”

She let go and Jack staggered backwards. He picked up his armband from the floor and sat back down. He breathed in through his nose, and out through his mouth. They sat in silence until the Potestates came to take Jack away. As he left, he glanced across to the girl, but she was looking at the painting.

## Chapter 2. Laundry Day

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*'For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions fierce*

*Strive here for Mastery'*

***John Milton – Paradise Lost***

Jack tried to focus on unpeeling the image of the horse from the back of his mind. It was impossible. Every time he thought he had it, the Head Employer would inevitably appear on its back, grinding his spurs into its flanks. The meeting had been strange. He'd expected deportation to some God forsaken corner of Paradise. He remembered when he was a kid, some of the old men talking about working in the gas mines in the Green Belt around London, or on the ships that maintained The Wall around the nearby coast. At least they got to come back home: if you got deported from The PIT you worked until you dropped dead of exhaustion.

But Jack was back in the dorm now. The objects that Reaver confiscated hadn't been returned, but he still had some of his charcoals and a few other precious items from his secret stash under the floorboards. He was surprised they hadn't searched harder. In fact, he was amazed that he'd been allowed back to the dorm at all. Hardly anyone who got taken to the H.E's office ever came back. He thought about the girl with the bloody lip and the brown eyes. Gordon had to be the reason he was still here — only Gordon had the kind of power that could stop the H.E from deporting a Claimant. But if Gordon was still protecting him, why had he been taken in at all?

Jack guessed you had to be tough to do a job like the H.E's, but when he saw the man up close he thought 'mean' might be a better description. When Jack went into the office, the H.E glared at him with cold, grey eyes. He didn't speak to him at first, but once Jack was in the office he motioned for him to stand in the centre of the room. Then the H.E pushed a button on his desk. The door opened and another man came in to the office.

The new man was very tall and quite thin, with exceptionally long, bony fingers. Despite his angular frame, his face was round, with soft features. A pair of delicate, steel-rimmed spectacles rested on his nose. He even had a faint smile on his face. The H.E didn't introduce the new man, but Jack got the sense that he didn't like him, leaning back in his chair with his arms folded, while the other man asked Jack a series of questions: 'What's your full name?'; 'How much do you weigh?'; 'Do you have a best friend?'; 'Do you know how many bytes are in a terabyte?'; 'What was your mother's maiden name?'; 'How often do you cry?'.



After the questions finished, Jack was asked to turn around and lift his arms in the air. Jack couldn't see, but it felt as though he was being measured with a length of tape. Then he was asked to swivel back around and to lean forwards. This time the tall man measured his head, using his long fingers and a strange set of metal callipers. When he was finished, the man winked at Jack, before turning to the H.E and saying: 'He's the one. He's perfect'. For what purpose he was 'perfect', Jack had no idea.

When he was taken out of the office, Jack felt confused but hugely relieved, right up until the moment that a hand grabbed him by the ear. Reaver dragged him down the stairs and along the network of corridors and gates that led to his dorm. At no point would he release Jack, and at no point would he stop grinning. When they arrived, he paraded Jack along the rows of beds, still clenching his ear in his fist. Then, when they reached Jack's bed, he let go of him and ordered him to make it. The others gathered round to watch, and Reaver let them. Nobody spoke while Jack struggled with the torn and trampled sheets. When he'd finally got them to look halfway respectable, Reaver leaned over to inspect them. He laughed, and then tore the sheets from the mattress all over again. He didn't stay to watch Jack remake them.

And that was it. Jack was alone on his bed, trying his hardest to draw a picture of a horse because he didn't know what else to do. The others didn't seem to know how to react either. A few of the bolder ones tried to approach him, but Billy was on hand to intercept them. Billy himself said nothing to Jack. Once Reaver had gone, he began a kind of one man patrol, slowly working his way up and down the dorm, glaring at the others one by one.

Jack was still drawing after lights out — there was just enough moonlight to see by. He looked down at his attempted doodles. He was almost out of paper now, and no closer to producing a decent sketch. The various four legged creatures he'd managed to scratch out looked thin and rakish, without the graceful curves of the horse in the painting. He couldn't get the head right either: it was too narrow and rat-like, with none of the dignity and force of the original. Every so often he tried to draw the man next to it, and here he had more success. In fact, he thought he'd improved on the other artist's work, making the man smaller and more in proportion, and bringing his hands out from behind his back. Hands were difficult, but Jack enjoyed the complexity. In his version, the man had one hand on the horse's bridle, while the other was holding a whip.

He needed to speak to Gordon, or at least to another Favourite, but there were none in this dorm — Gordon didn't like to have too many of them in the same place. That just left the Laundry Dollies: they could take messages to the other dorms if you were clever about how you slipped them your letter.

Jack looked at his drawings again and tried to pick out the best attempt. There was one where he felt he'd almost cracked it. The horse didn't look strong or noble, but it didn't look like a rodent either. If anything, it looked sad, and the man holding the whip almost looked like he was consoling it. He turned the paper over and wrote his message:

*G,*

*What is happening? Bottom of the lists. Taken to H.E. Need to see you. Help.*

*J.*

He folded the letter and tucked it into his sock. If he could make it to the morning, just get the letter to Gordon, everything would be alright again. As he drifted off to sleep, the horse from the painting flashed across his mind once again, but this time it was ridden by the girl from the waiting room, the blood still dripping from her lip. He hated blood. Blood belonged to his life before The PIT, before Gordon and Billy.

Jack woke up shivering, with the sound of breathing close by.

"Billy?"

"Yeah." Billy's voice sounded stretched and hoarse.

"Have you slept yet?"

"No."

"Then go to bed for God's sake. Why are you lurking about in the dark like that? Have you lost it or something?"

"Can't sleep."

"What if a Sandman patrol comes by and finds you out of bed? I don't need a bodyguard, Billy. I still got my armband." He let his voice rise above a whisper. "The others aren't dumb. They know what happens if they touch a Favourite."

"It's hard to see an armband in the dark, Jack."

"Go to sleep, Billy."

Jack closed his eyes and lay back on the bed. After a few moments he heard Billy walk over to his own bunk. He would never have admitted it, but Jack was glad his friend slept in the bed opposite his own. Anyone approaching Jack would have to pass Billy, too.

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Normally, Jack hated laundry days. The Laundry Room was a vast, windowless cellar packed with ten massive boilers. Each one was fenced by a circular trough, fed from overhead taps. The drains from the trough fed directly back into the boiler, so as the day wore on the water became dirtier and dirtier. The Laundry Dollies were the ones who kept the whole thing going, pushing their wire carts from trough to trough, collecting the clean laundry and dumping in the dirty stuff. Jack and the rest of the Claimants did the actual cleaning, scraping

the tangled bundles of sheets and uniforms with bars of soap that started the day the size of house bricks, but ended up like pebbles. It was hard work, but at least it was usually over by lunchtime, and you got to stand still for most of it. The Laundry Dollies never stopped moving — once the cleaning was finished they had to hang everything in the drying room, sort out every uniform and match it to the right Claimant in the right dorm, and then, once it was dry, bundle it all back into their carts and deliver it to every dorm across The PIT.

Jack couldn't wait for the first ice buckets to be brought out. It would be his opportunity to step away from the trough and hand over his letter — hidden from the Potestates by the steam. The heat was the worst part of laundry days. There was a ventilation system, but it could never cope with the volume of moisture that spilled out of the boilers. The only relief was when the Dollies came around with their buckets of melting ice for the Claimants to drink from, or to dunk their heads in. Only the Dollies themselves were allowed their own personal water.

As the only Claimants in The PIT with access to every dorm, Dollies were always valuable to anyone who needed to pass something to another part of the facility, including the girls' dorms. All of the Dollies were girls, hand-picked by the Wing Matron. It was technically a trustee position — a reward for good behaviour — but in reality it was used as a punishment. The official reward — entitlement to the cleanest bed linen — didn't make up for the relentless physical strain.

It seemed to take forever. There were almost no clocks in The PIT, so you could only ever tell the time by the daylight, or by the automated bells. The Potestates all had watches, but they wore them on the inside of their wrists. Jack sometimes tried to keep track of the passing minutes by signing songs in his head. For instance, he knew that all the verses of the Paradise Dream March took exactly four minutes and thirty seconds. He'd timed it once during the weekly assembly, where they had a big ornamental clock above the lectern.

Gordon was the one who'd taught him that trick. On his first day in The PIT Jack had been waiting in line for his medical — a scrawny eight year old standing in a cold corridor, wearing nothing but a pair of paper underpants. But there was one boy not in the line, leaning against the wall. The Potestates seemed not to see him, or at least they didn't look directly at him. He was perhaps only a couple of years older than Jack, but his youth and stature were disguised somewhat by his uniform which, unlike any that Jack had seen before or since, seemed to fit him perfectly. Everything about him was neat and in proportion, from his teeth to his neatly trimmed fingernails. He had good boots, too, with a shine on them. Jack liked people who cared about their shoes. It was the first time that Jack laid eyes on George Gordon.

That was when he told Jack about the singing trick. Jack had asked him how much longer they would have to wait before they got to go to bed, and Gordon told him about a hundred and twenty Happy Birthdays. He never explained what he meant, but Jack understood. That's how it always was with Gordon. He never explained anything, but Jack always understood.

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The water in the trough was already turning brown, and they weren't even a quarter of the way done. Could steam carry dirt? Jack wondered. If the water it came from was filthy, wouldn't some of the dirt get 'steam-ified', too? It certainly felt like the air in the Laundry Room had a gritty quality to it — something that stuck in the back of the throat. When the Dollies finally brought the water around, Jack almost forgot about the letter, he was so desperate to suck down some of the clean, cool liquid. But when Mole-face cut in line ahead of him, Jack didn't feel so thirsty. He pulled the folded paper from his sock and held it in a closed fist.

He knew the Dolly by sight but not by name. She'd taken messages for Jack before — a free service for Favourites, providing they put in a good word with Gordon. Jack couldn't remember if he'd ever honoured his side of the bargain, but it hardly mattered. Gordon always looked out for the Dollies no matter what. The Dolly clearly remembered Jack, and even gave a smile when the letter was tucked into her pocket. The red armband still had some of its power.

The water was already tepid by the time Jack took a drink — just a few brackish dregs with no sign of any ice left. It was still the best thing he'd ever tasted. He had to stop himself from licking the drops of condensation from the outside of the bucket.

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“Did you pass on the letter?”

They were at lunch. Billy managed to blag himself two plates of stew so he could share with Jack. As part of the ongoing External Reform Plan, the portion sizes had been getting smaller, and a lot of the protein had been replaced with some kind of fibrous vegetable — possibly Scud, going by the smell. As the last Claimant in the serving line, Jack barely got enough meat to choke on.

“Yeah. It was the tall one with the teeth. I don't remember her name.”

“Goof? Yeah, I know her. She used to steal cigarettes from Potestates. That's how she ended up on Dolly duty.”

Jack promised himself that he'd get Goof a whole crate of cigarettes once she brought back the letter from Gordon. Billy still seemed worried by the whole thing, but Jack knew that

was just his nature. Gordon always said the Dollies could be relied upon, and that was good enough for Jack.

The bell rang, and they both joined the lesson line. Jack took his place at the back with Mole-face, who gave him a sneering grin. Jack couldn't wait for Gordon to fix everything. He would make sure Mole-face was at the back of every line, at the bottom of every list, until the day he left The PIT. He would make him watch while Jack took first servings every day at every meal. He'd get Goof and the other Dollies to make sure he only ever slept on sheets from the last wash of the day. If he ever grinned at him like that again, he'd have him taken off the dental list altogether, and see how his smile held up with a mouth full of rotten teeth. Gordon was gonna fix everything.

The lesson was history. Mr Wambach was alright, but Jack thought his subject was lousy. Every lesson was the same. At the start of the class you got given a list of dates and events, which you would have to memorise so that you could repeat them at the end of the hour. Most of the time Wambach didn't even explain what the different events were, or how they were connected — he just said that history was about remembering rather than understanding. The only thing he seemed to enjoy talking about was the history of Paradise and The PIT. He seemed to look on the founding of the Paradise Institute for Transformation as the moment the world was fixed.

Jack was rubbish at memorising history. The trick he used to draw his pictures didn't work on facts and numbers and dates, just on the way stuff looked. The only art that Wambach was interested in was propaganda. He had big posters plastered up around the classroom, warning children to report on any suspicious persons who might be Enemy spies. Most of them had drawings of big dark shadows — pointed silhouettes of not-quite-human shapes. Jack had tried to copy one once, but found that he got bored of it very quickly.

The classroom also had a window that looked out onto The PIT's reservoir. Once, Jack had seen a family of ducks swimming on the surface. He found it easy to draw them.

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When he got back to the dorm, Jack couldn't stop smiling. The Dollies would be bringing their carts round soon, and a letter from Gordon with it. Everything was gonna get fixed. The others must have got to know about the letter somehow — maybe through Billy — because they were all looking at him like he was a Favourite again. It was respect, and awe, and just a little bit of fear. Even the idea of a letter with Gordon's signature on it was enough to put people back in their place. Some of the Claimants had probably never even seen Gordon in the flesh. He wasn't just a Claimant to them, or even a person — he was part of the PIT's structure, like the Potestates or the automated bells.

Jack sat down on his bed and pretended he couldn't hear the whispering around him. Instead, he took out his shoe polishing kit and started to work on his boots. He had developed a system for polishing that reduced waste to an absolute minimum. Right boot first. Two swirls of the brush in the polish. Front to back. Two more swirls. Back to front. Then the left boot — same process. The smell was terrific. It left a smoky but slightly chemical taste in his mouth. It was a bit like the booze some of the others tried to make with rotten vegetables and cleaning fluid. He'd only tried it once, but he could still remember how it made his teeth ache the next morning.

When he was finished, Jack placed the boots on the floor and lay back — his bare feet resting on the iron rung at the bottom of his bed. It was a sunny evening, and the light from the overhead windows felt warm on his toes. Billy crossed over from his own bunk and sat down next to him.

“Don't you think you're overdoing it?”

“What?”

“The 'I'm the king and you can all go to hell' thing.”

Jack grinned. “I don't know what you're talking about.”

“It makes you look smug.”

“And so what if I am smug? People have been smirking and whispering about me behind my back, and now they're gonna get what's coming to them. I *deserve* to be smug after the few days I've had.”

“Don't you think it would be smarter to keep your head down 'till you hear off Gordon? You won't make any friends in here acting stuck up. You told me that.”

Jack laughed off Billy's warnings. For someone who could be such a hothead, Billy had a real cautious streak. He didn't like to rock the boat. In fact, if somebody else tried to rock the boat, he'd usually try and beat them to death with one of the oars. Billy was a complex boy.

Jack had almost dozed off when the Dolly cart came around. The squeaking of the wheels cut through his comfortable haze and jerked him back into consciousness. He kept his eyes closed, however. It was important that he wasn't seen to be excited by the prospect of Gordon's letter. Everyone knew it was coming, and everyone knew what it meant. If Jack wanted to get maximum respect he had to seem as though he barely cared, like it was just one of those things, even though his heart felt like it was going to burst out of his chest.

Jack's bunk was at the end of the dorm, furthest from the door. His laundry would be the last delivery. He listened as the cart inched closer and closer, moving one bunk at a time. It was slow, but Jack savoured the delay, the building suspense he could feel in the air. With

every second the cart moved closer, and with it his redemption. In The PIT, a letter from Gordon could be as powerful as a sledgehammer, and he knew just where to swing it. He pictured the look on Mole-face's ugly face. You don't mess with a Favourite.

Finally, he heard the cart roll to a stop at the foot of his bed.

"You took your time," he said.

"Sorry."

Jack flinched. The voice was wrong. He sat up and opened his eyes. The Dolly in front of him was a short girl with red hair. He looked around for Goof, but there was no one, just a Potestate standing near the door. As he scanned the room his eyes fell on Mole-face, who was smiling ear to ear. Jack choked back a wave of bile.

"You got anything for me?" he said.

"Yeah," said the Dolly. "Same as I got for everyone. Brown sheets and a bunch of rags they got the cheek to call clothes."

"You don't have anything from one of your mates? From Goof?"

"Goof got taken up to the H.E this afternoon."

"What for?"

"How should I know? I'm not about to ask, either. Listen, are you gonna take this laundry or not?"

Jack took his bundle and placed it on the bed. He gave it a tentative shake, but nothing fell out. The Dolly trundled her cart to the door and left with the Potestate. Everything was quiet.

And then it wasn't.

The others rushed across the room, straight to Jack's bed. They knew exactly what they were looking for as they shoved Jack to the floor and flipped his bed onto its side. He watched as Mole-face — it had to be Mole-face — pried up the loose floorboard and began hauling out the contents of Jack's secret stash. One of the others must have seen Jack using it. Everything was dragged out: the little whittled sculptures, the hoarded chocolate rations, his drawings, his charcoals, the tin of tobacco he'd been saving, the stolen bottle of paraffin, his collection of stones from the Dome, and countless other treasures — all were pawed through and fought over, or else thrown to one side as worthless. Somebody even ripped the red rag from Jack's arm. Every time he tried to struggle to his feet, a hand or a boot shoved him back to the floor.

Suddenly, Jack heard a yell, and the boy nearest to him fell to the ground with a bang. Billy was standing over him, growling like a wild animal. The others turned in surprise, momentarily halting their raid. Jack climbed to his feet and stood behind Billy, trying to look

tough. There were at least ten boys in the gang, but Billy had a reputation in The PIT — nobody wanted to be the first one to lay a hand on him. They stood in silence for a full ten seconds. That fear might have been enough, Jack reflected later, if it hadn't been for Mole-face. As a New Boy, reputations meant nothing to him, and as soon as he made a move forward, the rest followed as one.

Jack fell to ground once more under the impact of the attackers. But it wasn't him the gang were aiming for, and he was able to roll aside. Billy was not so lucky. He hadn't fallen when Jack did, and for a few moments even seemed to be holding his own, throwing punches with the force of pistons, and kicking out viciously with his heavy boots. Ultimately though, one boy stood no chance against ten, and when Mole-face delivered a chop across the back of his knees, Billy went down hard and cried out for Jack to help him.

The blood was pumping in Jack's head, and he felt like his chest was on fire. He wanted to stand, to run, and to fight all at the same time. Gordon would have been brave enough to fight, Jack thought. But Jack was not Gordon. Billy called out again, and Jack saw Mole-face punch him square on the jaw.



## Chapter 3. George Gordon

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*'He's more myself than I am'*

*Emily Brontë – Wuthering Heights*

You didn't just become a Favourite overnight, Gordon used to tell him. You had to earn it. Being a Favourite had lots of benefits: first servings at mealtimes; better treatment from teachers and Potestates; protection from bullies.

The way it happened was strange, and in a way it all centred round Billy. Billy attached himself to Jack almost from the first day he arrived in The PIT, following him everywhere, even copying Jack's mannerisms and accent until Jack told him to stop. There was something in Jack that Billy admired. Perhaps it was because they were so different. Jack was small and clever, skilful with his hands, and was constantly making things and drawing pictures. In contrast, Billy was an ox, with a habit of misunderstanding everything he was told and crushing every small object he handled. Except for Felix. It had been Jack's idea that Billy take a spider for a pet, mainly as way of teaching him to be less clumsy. And it had worked, up to a point. When Felix was in his palm, Billy had hands like a surgeon, but as soon as he put him away the spell broke somehow, and he went back to having sausages for fingers.

One day, when Jack and Billy were still just eight and nine year old boys, they were playing together in The Dome, and Billy asked Jack to draw a picture of Felix. He didn't have any charcoal back then, so he used his finger to trace out an image in the dirt. It was pretty basic, but he had fun drawing the high, spiky legs and the big, bulbous eyes. Billy was delighted, and asked Jack to draw another picture, but this time of himself. Jack didn't really like doing self portraits, but Billy looked like he was going to throw a tantrum if he didn't.

As with the spider picture, Jack drew the image in the dirt. By now a small crowd had gathered round. Jack would learn as he got older that it wasn't usually a good idea to show an artistic side in The PIT. The other Claimants thought it was dumb, and the teachers and Potestates said it was against the rules. On this day, though, nobody objected, because there was an important person standing among the onlookers.

Jack didn't notice him at first, but when he shifted his position to put more details in the eyes, he noticed that the ring of Claimants surrounding him had a gap in it. When Gordon stepped into a crowd, gaps opened up around him. Jack had only seen him less than half a dozen times since he'd arrived in The PIT, and hardly shared more than a couple of sentences with the older boy, but he was already in awe of him. George Gordon was like nobody else in

The PIT. Even the fact that he had two names marked him out as special. Only the most powerful families in Paradise still used a 'surname'.

With Gordon watching on, Jack became a lot more tense, and he was conscious that he was fumbling over some of the finer details. Billy still grinned and nodded appreciatively at the end result, but Jack was furious with himself for not having done a perfect job. When Billy tried to reassure him, Jack shoved him away and stormed off to sulk on the other side of The Dome.

Jack was busily picking the dirt from underneath his fingernails when a shadow fell across him. At first he thought it was Billy, and he had a particularly foul insult on the tip of his tongue when he realised his mistake. It was Gordon.

Jack scrambled to his feet, muttering some words of apology for not showing proper respect, but Gordon just laughed and laid a friendly hand on his shoulder. He actually *liked* Jack's picture. Jack's talent was interesting. *Jack* was interesting. In Jack's dreams, his mother spoke to him like that.

Jack couldn't sleep that night. Gordon asked him to come to his dorm the next day and draw pictures with him. One of the Favourites was going to come and collect him in the morning, and he'd been told not to worry about his teachers missing him, or the Potestates. Billy, of course, was nervous about the whole thing. He didn't understand what was so impressive about Gordon. Jack tried to explain it to him, but Billy just didn't get it. He kept going on about how it was Jack that actually drew the picture. Billy was always dumb like that.

When morning finally arrived, Jack could hardly contain his excitement. His hands trembled so much he was afraid that he might not be able to draw properly. He needn't have worried. As soon as he was in Gordon's private room, all of Jack's nerves seemed to melt away. Gordon smiled and joked as though they'd known each other for years. Jack couldn't remember, later on, at what point they'd started drawing, but very soon they both had pencils in their hands — real pencils!

At that time, Jack had no idea how Gordon came to be in possession of such luxuries. Everything about the boy was strange and magnificent. How he had come to The PIT, and why he seemed able to wield so much power, were still a mystery. Later, he would learn that Gordon came from a very powerful family, but that he'd done something bad and been sent away to The PIT to teach him a lesson. All of The PIT's staff were terrified that one day Gordon would grow up and inherit his family's power, and so they let him and his Favourites do what they pleased. Gordon used his power to make things easier for the other Claimants: he got them cigarettes and chocolate, and got his Favourites to hand it out for free; he leant on

the Potestates to be more lenient with punishments; he got the Food Hall to dish up bigger portions. In a thousand little ways he fought back against The PIT, and made life that little bit better for everyone — especially his Favourites. But that was all to come. For now, Jack knew hardly anything about this boy, other than that he was the most impressive person he'd ever met.

Gordon wanted them both to try and do self portraits, so that Jack could help him improve his own skills. Initially, Jack was slightly uncertain. Most of his previous drawings had been scrawled in dirt or carved into wood, but after just a few minutes of working with the pencils Jack found that he instinctively understood how to brush and scratch in different ways, creating intricate details held together with bold sweeps of shadow.

Gordon did not seem to have the same instinct. His picture was alright, and the resulting image was recognisable as a self portrait, but it didn't have any sense of flair. Jack tried to instruct Gordon on the ways he could improve, but very quickly Gordon just began to laugh. Jack was going too quickly for him, he said. He was happy to just watch for a while and see if he could pick something up that way. They spent the next hour and a half like that: Jack drawing and Gordon watching over his shoulder. Sometimes Gordon would interrupt and ask questions, but mostly he stayed silent. At the end of it all, Jack had a self portrait that even he, with his exceptionally high standards, was happy with.

A week after their first meeting, Gordon sent for Jack again. Billy begged him to stay and help him to play with Felix — he'd invented a new game where they could toss the spider across the room to each other, and it would send out tendrils of web to stick to their hands. Jack had no time for stupid games, though. Gordon wanted him.

This time, Gordon didn't even try to draw his own picture. From the moment he arrived he let Jack work on his own. Just as he'd done before, Jack started a self portrait, and at first Gordon seemed content to let him get on with it. After a while though, he started to show signs of irritation, tapping his foot, letting out huffs of breath. In the end it was so distracting that Jack had to stop and ask what was wrong. To his credit, Gordon apologised for his behaviour and gave a smile. The problem, as he explained it, was that it was frustrating to see Jack being so limited in his ambition. The picture he was doing now was almost exactly the same as the one he'd done yesterday. Perhaps, Gordon wondered, Jack might draw a portrait of someone else. It seemed only natural to Jack that he should offer to draw Gordon. Gordon laughed — he loved to laugh — and protested very strongly, but finally allowed himself to be used as a model.

Jack found it easy to draw Gordon. Even though he was just two years older than Jack, he already had the bearing of a grown man, with big eyes and perfect white teeth. And yet,

when the picture was finished, Gordon did not seem totally satisfied. Perhaps Jack could try again? Next week? And so they went on, for as many as six or eight weeks. Every time he visited, Jack created at least two new portraits, and each time Gordon wasn't quite satisfied. When, at last, after over a dozen attempts, Gordon finally had one he was happy with, Jack was so grateful for the praise that he almost cried. Nobody said 'good job' quite like Gordon.

## Chapter 4. Divine Intervention

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*I do not believe in any religion, I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another'*

***Lord Byron – Letter to Francis Hodgson, 1811***

“The price of Dignity is Toil. Responsibility is the Reward of Pain. Adversity is Opportunity.”

Mr Wambach was leading the assembly today, striding up and down the high wooden stage like the prophets Jack learned about in culture class: mad-eyed, foamy-mouthed fanatics, certain that they could hear the voice of God.

Jack sighed. It was the same every week. The words changed sometimes, but the content never differed. Claimants bad, PIT good. Only The Enemy profits from idleness. Blahblahblah. Normally he passed the time by messing around with Billy at the back of the hall, but they hadn't spoken since Billy had called out for help in the fight. Jack had just stood there and watched.

It had been over a week since the letter from Gordon failed to arrive. Jack tried to send other ones, of course, but the Dollies wouldn't take them for him after what happened to Goof. After she'd gone to see the H.E, she never came back. The rumour was she'd been deported for carrying notes, but others said it was because she was stealing cigarettes again. To make matters worse, if Jack met another Favourite at mealtimes or out in The Dome, they wouldn't speak to him, and other Claimants would move in and push him away. He couldn't even sit in his old seat anymore. The assembly list had changed, and now he was right at the front, just behind the teachers. What had happened, and why? He needed to speak to Gordon, but there was no way he could get to him.

At least he didn't have to sit next to Mole-face, who'd been moved up the list after a fresh intake of New Boys. Most of them were just kids, maybe eight or nine years old, and were too young to know what Jack's isolation meant. Generally he just scowled at them and tried to act tough, so they pretty much left him alone.

“The nation was foundering on the brink of collapse!” Wambach was really warming up now: thumping his clenched fists on the lectern as he marched past it. “The jobless hordes, encouraged by The Enemy and their ‘government’, bemoaned the lack of work and begged for charity, blaming mechanisation and economic forces for their plight. Idle fools! They lacked the vision and the courage to grasp the Opportunity hidden in their Adversity. But then

it all changed, my young ones. Some of our great ancestors had the divine inspiration to rise up and create Paradise on Earth!”

Jack cast his eye around the room. There wasn't a boy there who didn't have a crooked back and heavy black rings under his eyes. He pitied The Enemy, banished away up in The North. If Paradise was the greatest place on Earth, he could only imagine what it must be like elsewhere. No wonder they were so full of hate.

The rhetoric went on for a good while longer before Wambach eventually stepped down, red in the face and breathing heavily. Then it was the turn of several PIT bureaucrats to make announcements relating to their various departments. The new Chief Administrator was going to be imposing a lot of new ideas when he was fully installed. Jack didn't know what all these things would be, but he could guess: harder work, more punishments, and less good food.

The new Chief Administrator himself wasn't present, but they were told that he would be formally introduced in a couple of week's time. In order to prepare for this event, the Wing Matron led them through half a dozen rehearsals of the Paradise Dream March and the Song of Working Welcome. Then it was time for breakfast.

Because of the fresh intake of New Boys, the Food Hall was running out of table space. They even brought in some extra folding tables, which they jammed in between the already cramped aisles. Claimants had to fight each other for the best seats, with some even sitting in the surrounding corridors with bowls balanced on their knees. As the last boy on the serving list, Jack had the worst chance of getting a decent spot, but he was quietly pleased with his solution.

At the back of the Food Hall there was an old storage room, which was mostly used as a waste dump. The kitchens stocked all the leftover slop in there at the end of every service until the last day of the month, when the sanitation pipes were opened up. The stink was so bad that nobody even considered eating in there. So, every mealtime, Jack collected his food and took it into the storeroom, with most of the other Claimants laughing at him as he passed them. Once inside, Jack closed the door behind him and shoved a broom against the handle to stop anyone following him.

Jack loved making things, especially when the things he made solved a problem. Over the years he'd made waterproof trousers out of tarpaulin scraps, table tennis bats from window shutters, and once even an umbrella from coat hangers, though that had been confiscated before he could finish it. But none of these efforts pleased him quite as much as his nose bag. The mothballs that the Dollies stuffed in the pockets of the Claimants' uniforms reeked. Jack didn't know what they were soaked in, but he wouldn't have wanted to have put

one near a naked flame. After smelling one for more than twenty seconds, Jack's whole sense of smell shut down. Wrap two of them in a napkin and strap the bundle under your nose with a length of elastic, and you could sit on top of a dunghill in high summer and not blink, or even eat disgusting PIT food in a cupboard full of rotting waste.

One of the things Jack realised while hiding in the cupboard was how little his absence was noted. As long as he was counted in at the start of the meal and out at the end of it, nobody in authority appeared to mark the fact that he wasn't there. It was both a freeing sensation and a depressing one. On the one hand, in a room full of hundreds of people who disliked him he was able to slip away into peace and quiet. On the other, he was alone, and he had no friends. In the dorm it was different. He had nowhere to hide. Mole-face in particular had started making a sport of tormenting him whenever he had a moment of free time, coming over to his bunk and pulling apart his sheets, or playing piggy in the middle with his stuff. In the past, Jack would have asked Billy for help, but he couldn't do that anymore. In fact, he could hardly stand to look at Billy — not after what happened. Not after he failed him.

A lot of the others seemed to be gathering around Mole-face as some sort of leader now that there was no Favourite in the dorm. It was weird for a New Boy to get so much respect, but he was big and strong and cruel, and also quite clever. Not so much in lessons, but in the way he spoke to people. He could pick out someone's insecurities very quickly, and either flattered or bullied them depending on what he wanted. As a result, his little crew consisted of the most bitter and twisted Claimants: the ones with the most fragile egos and volatile tempers. And of course Jack would be their primary target — the fallen prince. He thought about how he'd smiled at them when he thought Gordon's letter was coming. Billy had warned him about that.

But Jack had his refuges. He couldn't always hide in cupboards, and although his secret stash under the loose board had been discovered, he'd found a place to hide his drawings, and the few other bits he'd been able to salvage. If he waited until dark, and moved really slowly, he discovered he could unscrew the top of his bedpost without waking anyone up. The hollow cavity inside was perfect for hiding rolled up pieces of paper, and the charcoals he could wedge in sideways to stop them dropping to the bottom, or stick them to the sides with a bit of smuggled glue from the workshop. He didn't actually draw much in the dorm anymore, except when there was enough moonlight to see by and everyone else had gone to sleep.

But it was with those drawings — done in the half darkness when he could barely keep his eyes open — that he felt he did his best work. He usually tried to draw from life, or from the images that he managed to stick to the back of his mind, but now he had started to

draw from his *imagination*. It was odd. He'd never really tried it before, but it seemed to make sense now that he'd been abandoned. The world was crap, so why not try to imagine a better one? At first he'd taken some of his old stuff and tried to make it fantastical, like putting wings on horses, or changing pictures of lizards into dragons. But it didn't look good — it looked like the world as it was but with bits stuck on. Then he'd tried drawing stuff from scratch, as crazy as he could think of, like aliens with bug eyes, or strange ten-legged elephants with snakes for tails. But they just seemed childish.

Then, without really thinking about what he was doing, he started drawing a picture of himself, but in a pair of normal trousers, and a shirt like he'd worn before he came to The PIT. After a while he drew in some grass and a few trees. Then he put in some other people, like Billy, and an older woman who he thought could have been his mother, though she had died long before he was old enough to know her face. For some reason, he drew her with the same eyes as the girl from the waiting room. It was a scene that had never happened, that could never happen: a work of pure imagination. But it seemed so ordinary that it made him want to scream. Then he'd started drawing pictures of him and Gordon, not outside, but in The PIT. Jack still had his armband, and Gordon was hugging him. And then he drew a picture of a girl, this time unmistakably the one from the waiting room, and instead of scowling at him like she had in real life, she was smiling at him in a way that nobody had ever smiled at him before. After that he decided to ration himself to one piece of imagination a night. Any more might drive him mad.

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It was the first science lesson anyone could remember having in years. It was still over a week before the new Chief Administrator was to be introduced, but he had already started changing things, and even Jack managed to feel a little bit excited about the prospect of bringing science back. In the old lessons they'd got to do experiments and dissections and stuff, until one of the Claimant's had stuck a scalpel into a Potestate's leg.

They didn't have a lab exactly, but one of the old libraries had been stripped out and fitted with workbenches, and some of the shelves had been stacked up with plastic tubes and beakers. In reality, most of this equipment wouldn't get used, but it made the place look the part, as did the chemical stained white coats they had to wear during classes.

The new science lessons were going to be taught by a woman called Miss South. She was new to The PIT, and she always seemed to have at least two Potestates trailing around after her wherever she went. Like the Claimants, she wore a white lab coat, but hers was clean and had silver buttons on the cuffs. She stood at the head of the class, flanked by her guards, with a sheet covering something on the desk in front of her.



“Welcome Claimants,” she said. “New science will be replacing old science.” She smiled, showing off her unnaturally white teeth. “The most unnecessary elements — the dissections and so forth — have been discarded. Myself and the incoming Chief Administrator agree that, while it is important you understand your place in the evolutionary pecking order, it is not useful for you to have any in-depth knowledge of biological science.”

Jack could feel the mood of the room dampen. The only thing maintaining any kind of high spirits was the white sheet covering the desk. Mrs Bryatt, the old teacher, used to keep the ‘specimens’ under a sheet like that, so whatever was under it now might yet be worth seeing.

“That is why,” Miss South continued, “new science will be focused on the parts of science that matter to *you*.” With a flourish, she whipped off the white sheet covering her desk, revealing a few pieces of plastic and a tiny circuit board. There was also a selection of small tools. At the same time, five more Potestates came in, carrying large cardboard boxes, which they dumped at the back of the classroom. “In the boxes that have just been delivered, you will find a set of components identical to the ones on my desk. Properly assembled, they combine to make a scientific instrument, the use of which is not important to you. Now, gather round and I will demonstrate how these pieces can be put together with the help of a friend. Once you have memorised it, I will separate you into pairs and allocate you a set of tools, which *must be returned at the end of the class!*”

In the end, Miss South let everyone choose their own partner. Jack stayed seated and waited to be picked last. He watched the others pair up around him, until his eyes rested on Billy. Billy went from Claimant to Claimant, only to find himself blocked out by a turned back, or a shake of the head. He even asked the New Boys, but the others dragged them away from him. Finally, there was only Billy and Jack left. Jack asked if he could make up a three, but Miss South said no.

At first they worked in silence, occasionally passing the other some piece of kit, or holding a screw in place. The devices they were making looked like calculators, but with two metal prongs poking out of one end. They couldn’t turn them on without the battery pack, which was the only piece they weren’t provided with.

“What do you think they do?” said Billy.

Neither of them looked at the other. It was the first time they’d spoken in days. Billy still had a black eye.

“They look a bit like detonator switches,” said Jack. “We used to get shipments of bombs coming through the docks when I was a kid. They always had little switches like

these.” He shrugged and picked up a spanner. “Or maybe they don’t do anything, and this is just to keep us busy.”

Billy nodded. “Why haven’t you been talking to me?”

Jack didn’t answer. How could you make a guy like Billy understand *shame*? They finished the work in silence. Afterwards it was time for lunch. Jack locked himself in his cupboard and drew some new imagination pictures. They were like the others, but this time Billy wasn’t in any of them.

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Somebody was telling Gordon lies about Jack. That had to be it, because Jack knew he hadn’t done anything wrong. He hadn’t been badmouthing Gordon, he hadn’t been snitching, and he hadn’t been running anything on the side. Being a Favourite didn’t come with many rules, but loyalty was the key, and it ran in both directions.

Jack’s plan was to see Gordon face to face and explain everything to him. Jack and Gordon understood each other on a level nobody else could appreciate. If he could just see him in person then he could fix everything, and no amount of lies could stop Gordon from seeing the truth. It was a good plan, but it lacked in one fairly crucial detail: how to actually pull it off.

He’d tried talking to the other Favourites but they just wouldn’t listen. It was probably one of them telling Gordon lies in the first place, and in any case they would be glad to get rid of Jack. They were all Favourites, but Jack was Gordon’s *favourite*. If Jack could just see Gordon, he knew he could straighten everything out.

In the end it was God that delivered the solution. Or at least God’s representative. Officially, The Paradise Institute for Transformation was a secular organisation, but it didn’t object to Claimants practicing State Christianity. A lot of people still liked religion, especially back in Jack’s home town of London, where there were still a lot of the big old churches.

Mr Swedenborg was The PIT’s chaplain, a fat man with a white beard who wasn’t technically a priest, but out of all the PIT staff he most looked the part. Every other Sunday afternoon he led a general service in the Assembly Hall, and in the morning a Claimant had to volunteer go to Swedenborg’s office and help him prepare. Unsurprisingly, Jack seemed to be stuck at the top of the volunteer list.

“Can’t you fasten it any looser, child?”

“Sorry, sir.”

Jack was helping Mr Swedenborg into his official robes. They had been inherited from the previous chaplain, who had been quite a bit leaner than Mr Swedenborg. They were fastened at the back by a series of buckles and straps.

“Have you got my sermon there, child?”

Jack picked up the sermon from the desk. Swedenborg had dictated it to him just an hour before, letting Jack use the electric speech-presser to type it up. Most of the PIT’s paperwork was usually done by hand or on steel typewriters because of the unreliable electricity supply.

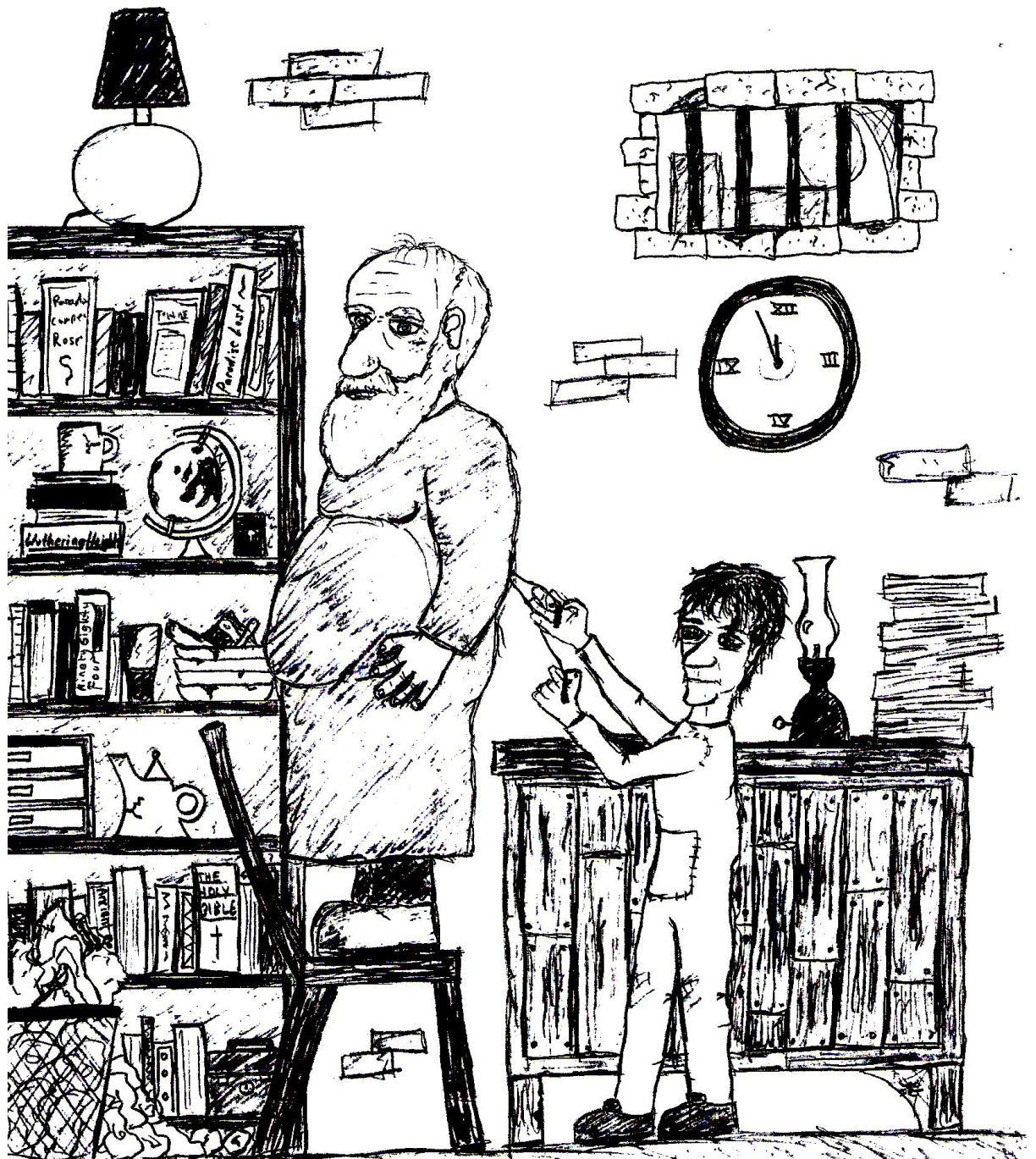
“The cleaning things are in the cupboard in the corner, child. Please don’t steal anything because Mr Abrahms — the Potestate standing outside the door — will search you when you leave.”

The chaplain barged out of the room and slammed the door behind him. Jack heard the lock crunch into place a few seconds later. Swedenborg’s office was quite big, though the clutter and the dirt made it feel claustrophobic. The floor was covered in plates and food wrappers, and there were stacks of paperwork and old sermons piled up next to the desk. There was a small window on one wall, but it was heavily barred and didn’t let in any air, while the other walls were covered in a mixture of anti-Enemy posters and poorly constructed shelving.

The cleaning stuff was where the chaplain had said it would be: an old wire broom missing most of its bristles, a bucket and mop, a water spigot, and a few burlap sacks already stuffed with rubbish. He started by picking up all the dirty plates and cutlery and putting them in the bucket, which he filled with water and some soap powder. Then he stuffed as much of the wrappers and other bits of waste as he could into the sacks. He didn’t dare throw away the paperwork, so he just shuffled it around into slightly neater piles. Once the floor was clear, he scraped the wire broom across the thin carpet to try and drag up some of the dust, which he then pushed into a little pile.

As he was putting the equipment away, he noticed that some of the dust had disappeared. The cupboard wasn’t carpeted like the office, but instead showed the bare floorboards that could be found in all the Old Buildings. The dust had slipped through a large gap between two planks. Jack poked at the floorboards with his foot, and found that one of them was loose. Not really thinking about what he was doing, he knelt down and started to jimmy up the board with his fingertips. It worked almost instantly. The wood felt damp, and it crumbled in his hand. The office was on the ground floor, and it had a deep crawlspace underneath.

Still not really thinking, Jack pried up another couple of boards and lowered himself down into the emptiness below. It was dark. The only light came from the hole above him and what looked like a few gaps in the floorboards somewhere deeper in. Swedenborg’s office was fully carpeted, so that could only mean that the crawlspace extended out into the corridor.



JACK AND SWEDENBORG

Figure 2.

He climbed back out and looked at the clock. Swedenborg had only been gone forty five minutes. He'd be back in an hour and a half. Jack felt his heart speed up, and the back of his neck was sweating. He suddenly felt very nervous. He started singing Happy Birthday in his head.

Back in the hole, he began moving towards the light from the corridor. Once he was there, he could hear the Potestate above. Jack looked to his left and saw — by the cracks of light between the boards — that the crawlspace extended along the whole length of the passage. He knew then why he felt so excited. Gordon's dorm was near here. Jack had been there many times — he'd even lived there for a little while. It was barely one hundred metres away: down this corridor, through a door on the left, and then along a short passageway.

He inched forwards as quietly as he could, hoping not to alert the Potestate. At one point a rat, or some other furry rodent, crawled across the back of his hand, but he bit his lip and didn't make a sound. As he'd hoped, the crawlspace continued once he reached the left turn. His heart began to beat even faster, and the back of his overalls were now plastered with sweat. He was just metres from Gordon's dorm. He knew that he wouldn't be able to get straight up into the dorm itself, as it had stone flagging, but as he suspected he was able to reach the underside of the maintenance room a little further down the corridor. All he would have to do is break through the boards, walk a few steps down to the dorm entrance and knock.

Jack turned and crawled back to the chaplain's office as quickly as he could manage. When he returned from the service, Swedenborg was impressed with how dirty and sweaty Jack seemed. He hadn't realised how filthy the office must have been. He promised Jack that next week he'd see if he could get him one of the old vacuum machines to help with the dusting.

## Chapter 5. An Empty Corridor

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*'Fear overcame my good will'*

*Dante Alighieri - Inferno*

Trying to firm up the details of the plan was complicated. Swedenborg had been so impressed with Jack that he'd made his role as personal assistant an official trustee position. The decision would be reviewed once the new Chief Administrator was formally installed, but the chaplain seemed fairly confident he wouldn't be overruled. This meant that Jack was now with Swedenborg for an hour every day of the week: in the evening on weekdays and in the afternoon on Sundays. Although this theoretically gave Jack more access to the crawlspace leading to Gordon's dorm, in practice Swedenborg left the office so rarely that it was very hard to get anywhere near it.

Most of Jack's duties involved cleaning up. Swedenborg himself didn't seem to have much to do with his evenings other than eating and sleeping. Sometimes he read, or made notes for his sermons, mostly using his slim paperback edition of the Authorised Paradise Proverbs of Work and Prayer. Often the old preacher would read some of his favourite passages aloud: 'Proverbs 12:11 He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment'; 'Proverbs 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied'; and his favourite of all, 'Proverbs 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labour'. This last one he often repeated, and even made Jack copy it down and take it away with him for private reflection. Jack used the reverse side of the paper to draw another portrait of the girl from the waiting room — the one with the brown eyes. He wasn't sure if this counted as diligent behaviour, because Swedenborg hadn't told him what it meant.

There were times, though, that Jack was left alone in the office, either on a Sunday, when Swedenborg went to deliver his sermon, or because he was called away to do some pastoral work. There were deaths in The PIT, and the chaplain often had to preside over a cremation. In those hours, Jack would plan and prepare. He had worked out through repeated attempts that he could make his way to the floorboards under the maintenance cupboard in less than ten minutes. The boards themselves came up fairly easily, but the door to the passageway was locked by a bolt from the outside. He knew that he'd be able to find a file narrow enough to work through the gap in the door, but stealing it could be dangerous, and even if he got hold of it and broke through the lock, there was no way he could tell if there

was a Potestate stationed on the other side. More than anything, he just wanted someone to talk it through with — someone to tell him that he could do it. But he had nobody.

Billy seemed to have gotten the message, and avoided Jack if he could. He preferred to sit and play with Felix now, though every now and then Jack caught Billy staring over at him. It made his chest ache. If ever the class needed to partner up then the teacher would have to force someone to go with Jack. Mole-face's gang of followers seemed to grow every day, and they took every opportunity to humiliate Jack in lessons and in his free time. The only places he could relax were with Swedenborg or during meals, when he locked himself away in the waste store. In those times, when he wasn't working on his plan, he drew. Now that he worked in the chaplain's office he had an inexhaustible supply of paper, and he'd even managed to steal a couple of pencils. There was no real logic to what he chose to draw: sometimes it was portraits, or landscapes he remembered from The Dome and from looking out of windows. But he almost always added in things from his imagination now. Things that made the world better than it really was. Especially the girl with the brown eyes.

Another thing he had started doing was drawing things from before The PIT, from his very earliest memories. This was hard, because it felt like such a long time ago, and there were a lot of things he didn't want to remember: his father, and the day he left. But some things kept floating to the surface, like London, with its jagged, angular skyline, and the great muddy scar of the Thames Ditch. He drew the big lines of people queuing for the Work Shuttles, and the big yellow helicopters that flew out from the SecuriCorp building to patrol The Wall, or to drop bombs on The Enemy.

Sometimes he tried to imagine The Wall itself, and to commit it to paper: hundreds of miles of steel wires strung across the seas around Paradise, fixed to the sea bed itself with enormous screws driven into the rocks. He'd once spoken to an old man who'd worked on one of the maintenance teams, and he'd said The Wall only came onto dry land for a two hundred mile stretch in the very north of Paradise, separating them from the armies of The Enemy. The old man had never seen The North himself, but people told terrible stories about life up there, and the evil ways in which The Enemy lived. Teachers, and other people in authority, were particularly fond of these kinds of tales, and a lot of the time the things they said sounded like fairy stories, designed to frighten little kids into behaving. But there must have been some truth in them. Why else build The Wall, other than to keep The Enemy out? Why drop bombs on them? Unless they really were out there, and really were dangerous.

Jack had never met an Enemy before — very few people had — but he tried to draw one anyway. Sometimes they appeared in his mind as savage cavemen, hunting mutant wildlife for food and sleeping under tainted clouds, desperately trying to break their way back

through the gates to Paradise. At other times he saw them as a race of forgotten kings: proud, strong and beautiful, waiting for their time to come again.

Gordon used to talk about The North a lot. He claimed his ancestors had originally been from there. Jack wasn't even sure where his own parents were from, let alone his ancestors. But of course, Gordon was different from Jack: Gordon was a Creator. Most normal people never heard that word, but Gordon said that's what they called each other in private. Creators were the ones who owned Paradise, who made it work. Not Potestates, or silly bureaucrats like the H.E, but the ones who were really *in charge*.

The history of Paradise and the Creators wasn't something that really interested Jack — the world was as it was. Gordon had tried to explain it to him as best he could on many occasions. The way he told it, there was a group of rich and powerful folk who got jealous of the Enemy government's strength. These others roused the ordinary people to start a revolution, armed them with money and weapons, and then took the power for themselves. That's why they called each other Creators, because they had started the whole thing — they *created* Paradise.

Jack couldn't imagine how the world could have been much worse than it was now. Of course, you never heard people complaining too much about the way things were. Most people said they were proud of Paradise, but you could never tell how honest they were being. The Creators had complete control, and there was no use whinging about it. That's why Gordon was able to do as he pleased in The PIT — nobody, not even the meanest Potestate, wanted to say 'no' to a Creator. Even a fallen one.

One day Gordon would have to leave The PIT. In three years he would be nineteen, the official age of adulthood, and Jack couldn't imagine that he'd be put to work like the others. He was too good for that. Gordon had a destiny.

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The metal file Jack needed to break into the corridor on Gordon's dorm was in a crate of tools in steel-work class. Mr Cripslock, the teacher responsible for maths and metal, kept a close eye on the Claimants around anything that could be used as a weapon, and just about everything stored in the tool crate had the potential to stab, bruise, graze, slice or mangle. Whenever a Claimant needed a tool they had to first ask Mr Cripslock, sign a ledger saying they had taken the tool, and then sign it back in at the end of the lesson, all under the supervision of one of the Potestates, who also had to sign the ledger. Jack knew Claimants weren't as violent as all the regulations seemed to suggest. You were much more likely to die of a virus, or a beating from the Potestates, than you were from an attack by a fellow Claimant. Jack suspected the real reason behind rules like these was to protect The PIT itself.



Today they were making chains. They weren't the thick kind used for shackles, but thin, twisted pieces of wire linked and pressed together with a set of pliers. They were making them in individual metre long strips, not that different to the paper clip chains they sometimes made in other lessons when the teachers weren't looking. Jack couldn't imagine what these chains were for — maybe some kind of machine component — and in any case he didn't really care. All he cared about was finding a way to get his hands on the file. In the end it was Mole-face, of all people, who provided the opportunity. Jack was alone in the corner of the room nearest the tool box, desperately trying to figure out a reason he'd need a heavy metal file to work a small piece of wire that he could almost snap with his fingers, when he felt a slap across the back of his head.

“Working hard, golden boy?”

“Not too hard.” Jack straightened his back and cast a darting glance towards Mr Cripslock. He was looking the other way. “Do you want something, Mole-face?”

“Don't call me that.” Mole-face was smiling, but Jack could see his fingers twitching.

“What should I call you?”

Mole-face placed a hand on Jack's shoulder. “You can call me ‘sir’ if you like? Or ‘boss’...or ‘chief’. What did you used to call your other master?”

“I called him by his name. I still don't know yours.”

Instead of answering, Mole-face turned and looked at Billy. Billy was bending the wires together with his clumsy fingers, a look of utter concentration on his face. “Look, he's doing my chains for me the dumb animal. Just cos I asked him to. I can see why you kept him as a pet.”

“Go to hell, Mole-face.”

“I told you. Don't call me that!”

Mole-face shoved Jack so hard that he fell to the floor. Mr Cripslock turned at the sound, and the Potestate ran across the room and grabbed hold of Mole-face's collar.

“What in Paradise is happening here?” said Cripslock. “Why are you away from your workbench, Claimant?”

The teacher told the Potestate to take Mole-face out into the corridor, and then started lecturing the rest of the class about behavioural standards. Jack lay still. He had rolled under his workbench when he landed, and the air had been knocked out of his lungs. It wouldn't be long, he guessed, before his absence was noticed, but he was enjoying the chance to rest, and to savour the feeling of having got under Mole-face's skin. There would be payback for that, he knew, but if his plan to see Gordon worked he'd have payback of his own.

Cripslock was still droning on, and the Potestate was still out in the corridor with Mole-face. Nobody had noticed that Jack wasn't there. The tool box was only a few feet away, and there was nobody guarding it. Rolling quietly onto his stomach, Jack glanced out across the classroom. The Claimants were focused on Cripslock, who was writing out rules on the chalkboard, with his back turned. Jack probably only had a matter of minutes to try and get to the file.

Very gingerly, Jack pulled himself up onto all fours and tried not to breathe. His chest hurt where Mole-face had shoved him, and holding his breath was painful. Wincing, he crawled out from under the workbench and started to move across the concrete floor towards the tool box. Cripslock was reading the class rules aloud as he wrote them out, and he was already up to ten: 'no singing or rhythmic clapping'. There were twenty five rules in total. Jack desperately wanted to move faster, to stand up and run, but he knew that his only chance was to be as quiet as possible, so he bit down on his lip until he could taste blood.

Finally, he reached the box. Cripslock was on rule eighteen: 'No sharing or other acts of communism'. Jack had to stifle a nervous giggle. The box was just that: a box. It wasn't separated in to useful little compartments, it was just a small wooden crate filled with random tools. Jack could see the file he needed, but it was underneath a couple of lump hammers. If he wanted to get to it, he'd have to move them without making a sound. Slowly, he lifted the first hammer and placed it to one side. It made an almost inaudible 'clink', but in Jack's ears it was like a pane of glass exploding. He looked up, but still nobody had noticed him. The next hammer was smaller, but the end of its handle was resting under a screwdriver, meaning he had to slide it out while making sure the screwdriver didn't move. 'Rule twenty one: No eye contact for longer than fifteen seconds with any Claimant or member of staff. Dispensations may be granted for ophthalmological inspections.'

The second hammer slipped out without a problem, and Jack placed it next to its partner. Finally, he picked up the file. It was perfect — just the right size to slide through the gap in the cupboard's doorframe. He slipped it into his overall pocket and started to move back towards his bench. He froze. Cripslock was still writing, and the class were still focused on him. All the class except one. Billy was staring at him. The only thing Jack could do was stare back — his legs had stopped working, and he could feel the blood draining out of his face. Eventually, through a massive effort will, Jack managed to force himself to move, not his legs, but his head. He shook it. Billy blinked and frowned, as if he didn't understand. Jack shook his head again, and this time Billy seemed to grasp his meaning. He opened his mouth as if to say something, and Jack felt his heart stop. And then, frowning again, Billy closed his mouth and turned around. Jack breathed out.

He moved back over to his workbench just as Mr Cripslock read out rule twenty five: ‘Stealing is forbidden. Anyone caught stealing, or helping another Claimant to steal, will be dealt with in the cruellest possible manner.’

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It had to be a Sunday. It was the only time Swedenborg would definitely be away from his office, and the only time that Jack could guarantee Gordon would be in his dorm. Gordon hated religious sermonising, and took a lot of pleasure, Jack knew, in spending his Sunday afternoons alone, so as to ‘enjoy his day of rest’. The wait had been painful. It wouldn’t be long now until the new Chief Administrator was officially installed. If he decided to overrule the chaplain, and take away Jack’s job as assistant, there might never be another chance to execute the plan.

Jack’s preparation had been perfect. After he’d smuggled the file out of the workshop in his boot, he’d hidden it behind a set of pipes in the waste cupboards, ready to collect when he needed it. He’d worked out his timings down to the second, and had even practiced working the file through a metal bolt during mealtimes, using an old steel chair leg as a substitute. Everything was ready. Everything was in place. All that was left was to do it.

The first part of the day dragged on so slowly that Jack felt like screaming. Swedenborg, as usual, hadn’t finished writing his sermon, and was still fiddling around with phrasing five minutes before he was supposed to be in the Assembly Hall.

“Do you think ‘thou’ is too archaic a pronoun for the boys to understand, child?”

“Couldn’t say, sir,” said Jack, furiously polishing a shelf that was already gleaming.

“Don’t know what a pronoun is to be honest. Or an archaic.”

“I’ll leave it in I think. The meaning should be obvious from the context.”

Jack ground his teeth. “That’s probably right, sir.”

“What do you think of the theme, though, child? I really do value your insight. Is ‘salvation’ a topic that appeals to you?”

The image of the girl in the waiting room flashed across Jack’s mind. It had been weeks since he’d seen her, but still he couldn’t stop thinking about her.

“I don’t know, sir. We’ve all got to have hope I suppose.”

Swedenborg looked slightly alarmed at this. “Hope you say? No, no. That isn’t what I was going for at all. What has hope got to do with salvation? The point of salvation isn’t to *inspire* hope — it’s to make it *unnecessary*! Hope can lead to...irrational actions. The certainty of salvation means actions are not required. We simply get our heads down, work hard and await the inevitable. Hope? No, no, child, this won’t do at all. I’ll start over...”

“No!” Jack hadn’t meant to raise his voice, but the thought of Swedenborg delaying any further terrified him. It would destroy his plan. “I didn’t mean ‘hope’, sir. Not as in what you mean, anyway. No, hope isn’t something you chase after. It’s like you said about salvation, sir: if you’ve got hope then you don’t need actions. If you’re hoping things will change, then it means you’re not doing anything to make change happen.”

Swedenborg nodded sagely. “You’re a wise young man, Jack. It’s a shame your circumstances could not have been different. Rest assured however, you will get your salvation the same as the rest. Or at least, I *hope* so.”

After the chaplain left, Jack set to work. His first task was to clean the room enough that he couldn’t be accused of having done nothing while Swedenborg was away. The quickest way to do this was simply to rearrange the stacks of paper into neater piles, and to hide any mess in the back of the cupboard. Once this was done, he immediately pried up the floorboards and began his countdown. By now he was able to move through the narrow crawlspace swiftly and quietly. Mr Abrhams, the Potestate who guarded the door, was completely oblivious to the movements beneath him. Jack grinned to himself as he pushed his way up into the maintenance cupboard. It was so easy. He was so close.

Jack had picked his file well, fitting it through the gap in the door frame and biting into the slender bolt on the other side with ease. He worked it slowly, conscious of the noise of rasping metal. His practice on the steel chair leg had taught him the importance of maintaining a fluid rhythm: back and forth, back and forth. If he stopped half way through a motion the file would stick, and he’d have to wrench it free and risk making a really loud noise. He’d stolen an oily pat of Paradise Margarine to grease it with if this happened, but he’d rather not have to take the chance.

Swedenborg’s delay in leaving for his sermon had put Jack behind schedule. He’d already been gone half an hour, and he had one hour at most before he’d have to be back in the office. Jack was almost beginning to panic, when at last he felt a sudden snap, and the file nearly slipped from his grasp. The bolt was severed. Jack breathed in through his nose, and out through his mouth. Listening carefully for the sound of footsteps, he put his hand on the doorknob and gently eased it open. The corridor beyond was empty. He knew the stretch of hallway well, and although he couldn’t see it without actually stepping over the threshold, Jack knew that if he walked just a few paces to his left he would be outside Gordon’s dorm. He began to move forward when he heard a creak.

He froze. The cupboard door opened outwards, meaning he couldn’t see anything to the right of him until he moved out into the corridor. In his mind he had a sudden vision of Reaver, the old Potestate, hiding behind the door. He pushed the door forward another inch

and waited. Nothing. Jack shook himself. It was just nerves. Parts of The PIT were ancient, and he well knew the kinds of noises old buildings could make. He'd spent many nights lying awake in dorms that seemed to whisper in the wintertime, as cold breezes worked their way through every nook and cranny, or groaned and squealed as wooden beams swelled and twisted during a hot summer.

There was another creak. Jack's mouth became bone dry in seconds, and he felt the soft hairs on the back of his hands prickle. *It's just the wind, or a rat in the walls*, he thought. But his legs wouldn't move. His mind kept flashing forward to what would happen to him when he was caught: deportation to a gas mine in the Green Belt, or one of the factories in Paradise Falls. In that moment, Jack knew that Mole-face was right about him. He was a weasel — a coward. That was why Gordon had abandoned him. That was why he hadn't been able to save Billy.

Instead of moving into the empty corridor — and it was empty — Jack closed the cupboard door and made his way back to Swedenborg's office. He spent forty minutes giving the place a proper clean, even using the heavy vacuum that the chaplain had located for him. When he'd finished, he looked around for something else to do. There was nothing. He sat down at the desk and, after a few seconds, began to cry.

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For the next couple of days Jack walked around as if someone had hollowed out his insides. He had managed to stop weeping before Swedenborg returned from the sermon, and he hadn't shed a tear since. His own words about 'hope' kept replaying themselves over and over again in his mind. *If you hoped things would get better then it meant you weren't doing anything about it*. He knew that was false now. Hope was something you got from plans, from actions, from believing that what you were doing had even a one in a million chance of coming off. Without that, you had nothing, and might as well wait until you were dead and burned for your salvation.

Lessons were something he now dreaded. Before, he had been able to cope with the rejection of his classmates, but that was when he could still enjoy fantasies of escape and redemption. Now he felt truly alone. For reasons he still couldn't understand, Gordon had abandoned him, and he didn't have the courage to do anything about it. The only person who spoke to him now was Mole-face, and that was just a constant stream of poisonous whispers. In the past, other Claimants had to be forced to work with Jack, but now Mole-face volunteered in every class. Clearly he was angry at how Jack managed to get him in trouble with Cripslock, and this was the revenge. To begin with, Jack just let the abuse wash over him

and didn't react, but this just seemed to make Mole-face more determined. He kept saying that he would '*get him*'.

He didn't even have comfort in drawing anymore. He could still scribble down a decent landscape, or something else from his memory, but the pictures from his imagination had dried up, and anything else seemed shallow and pointless. He had lost the power to imagine the world any differently to how it was. Instead, he spent his time looking through his old drawings, especially the ones of his memories before The PIT, of his old bed in his dad's flat, before the bastard ran off, or the hazy, semi-invented portraits of his mother, always somehow mingled with the wide eyes of the girl from the waiting room. They didn't make him feel better, but they did make him feel *something*. Maybe it was sadness, or anger, or grief, but when he looked at those pictures he felt a little bit of the emptiness fill up, and his chest ached like he was breathing in smoke.

The turning point came when he was in The Dome. As usual, he sat by himself, leaning up against the low brick wall that secured the steel arches and wire mesh which formed The Dome itself. He was playing with a stone he'd found amongst the gravel. It was unusual because of its size — big enough to fill his hand — but also because it was smooth. Most of the stones he found were rough chippings, or crumbling chunks of limestone, but this felt like it had been smoothed by water, in a stream or by the sea. That meant it had to be old, or else it had been brought in by some outside source. Jack looked around at the other Claimants and the lingering Potestates. He couldn't imagine why any of them would smuggle in a rock and then dump it here.

"Hey, golden boy." It was Mole-face, of course, along with a group of his hangers-on. "All alone again? Want some company?"

"No thanks," said Jack, slipping his hand and the stone into his overall pocket.

"Don't be daft. I'll sit with you." Mole-face sat down next to Jack and laid a heavy arm across his shoulder. "I've got something I wanted to show you. Something I found."

"Great." Jack concentrated on the touch of the stone on his fingers.

"Now, you might be a little bit cross with me, Jack. Cos I had to go through some of your stuff to find what I was looking for."

Jack nodded. Everyone had already been through his possessions anyway. He didn't have anything left to hide.

"Now, me and the other lads were really impressed with this, but we thought you might need a little bit of help."

"What are you talking about?"

Mole-face smiled, and for a moment Jack felt a flash of anger.

“I’m talking about these.”

One of Mole-face’s gang stepped forward, laying a bundle of papers in front of where they were sitting. Jack picked them up and stared. They were his drawings — the ones he had hidden in the hollow space in his bed post.

“How did you find them?”

“It was easy enough. You’re not the only one who stays awake at nights, you know.”

The drawings were Jack’s, but now he looked at them closely he could see they’d been altered, or maybe graffitied was a better word. Most of it was fairly crude. His landscapes had been defaced with various ugly words and images, and his portraits had been doctored to make them ridiculous and cruel. He leafed through them almost with disinterest. It was just another part of his old life that was being taken away from him. All he was thinking about was the stone in his hand.

“This one’s my favourite, though,” said Mole-face, pulling out a neatly folded square of paper from his overall. “I let the boys do the other ones, but I thought this one might be a bit special, so I did it for you myself. I think I’ve improved on what you were going for.”

He unfolded the paper and handed it to Jack. It was his mother. He had worked for days on this particular effort, bringing together all the little scraps from his other sketches and putting them together into one image. It was the closest he had ever gotten to bringing out the image of her from his memory. What Mole-face had done was revolting. The others had simply destroyed or abused his art, but Mole-face had *changed it*. He must have had some talent himself, or else he’d got someone to help him, because it was well done. In the original picture his mother had been smiling, but now, with the application of an eraser and few pencil strokes, her expression was one of hatred.

Jack’s chest felt like it was being trodden on. The memory of everything that had happened — Billy’s beating, being taken to the H.E, his abandonment by Gordon — all of it swelled up inside him until it seemed he would burst.

“I guess it’s supposed to be your mother, right?” said Mole-face. “Well in the first draft it looked like she loved you, but if that was true then you wouldn’t be in here, would you?”

Jack couldn’t breathe. He looked at Mole-face

The stone was still in his hand.

“What’s the matter, Jack? Did we upset you?”

The stone hit Mole-face’s temple with all the force that Jack could put behind it. There was a sickening crack that was somehow wet and sharp at the same time, and Mole-face’s body collapsed as though he was made of rubber.

And then the world exploded.

Mole-face's gang sprang on Jack in a wave of boots and fists. He heard the alarm bell screeching and the sound of Potestates charging towards him. The last thing he remembered before he slipped out of consciousness was the smooth, bloody stone falling from his hand.



## Chapter 6. Mary

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*'Thea was startled up,  
And in her bearing was a sort of hope'*  
**John Keats – Hyperion: A Fragment**

It was light when Jack woke, and he could hear a bird singing. He tried to get up, but his leg hurt. He was lying on a bed in a large room containing several other beds — all of them empty. On the wall opposite was a window, through which he could see the top of The Dome and some of the distant hills and Scud fields. Jack had never been in the infirmary before, but he could guess that was where he was now. It was nicer than he thought it would be. The PIT had a lot of very old buildings that had been repaired, repurposed and recycled over the years, but this place seemed brand new. The ceilings were low and flat; the floor looked like it was made of plastic; the window was clear and unstained.

Jack heard a door to his left begin to open. He stiffened. In an instant, any sense of quiet and comfort was stripped away. He felt that squeezing, suffocating pressure across his chest, and the shouting and grunting of Mole-face's gang seemed to fill his ears. A woman came into the room. It was a Matron. Almost every part of The PIT had a Matron: usually a big, uncompromising woman with a skill for organisation. They weren't Potestates or Bureaucrats — they had no weapons, and they couldn't threaten anyone with pieces of paper and official procedures — but if a Matron told you to do something you did it.

This Matron looked different to the others Jack knew. She was short and thin, and a little younger than most. She wore her official uniform with the shiny surface of her sash turned inside out. When she approached Jack's bed she looked first at his leg, and then at his face.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"My leg hurts," said Jack, and realised that his throat was dry and sore, as though he'd been crying.

The Matron walked across the room to a small sink and poured out a glass of water. Jack sucked it down quickly, and then instantly fell into a coughing fit. The Matron laughed and handed him a handkerchief. The sound of her laughter was strange, thought Jack. Even though she was laughing *at* him, the sound was so pleasing it made him want to smile. He did. She smiled back at him.

"No wonder you ended up in here," said the Matron. "Obviously accident prone."

Jack winced a little at the word ‘accident’, but nodded his head and tried another smile.

“My head hurts, too. A little bit, anyway.”

“You’ve got a bit of a lump and quite a few bruises. But I’ve given you something for the pain, and I’ll be able to give you some more in a few hours. It’s only your leg that’s going to need any real time to heal.”

“How long?”

“Not sure. But you’ll be able to walk soon, I hope. It’s not a full *snap*, Jack.”

Jack nodded. Matrons didn’t call you by your name. You were just a Claimant to them, like you were just a Claimant to the Potestates and the H.E. This Matron wasn’t behaving properly. Instinctively he liked her, but he had learned not to trust his instincts about people. They let you down.

“Is there anything else I can do for you before I go, Jack?”

“No, thank you.”

“You might be bored on your own. Do you want me to get you anything to pass the time?” She paused, as if trying to remember something. “When you were brought in you had some drawings with you. The Potestates took them away somewhere, but I could get you some paper and a pencil.” She leaned forward conspiratorially and whispered: “So long as you don’t tell anyone.”

Jack stared at her. “No thanks. Don’t like drawing. I don’t know whose pictures they could have been.”

With nothing else to do, Jack dozed. When he came around his mouth was dry again. With his eyes closed against the afternoon sunshine, he groped blindly on the bedside table for his glass of water. His hand brushed against something warm. Startled, he tried to swing himself off the bed, before his leg shrieked with pain and forced him to remain where he was.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

Jack opened his eyes. It was the girl from the waiting room — the one with the brown eyes. For some reason he couldn’t catch his breath. He just stared at her.

“Sullivan said you would be sore. I brought your pain pills.”

“Who’s Sullivan?”

“*Matron* Sullivan”

She handed him two small capsules. “Take one now and then another before your evening meal. Sullivan’s making pie.”

“Okay. Thanks.” Jack swallowed one of the pills. He realised that he was still staring at the girl, so he said: “What’s for breakfast?”

“That.” She nodded at the bedside table. There was a bowl of something white. “It’s porridge, or that’s what Sullivan calls it. It looks kind of gross, but it tastes good when you put salt on it. Look, this is a weird question, but do I know you?”

Without meaning to, Jack grinned. “Yes. I mean, kind of. We met in the H.E’s waiting room. You had a bad lip. I’m Jack.”

“Mary. Yeah, I remember.”

Jack picked up his bowl of porridge. He wanted Mary to like him. He tasted the porridge. It was lukewarm, but when he mixed in a pinch salt it tasted better than anything he’d ever eaten in The PIT.

Apparently content that Jack was medicated and eating, Mary left. She would be back later with the evening meal. Jack wished that she’d stayed, but he had no way of keeping her. What could he say? He understood nothing about girls. He’d known some before he came to The PIT, but this wasn’t like that.

To take his mind off her, Jack tried to pull himself into a proper sitting position. If he could sit up straight he’d have a better view out of the window. As he shuffled himself up the bed, being careful not to jar his leg, he heard an odd scrunching from underneath his pillow. Reaching back, Jack found four squares of thick, good quality paper, as well as a pencil. There was a message scrawled onto the first piece of paper: *‘just in case you change your mind – S’*. Jack couldn’t help but feel happy, though he still felt a lingering sense that something was wrong with Matron Sullivan. Nobody was ‘just nice’.

Finally sitting in an upright position, Jack looked out of the infirmary window again. Only the top of The Dome was visible, but it was interesting to see the debris that had settled on it: birds’ nests, empty packaging, leaves and branches blown from distant trees. Beyond The Dome he could make out some buildings he’d never seen before, perched about halfway up one of the hills, a few miles away. They looked like big warehouse sheds, and there was a wide track running off to one side. It was probably a farm, where they stored the big harvesting machines he sometimes saw in the Scud fields. It might have been his imagination, or a trick of the light, but he thought he could even make out a few people walking around. As far as Jack knew, most of the work of a farm was automated, but he’d heard some of the country boys talk about little farming settlements, mostly full of engineers and mechanics who kept the machinery running.

Jack suddenly realised, as though his mind had been absent from his body, that he was drawing. He’d sketched a boy and a girl sitting on two horses. The horses were pulling a plough behind them. He’d never seen a real plough before, but there had been a photograph in one of Wambach’s history books. In the past, people had used them to make ditches in the

earth, in which they planted seeds. It was a nice picture — the first ‘imagination’ picture he’d drawn since the plan to see Gordon failed. For a moment, staring at the happy faces of the children he’d drawn, Jack wondered if he might try and reach Gordon again. Maybe this time he would carry it through.

No. It was nice that the children in his imagination could be happy, but there was no use in encouraging false hope. He already had a broken leg, and when it was healed there was no telling what might happen to him. Most likely he’d be deported, and if Mole-face was badly hurt, or even dead...

He started to draw another picture.

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Over the next few days, Jack began to feel stronger. His leg didn’t hurt so much, and he could move around on crutches. Perhaps he’d be able to go back to his dorm before the welcome assembly for the new Chief Administrator. In truth, he wasn’t looking forward to it, but he had to know what had been going on in his absence. What had happened to Mole-face? Had Gordon tried to come and talk to Jack while he’d been away? Was Billy alright? No Potestates, or anyone from the H.E’s office, had been to see him yet. It was driving him mad. As far as Matron Sullivan knew, once Jack was healed to her personal satisfaction he was free to return to the general Claimant population. Or so she said. He’d tried to ask her about Mole-face, but every time he opened his mouth the words seemed to dry up on his tongue. As for Mary, he was too ashamed to tell her what he’d done, and she seemed content not to ask him.

The drawing was helping to take his mind off things. In no time at all he’d gone through the original paper provided by Matron Sullivan, and she was finding it so difficult to keep him stocked up that she was letting him sketch on the reverse side of his own medical printouts. Mary was very interested in his work. She liked art: her mother, who had worked in a fish factory, had been a bit of an artist herself, or so she said.

Mary’s family were from somewhere called Strack, an industrial community two hundred miles from London — by the sea. Her mother had worked in London as a young woman, and she’d shown Mary some of her paintings of the place: the Paradise Bridge; God’s Shard; St. Paul’s Market. Jack had seen all these things, but the way that Mary described them was alien to him. In her imagination they were beautiful objects — colourful and romantic. To Jack they were just buildings.

Mary said that when she left The PIT she hoped that she’d get an apprenticeship to work for one of London’s hospital companies: MediCorp or YouHealth. Jack didn’t know what he wanted to do once he left The PIT. He’d always just assumed that his future was out of his control. Mary disagreed.

“You can make choices, you know? Even in here. Do you think I just ‘ended up’ being a Claimant Nurse? No. I stole books from the science labs to learn more about medicine. I begged the Matrons to put in recommendations for me. I volunteered for every filthy job going. You can choose to rot in here, or you can take the opportunities as they come.”

“They took all the books out of our science lab.”

“Then go and beg for some more! Get someone to sneak some in! Why is everyone in here so...so...idle?”

“Not everyone is,” said Jack. “I’m not exactly ambitious though, I’ll admit. I only like drawing, and that’s not a job is it? It’s a ‘Non-Profit Activity’. It doesn’t matter how hard I work at it, I’ll still end up in some fish factory like your mum.”

“And what’s wrong with that? Fish need processing don’t they? Why can’t you be an artist, too? Not everything has to be about work and money.”

Jack had never heard anyone talk in this way, except for Gordon.

“Then why are you so desperate to be a nurse?”

“Because I can’t draw.”

Jack laughed. Mary was frowning at him, but he thought he could see her cheek twitching. He couldn’t quite tell if she had no sense of humour at all, or if she was constantly having one big secret joke at his expense.

“Besides,” she said. “I like helping people.”

Mary turned away to change the sheets on one of the empty beds, and the light flashed on the small, silvery scar on her lip. Jack remembered the first time he met her, when that scar had been a fresh wound. He’d tried to help then, even offering up his precious armband as a bandage. He wanted to ask why, if she loved helping people, she had so forcefully rejected him when he had offered to help *her*. But there was something fierce about her — a trace of hard steel beneath those soft brown eyes — that made him too afraid to ask.

When Mary left him, Jack went back to his drawings. He looked over the sketches he’d already done. There were multiple landscapes, a few little imagined scenes like the children with the plough, and odd little doodles that were nothing much other than a collection of lines and shades. There were no portraits. What Mole-face had done to the one of his mother still burned him, and it made him queasy about putting down another real face to paper.

But once again his hands couldn’t help themselves. They moved the pencil across the paper as if they were beyond his control. But they weren’t. He knew what they were doing and he could have stopped them if he wanted to. But he didn’t, because they were drawing Mary, and he wanted to see her face again.

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It was the day before the new Chief Administrator's welcome assembly. Matron Sullivan had given Jack a clean bill of health to attend the ceremony, and then to return to his dorm. She seemed to think that he should be pleased.

"You must have been bored stiff lying around here, Jack."

"Not really." Jack was standing by the window while Sullivan changed his bed sheets. He didn't need the crutches anymore, but it still hurt when he put his full weight on the leg. "I quite like it here."

"But you'll be seeing your friends again."

"I guess." Jack still couldn't work the Matron out. Surely she must know how he ended up in the infirmary?

"And you'll be able to go to lessons, and to play outside. You can draw something other than the view out of that window, too."

"Yeah." Jack had given Matron Sullivan most of his drawings for her to take away, though he'd kept one or two for himself. It would have been impossible to smuggle them all back to the dorm. She said she was going to hang them up in her kitchen.

"Are you alright, Jack? You don't seem yourself."

"I'm fine."

"You're going to miss her, then?"

Jack had to concentrate to keep his voice level. "Who?"

"I'm not an idiot."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

To Jack's horror, the Matron lifted up his mattress and pulled out the portrait of Mary. "I make the beds, Jack. You can't hide anything from me."

"You've got no right. I mean, you can't just...Please don't tell her."

Matron Sullivan laughed. Jack hated her laugh — it made him smile even when he wanted to be angry.

"It's none of my business. You could tell her though."

Once again, Jack felt the creeping sense that something was wrong with Matron Sullivan. She seemed to be speaking a different language to the one he knew. In normal circumstances it would be embarrassing to tell Mary how he felt, but in The PIT it was utterly pointless. What did Sullivan think was going to happen?

"Can I have my picture back, please?"

"It's a good likeness, Jack. It's a shame Mary won't get to see it. She'd like it."

"It's not for her."

“You’re as bad as each other.”

Finally, Jack could take it no longer. He had to ask.

“Why do you act like this? You know what it’s like here. You work here, so you must do. Why can’t you just be honest? You keep laughing and smiling like everything’s okay. But it isn’t. It just isn’t.”

Sullivan winced, as if Jack had slapped her. For the first time since he’d met her, Jack saw her frown. Then, very quietly, she said: “Being honest doesn’t make it any better.”

Once the Matron left, Jack retrieved the drawing and looked at it. He wasn’t convinced the likeness was any good. In real life Mary didn’t smile much, but in Jack’s portrait she looked like she was laughing. It was like one of his imagination drawings: a real person, but as they should be, not as they were. When she changed the dressings on his leg, and he felt the calloused tips of her fingers scraping along his calf, it was electric. It was like the sharpest pangs of embarrassment and shame, mixed with an acute sense of excitement and fear. It made the girl in the portrait, the imagined Mary, seem pale and empty by comparison.

Tonight would be his last chance to see her in person. She would bring his evening meal at around seven o’clock, and sit with him while he ate. Sometimes they talked. Other times she would clean up the ward and re-make the beds, though there were never any other patients. Jack wondered about that sometimes, but Matron Sullivan and Mary never commented on it, so he guessed it was normal. Mary rarely said anything about her work. She rarely talked about herself at all if it came to it. Mostly she asked questions. She liked to know what people thought, she said. Jack tried to answer her, but wasn’t sure if he knew the answers himself. Mary didn’t mind.

There were footsteps in the corridor. It was only five o’clock, so it could not be Mary, and the Matron had only just gone. He hastily shoved the portrait into his pocket. The door opened to reveal a Potestate — a young man Jack had never seen before. It was strange. He hadn’t been in the infirmary that long, but seeing a Potestate felt jarring, like finding a bone in a piece of fish.

“Time to go, Claimant.”

“What? No. It’s tomorrow that I leave.”

The Potestate shrugged. “Orders. It’s today.”

Jack felt cold. Because he hadn’t heard anything, he’d actually started to believe that everything was going to be fine. The wet snap of the stone hitting Mole-face’s head re-played itself in his mind. He’d been a fool. Mole-face was dead, and he was the killer. Jack was going to be deported.

The Potestate led him out of the ward without even stopping to let him collect his things. Jack had never been beyond the doors at the bottom of the corridor, but very quickly they were through them and into what seemed like a warren of intersecting passageways and awkward metal staircases.

Jack's leg felt like it was going to give way. He tried asking the Potestate how much further they had to go, but he was ignored. When he finally collapsed to the floor, the Potestate sounded bored as he shouted for a nurse. It was, Jack reflected later, inevitable that it should be Mary who answered the call. Jack didn't want to look at her. The Potestate ordered Mary to get Jack moving again. She helped him back onto his feet and gave him two of the familiar blue capsules. Within a few seconds he felt the pain begin to numb in his leg, but his heart felt like it was being trodden on. He still couldn't bring himself to look at Mary, let alone to speak. Without saying a word, Jack took the folded drawing from his overall pocket and pressed it into her hand.



## Chapter 7. St Joseph's School for Boys

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*'My protectors had departed and had broken the only link that held me to the world'*

*Mary Shelley - Frankenstein*

Jack had expected to be taken straight to the H.E's office, or else simply led out of the facility altogether. Gordon always said that being deported was like being kidnapped, but with more paperwork. You could be going about your business just like any other day, and then suddenly you'd have two Potestates hauling you off into the back of a windowless truck.

It was a surprise then, when Jack found himself being shepherded into a part of The PIT that he had never seen before. It was part of the Old Buildings, with all the usual wooden panelling and high, porthole windows, but was apparently not in active use. There were cobwebs, missing floorboards, and what looked like mouse droppings. As they walked, they passed through an archway with a crest above it, which showed a large flower wrapped around a carpenter's square-rule. The legend beneath read: 'St Joseph's School for Boys'. Jack had never known what the Old Buildings were used for in the Time Before Paradise. It seemed fitting that it was a school named for the patron saint of workers.

After passing through the arch, they walked along a series of long corridors until they finally reached a set of double doors at the end of a small passageway. There was another Potestate waiting for them when they arrived, who instructed Jack to remain where he was until called. Jack didn't know who it was that was going to call him, but he didn't feel like asking questions was allowed.

The sunshine through the windows was beginning to fade, and there was no electric lighting in this part of The PIT. One of the Potestates lit a cigarette, and very quickly that became the only visible light in the corridor. Jack didn't smoke — not regularly anyway. One Christmas, when he was eleven, he and Billy tried two cigars that Gordon had given away as presents. They'd both pretended to enjoy them, but Jack knew for a fact that Billy had snuck away to be sick afterwards. It was still a nice gift, though, Jack thought, because a cigar was a gift that important people got. That was what Gordon did — he made little people feel like they meant something. What Jack wouldn't have given to feel like he meant something now.

The Potestate smoking the cigarette made a crackling noise. It was his talk-box. Jack couldn't make out what was said, but he wasn't surprised to find that it related to him. After a brief moment of discussion, the two Potestates pulled Jack to his feet and ushered him through the double doors. The room he found himself in was bigger than any he had seen in The PIT — bigger even than the Assembly Room. It was designed as a long rectangle, with

blue ceramic tiles covering the floor and the walls. In the centre there was a wide, deep trough, also tiled, running the entire length of the room. The trough itself was empty, but the far side was lined with electric lanterns, just powerful enough to illuminate the high, vaulted ceiling.

“Do you like it, Jack?” said a voice from the other side of the lanterns. “I think it’s rather beautiful at night.”

Jack turned to look at the Potestates, but they were already heading for the exit. This did not feel like a kidnapping.

“Who are you?” said Jack.

“You don’t remember me? That is a shame, Jack. I was led to understand that you have a very good memory.”

The voice was still coming from behind the line of lanterns.

“Not for voices, sir.” The ‘sir’ came naturally to Jack’s lips.

“Ah, yes, you’re much more of a visual artist, aren’t you? I very much admire your drawings. Such a shame those other boys defaced them so horribly.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Come over here why don’t you, boy?”

Jack edged his way around the empty trench in the floor. He didn’t have a clue what purpose it served, but he couldn’t shake the idea that it would be a good place to dispose of corpses. By the time he reached the other side, he could feel the familiar sense of paralysis beginning to grasp at his legs.

“There you are, my lad. So good to see you again.”

The speaker was visible now, coming into clearer focus as he strode towards Jack on lanky, grasshopper legs. He recognised him immediately as the man who’d interrogated him in the H.E’s office — the day he first met Mary. He was the man with the long, bony fingers, the friendly smile and the odd list of questions. The man who’d said Jack was ‘perfect’, but never said what for.

“Good to see you too, sir.”

The man laughed. “You remember me now? Excellent! I must introduce myself formally. I’m Mr Rafael, the new Chief Administrator. You should call me Raffa. My friends call me Raffa.”

“Thank you, sir”

The man laughed again. It was a strange, crickety sound, amplified by the echoing of the tiled walls. “You really are a very amusing young man, Jack. Even if you don’t intend to

be. In fact, you almost remind me of myself. I'm told that I often come across as a bit of joker."

Jack stared at him, blankly. None of this made sense. In fact, nothing had made sense ever since that first morning when he was sent to the back of the counting line — this bizarre encounter was beginning to feel more and more like the end of a bad dream.

"Do you know where we are?"

"No, sir."

"Please, I told you to call me Raffa. This is the swimming pool. I suspect that you have never heard of such a thing before. Am I right, Jack?"

"Yes si...Raffa."

That laugh again. "There is no reason why you should know what it is of course — they don't make them anymore. You see, originally this trough would have been filled with water. And then — this is fantastic — young people like yourself would take off their clothes and jump in! They'd splash around and swim in it. You've heard of swimming? It's what the sailors and Wall workers train to do, in case they fall in the sea. I believe some of them actually practice in an old trough like this one. But, you see, the people who used this place — they used it for fun! Isn't that hilarious?"

"Er...I don't know, sir. Raffa, I mean."

"But don't you see, Jack? They were doing it for fun, even though it could have absolutely no benefit to their future prospects. If you're applying for a job as a builder or a factory worker, what difference does it make if you can swim or not? They could have taken up carpentry, for instance. If they wanted to build physical stamina they could have taken up running — that, at least, would have been free. Your hobby, of course, is a very worthwhile pursuit."

"Drawing you mean?" Jack felt disorientated. He couldn't understand what this strange man was driving towards, but the mention of art always captured his attention. "I thought it was bad — a Non-Profit Activity."

"Oh, that's just The PIT rules, Jack. They shouldn't matter to a boy like you. You're like me — born into the wrong place. No, drawing can be a very useful skill indeed. If properly applied, it can even make money. An architect needs to be able to produce very precise drawings for instance — and the same applies to engineers and other kinds of designers. Not to mention the 'creative' advantages, though of course these are not really worth anything to the rest of society — a Non-Profit Activity, as you say. But for those with a better class of mind, like us, creating art can be a very freeing process. Some of my best ideas have come to me while sketching out a landscape."

“You draw?”

“Oh, yes indeed. In fact, I took the liberty of knocking something up for you, my lad.” Raffa put his hand into the inside pocket of his pinstriped suit, and pulled out a folded piece of paper. “I took a bit of artistic licence, but I hope it is in some way true to the original.”

Jack took the paper from Raffa’s extended hand. It was the portrait of his mother — or rather it was a version of it. It looked more or less exactly like the one that Mole-face had vandalised, but his mother’s smile had been restored and, if Jack was honest, the quality was rather better than what he had been able to produce. He opened his mouth to speak, but he didn’t have any words.

“No need to thank me, my lad, it was no trouble. In fact, I rather enjoyed doing it. She was a very beautiful woman, if your memory is to be believed. She reminds me of my own mother, especially the hair. A practical haircut for a hardworking woman. She worked in a food canning plant, yes?”

“I don’t know.” Raffa had even gone to the care of using a fine pencil to put in exquisitely detailed eyelashes. “She died when I was young.”

“Yes,” Raffa sighed. “My own mother died when I was ten. She was a factory worker.”

“*Your* mother, sir?”

Jack looked at Raffa’s tailored suit, his leather shoes. Jack hadn’t met many Creators — the people in charge of Paradise — but this man had to be one of them. It was the way he spoke and the way he carried himself. He reminded him of Gordon.

“Astonishing, isn’t it? Yes, in fact I used to live in a place not that far from where you grew up, Jack. I believe we probably played ‘drivers’ in the same rusty bangers outside the same old garage.”

“But you’re...”

“Yes. The new Chief Administrator. Arguably the single most powerful individual in The PIT. I stress the word *arguably*.”

“Arguably?”

“I was referring to your good friend and patron — Mr Gordon.”

The name sent a shiver through Jack’s body. “I don’t what you mean.”

“Oh, come now, my lad, don’t let’s talk to each other like idiots. You see, the difference between me and what Mr Gordon would call ‘Creators’, is that I do not consider you to be an idiot simply because of your background.”

“Gordon doesn’t think I’m an idiot.”

“Perhaps not,” said Raffa, though he sounded reluctant. “But he’s still one of them isn’t he? He’s never slept in the street because his drunken father locked him out of the flat. He’s never eaten flour and water fried up in a pan because there’s nothing else to eat. Not even in here — not even in *The PIT* — has he had to experience one moment of true suffering. But you and me, we know what it’s like to have nothing, and to know deep down that we’re better than that.”

“Gordon looks after me.”

“Not recently, though. Am I right?” Raffa leaned back and cleared his throat. “But I’m getting well ahead of myself. I was talking about swimming.

“You see, Jack, this swimming trough represents everything that I think is wrong with The PIT. Do you know, some years ago, the previous Chief had plans to re-open this place as a punishment centre? Pointless cruelty like that achieves nothing, my lad. Paradise was founded on the principle that hard work should be for a purpose, and that for a special few, the hardest workers, the most gifted workers, there should be the opportunity for...elevation. That is what I achieved, and what I believe you could achieve.”

Raffa began pacing up and down the tiles. His long legs, swinging past the lanterns, cast strange shadows.

“I was just like you, Jack. Talented, intelligent and poor. But then I met someone who believed in me, as I believe in you Jack, and they took me away and showed me how I could succeed. Now I want to re-shape the world that others might do the same. I want to *help*.”

“You sound just like Gordon, sir.”

“*Raffa*.”

“Sorry, Raffa.”

“Think of those thugs that attacked you. The best we can do for them is to equip them with basic skills that allow them to fulfil their limited potential. But you can achieve more, Jack — like I did. I could give you that chance, Jack. I could take you out of this place and show you the pathway to a better life.”

“It’s like being a Favourite, then?”

This time Raffa just smiled. “No, Jack — not at all. Mr Gordon picks his ‘Favourites’ based not on their ability, but by his own personal whims. He dumped you without a second thought.”

“That’s not right. We were friends. If I could just talk to him...”

“Don’t take it so hard, Jack. I’ve seen it happen a hundred times. People like Gordon don’t care about folk like us. They play games with us until they get bored. Then they cast us aside.”

“I don’t understand.”

Raffa smiled again. He had a kind smile. “I know it’s a lot to take in. The important thing is to accept it. Gordon has cut you off from his protection. I suppose you no longer amuse him as you used to. As a result of that, you were bullied and savagely beaten. He didn’t even try and speak to you. He just left you to rot.”

Jack felt numb. This was the explanation he had been grappling for, but now he had it he wished he didn’t.

“He isn’t like us,” Raffa continued. “You’re just like any other pauper to him — a source of amusement while he waits for daddy to forgive him and bring him home.”

“No! It’s not like that. He hates his dad — it’s him that sent him here!”

“Did you never stop to wonder why? Even his own father can’t stand his nonsense. He thought sending him here might cure him of the rubbish swilling around his head, but it just festered and spilled out, until it infected this whole place. Did you think that all the cigarettes and chocolate he dished out was out of kindness? Did you think his interference was helpful to the proper function of The PIT? No! All he has ever done is undermine the vital work of this place. If The PIT sometimes seems harsh, it is because it seeks to prepare you for a harsh world. If your classes seem hard, it is because the lessons of life will be even harder. Gordon knows this, but he doesn’t care. He is a wrecker, intent of making the children of The PIT into fat and lazy shirkers like himself. There are even rumours that his poisonous influence reached up to my predecessor! That is why the old Chief was removed, and it is why I am here. To restore order! It burns me up, Jack. It burns me up to see him destroying a boy like you — a boy who could be so much more than a rich brat’s lackey.”

“I’m nobody’s lackey!”

“Then prove it!” Raffa leaned in close once more. “Prove it, and I’ll give you what Gordon always promised but never delivered. I’ll be your friend, I’ll make you my equal, I will *set you free!*”

“How do I prove it?”

“By giving him to me. Heart and soul. Tell me how he works, who he has in his pockets. Give me his secrets.”

“Betray him, you mean.”

“You can’t betray him. *He* has betrayed *you!*”

## Chapter 8. A Funeral

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*'An orphan's curse would drag to hell*

*A spirit from on high;*

*But oh! How more horrible than that*

*Is the curse in a dead man's eye!'*

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge - The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Jack sat on his old bunk, in his old dorm, and wondered why everything seemed so different. There was no more Mole-face for a start. Jack still didn't know what had become of him after their fight in The Dome, and he was troubled by the fact that he didn't care. Then there was Raffa' offer, swirling around his head like a fever. He'd said no, of course, and Raffa — such a strange man — had seemed to accept it for now. In truth, Jack couldn't see why Raffa was so desperate to bring Gordon down. He'd said it was because Gordon was a 'disruptive influence', that by helping to make the other Claimants' lives easier, he was actually making them weaker, less able to survive in the real world. Jack had always thought it was just kindness that motivated Gordon, and perhaps just a bit of vanity. It couldn't be true that he had just abandoned him. There had to be some other explanation, didn't there? How he longed to talk to Mary about it all.

"How are you, Jack?"

In the few hours since Jack had returned to the dorm, Billy hadn't stopped trying to speak to him. He wanted to know what happened with Mole-face, where he'd gone after the attack, whether they could go back to being friends.

"I'm fine. Just like I was fine ten minutes ago."

"Good. I'm good as well."

"I didn't ask."

"Look, I don't blame you for what happened. Can't we just go back to..."

"Hit me," said Jack. The thought had come from nowhere.

"What? Why do you want me to hit you?"

"Just hit me. It'll make it right with us."

"But I don't want to."

Jack leaned forward and grabbed Billy by the shoulders. "I know you don't get it, but you need to do this. I *deserve* this. How else can we be friends after what happened? I need to make it right."

"But I forgive you. You were just scared."

Jack sighed and limped back over to his bunk. After a while he turned over to see what Billy was doing. He was playing with Felix, a quiet smile on his face. Even if Billy beat him to within an inch of his life, it wouldn't make Jack deserve his friendship.

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Jack still had to work as Swedenborg's personal assistant. He'd almost forgotten about the chaplain while he was in the infirmary, but evidently Swedenborg had not forgotten about him. As soon as he entered the office, the fat pastor jumped up from his chair and crossed the room to press Jack with a firm, greasy handshake.

"My boy, my boy!" he said. "You look very well. I have been missing you. Indeed I have been. Will you look at this office? It's a shambles without you."

"Yes sir. Shall I get started with it?"

"Started with it? No, child. Not now at any rate. I've things to do, and I want your help. Come along, child."

"We're going out, sir?"

"Out? Yes, out and about as you might say. Though it is not, sadly, a happy errand."

"Where are we going?"

Swedenborg didn't answer, but instead picked up a leather briefcase from behind the door and gestured for Jack to follow him. Escorted by a Potestate, they made their way along another series of corridors that Jack wasn't familiar with. At one point they even went outside into a small courtyard. The sun was shining overhead, and there were birds singing in the distance. But this respite lasted only a moment before they were once again confined by the shadowy passageways of The PIT. Eventually they stopped outside a door, marked out with the black steel hammer that was the official symbol of the State Church.

"We're here." Swedenborg didn't look at Jack as he spoke. "I want you to prepare yourself, my child. This may be...difficult. Help me on with this will you?" Swedenborg opened his briefcase and pulled out a set of robes. Usually, when he delivered his sermons, Swedenborg wore a long grey cassock. This one was black with a large hood.

Once Swedenborg had been cinched into his robes, he asked the Potestate to wait where he was and invited Jack to follow him through the door. It was dark on the other side, with the only light coming from a blue emergency lamp. Swedenborg muttered under his breath and stumbled across the room. After a few moments there was a whooshing noise, and a series of clicks — the walls were suddenly lit up with an earthy, red glow. Jack was so taken aback that he didn't immediately register the source of the light, but when he did, he felt his heart begin to beat faster.



On the opposite side of the room, where Swedenborg was now standing, there was a low, flat table. Behind this table there was a large metal box, some six feet high and six feet wide, which was built into the wall. In the centre of the box, at the head of the low table, was a hinged grating. Behind this grating, Jack could see the roaring fires of a furnace. But it wasn't this that had seized Jack's heart — it was what lay on the table, lit up in the flickering colour of the flames.

It was Mole-face. He was dead — and Jack had killed him. His skin was almost blue, and there was a faint chemical smell in the air that didn't quite cover the sticky, heavy aroma that lay underneath it. Jack didn't know what to do. He felt like he was living through one of his bad dreams, but he was very much awake. Terrified, he looked at Swedenborg, half expecting him to be pointing an accusatory finger in his direction, but the old man merely looked concerned.

"I'm sorry, my boy. Perhaps I ought to have warned you, but I find these things are best done in the moment. If I'd told you we were going to administer a funeral ceremony, I feared you might not want to come. It can be harrowing the first time you see a dead body, but you must remember that this is merely a shell, and that his spirit walks in the land of Heaven."

Jack stared. Swedenborg seemed genuinely unaware of his connection to Mole-face. The pastor was now thumbing his way through his book of proverbs, mumbling under his breath as he searched for a particular passage. Jack felt his chest tightening, and the cold fingers of fear gripping at his legs, rooting him to the spot.

"Ah, here we are my child! Now, what I need you to do is very important. PIT funerals require a witness — that's you. Are you alright, boy? You look a bit peaky. Anyway, I need you to stand witness by my side as I read from the Authorised Proverbs of Death and Retirement, and once I'm done you need to pull this lever. It will convey the body into the furnace."

Pale and sweating, fighting against his horror, Jack moved to Swedenborg's side. *Just pull the lever and the body will go away*, he thought. *If the body goes away, then maybe it was never really here.*

"We now put you to rest after your labours..." Swedenborg pulled a card from his pocket and peered at it. "Robert."

The name was like a punch in the gut. The nervous giggle Jack had been suppressing died in his belly, replaced by deadening numbness. He could have lived with murdering Mole-face, the cruel bully. But Robert?

Within a few moments, Swedenborg was finished. Jack made a motion to pull the lever, but the chaplain prevented him with a sudden flap of his arms.

“I almost forgot — the boatman!” Swedenborg fumbled around in his briefcase and pulled out two silvery discs, no bigger than buttons.

Despite everything, Jack found himself fascinated by what the chaplain was holding.

“Coins, my child. For to pay the boatman.” Swedenborg looked uncomfortable. “I’d rather you didn’t mention this to anyone, if that’s alright? Strictly speaking I’m not supposed to have any solid currency — not since the Abolition. And it’s only a silly tradition anyway but, well, it’s a tradition nonetheless.”

Jack didn’t know what currency was, or why it was needed to pay a boatman, but there was something utterly beguiling about those ‘coins’. He watched, entranced, as Swedenborg laid them delicately on the eyes of Mole-face — *Robert* — with a tenderness that Jack had never seen in the chaplain before. It was the first time since he’d known him, Jack thought, that Swedenborg was speaking and acting not from a script, but from his own instincts. Later, Jack could never provide an answer as to why this thought led him to do what he did next. Jack didn’t really believe in God, but he could think of little else that could explain it.

“Sir,” he said. “I killed this boy. He was a bully, and I hit him in the head with a rock. I killed him.”

Swedenborg frowned, stroking his beard. “My child. Calm yourself.”

“No. You’re not listening. I hit him in the head. Look — you can see the scar!”

Swedenborg glanced at Mole-face’s temple. “Indeed you can, my child, and that is why your fantasy-addled mind has latched onto it. But it wasn’t this little scratch that did for this poor young man. I know for a fact that he died while you were still ill. According to my notes, an unknown Claimant attacked him. A rival perhaps. Someone he’d upset.”

Jack didn’t hear the rest of what the chaplain said: the sound of his own thoughts drowned out everything. He was not a killer. For a moment, all he felt was pure relief, but when this sensation subsided he was left with a nagging sense of unease. If he had not killed Mole-face, then who had?

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Jack wished so much that he could sleep. Every time the lights went out he just lay there, staring into the darkness. His leg still hurt, especially after a long day, and to make matters worse he was starting to see things. He jumped at shadows, and when he heard other Claimants laughing the sound turned to screams in his ears.

He wanted to talk to someone, especially about what Raffa had asked him to do, but he still hadn’t found a way to make it right with Billy. Billy had always been the one person he could rely on to be strong in the face of any challenge, even more so than Gordon. He didn’t have the imagination required to feel afraid or beaten down. When Jack had stood by

and watched Mole-face's gang attack Billy, Jack had made himself unworthy of his friendship. He'd have to do without it until he could find a way to redeem himself.

The only respite Jack had from his waking nightmares was his Sunday visits to Swedenborg's office. It was strange, given that it was Swedenborg who'd shown him Mole-face's body, but there was now something about the man that calmed Jack. Perhaps it was the way that he always seemed to talk without listening — it made it very easy to be in his company, as there was no pressure to contribute. But Jack suspected it had more to do with that moment in the furnace, when he'd seen the chaplain lay a pair of coins across Mole-face's eyes. It was a moment that clearly meant something to Swedenborg, and it was something that he wasn't supposed to have done. It was piece of kindness that, in Jack's current circumstances, shone out against the cruelty.

"Sir," he said, one afternoon when he was cleaning the chaplain's boots, "do you ever wonder about The PIT? I mean, whether it's a good thing or not."

Swedenborg looked baffled. "What is this, child? What good or bad? The PIT? A place to mould young minds and keep active those thumbs which otherwise would be idle, or in the service of The Enemy and its armies. A good thing? Perhaps. A necessary thing? Absolutely."

Jack sagged. He didn't know what answer he wanted, but he kept thinking of how uncomfortable Swedenborg had been when he'd talked about the 'silly' little tradition of the coins for the boatman. He wanted to find out where that uncomfortable-ness came from. He needed to hear somebody — an adult — admit to him that the world was not fair.

"But," he said, choosing his words slowly, "what about that boy in the furnace. The dead one."

"Dead? Yes, I should hope he was dead!" Swedenborg chuckled. "What about him, child?"

"He got, well, you said he got beaten up. Killed."

"Yes. A bad business. But as I said to you at the time, he walks now in the light of our Lord, and shall suffer no more."

"Right. It's just, why did that happen to him? Isn't The PIT safe?"

Swedenborg frowned, and glanced towards the door. "There are guards everywhere in The PIT." He looked nervous.

"I just mean," Jack pressed on, "that I sometimes feel like the Potestates aren't here to protect us, but to protect other people *from* us. I just..."

"Jack, please..." Swedenborg was sweating. "That is more than enough, child. The PIT is here to serve you, to defend you, not to trap you. If you feel anxious, then look to yourself

before you look to others. All of us, at times I am sure, suffer from...doubts about the way of things..." Swedenborg had turned a strange shade of pink, and he couldn't stop his eyes from flickering towards the door. "But in the end we must accept our lot and trust that the Lord will put us on the right path. He will receive us all in Heaven."

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean to say anything bad. I just think, after seeing that boy — the dead boy — I've been a little bit confused and..."

The chaplain's features softened. Some of the heat drained from his cheeks. "No. I'm sorry, child. I forget sometimes that you are so young. I know it can be...troubling to see another person in that way." Swedenborg leant in close to Jack's face, his voice dropping to a whisper. "But don't worry about him, Jack. The boatman takes care of paying passengers." The chaplain took hold of Jack's hand, and pressed two round discs into his palm. "You keep hold of these and he'll take care of you, too."

For a moment, Jack felt alarmed. Was Swedenborg saying that Jack was in danger of dying? But when he looked at the old man's face, he saw that the intention of the gift was kindly.

"And the people I care about, sir? Will the boatman look after them, too?"

Swedenborg smiled. "They may have to swim for it."

## Chapter 9. The Farm

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*'Now a soft kiss -  
Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss'*

***John Keats – Endymion***

Jack's hands were blistered. He was definitely going to get sunburn, and the paper mask they'd given him didn't feel like it was working — his lungs ached. It was still the best day he could remember having in years. Out-of-PIT work parties were only organised very occasionally, and most Claimants never got closer to the outdoors than The Dome. The only reason this one had been organised was because of a broken machine.

And so here they were: fifty male Claimants and fifty female Claimants, all equipped with hand-held pesticide sprayers, wading through a tall crop of Scud. It had been a surprise to Jack that he'd been selected for the duty, until he realised that the Head Employer considered it a punishment. The stupid old bureaucrat didn't understand how it felt to be *outside*. There were birds in the sky, and the Farm Supervisor had an actual dog! Even over the cloying, burning reek of pesticides, Jack could smell the freshness in the air.

It was scheduled to be a two-day exercise. The hope was that the big automated 'gasser' would be repaired by then. The Scud fields extended for miles, but the only section the Claimants were being asked to work on was the area closest to The PIT. Despite this, they weren't going to be sleeping in their dorms overnight. Instead, the Farm Supervisor had set up bunks in two empty sheds, as well as a 'hosing' area in the courtyard. All of the farm buildings were surrounded by a chain-link fence, and there was a group of Potestates assigned to patrol the perimeter at night. Jack couldn't really see the point. Where would an escaping Claimant run to? In what direction would they go? Claimants weren't ever told exactly where The PIT was — it could be weeks' journey to anywhere.

By the time they finished work on the first day it was almost dark. The sky was a deep shade of purple that made Jack wish he had proper paints instead of charcoal. Though his whole body was screaming with exhaustion, he didn't want to go back inside. Without Mole-face to lead them, the others didn't bully him so much anymore, but neither did they talk to him. He often found himself wondering if it had been one of the boys from his own dorm that killed Mole-face, perhaps even a member of Mole-face's own gang. It was impossible to know, and even if he could find out it wouldn't make a difference. Jack would still be alone. He decided to embrace his isolation, and so dragged his bed to the furthest corner of the shed.

The shed was a big, high-ceilinged barn with a concrete floor. There wasn't a lot of light, due to the lack of any electricity, and the only warmth came from their blankets and a portable heating unit. It ran out of fuel within an hour. Despite the cold, most of the Claimants were so exhausted from the day's work that they didn't have a problem falling asleep. Jack didn't find it so easy. The reason he'd enjoyed the work so much wasn't just the joy of being outside in the sunshine, it was that hard physical work drowned his brain in pain and sweat, and stopped him thinking about anything else. He had still had no word from Gordon, and the longer the silence continued, the more the words of Raffa played upon him. *He dumped you without a second thought.*

Rather than lie in the darkness, letting his thoughts fester, Jack got up. If he was in The PIT, he would be worried about Sandman patrols, but he couldn't imagine the Potestates would bother with them out here. It was a day off for them too, and judging by the sounds coming from the Farm Supervisor's cabin, they were determined to enjoy it. Apparently Scud could be used to make liquor.

There was no door on the shed, just a heavy canvas sheet pulled across a large opening. Jack slipped under it as quietly as he could and stepped out into the night air. Directly outside the shed there was a small yard, which was blocked on one side by the other main shed and the Farm Supervisor's quarters, and on another by the large cluster of garages where the automated farm equipment was stored. The remaining side was open, and had a small track leading out to the perimeter gate, around a mile away. He walked down the track for a couple of minutes until he came across a tree stump by a clump of hedges. If he went much further he would risk being in eyeshot of the perimeter guards, so he sat down on the stump and tried not to think.

Gordon had told him once that the very cleverest people could 'turn off' their thoughts. If they wanted to do something that they knew was wrong, for instance, they could wilfully turn off the bit of their brain that knew about right and wrong. Or if they were told something that they knew couldn't be true, but they wished it was, then they could turn off the bit of their brain that knew about truth and lies. People did it all the time, he said. Jack didn't understand how anyone could control their thoughts. Thoughts always just drifted through his mind like the wind blowing through the trees. The tree didn't get to choose which direction the branches bent.

Suddenly, there was a *snap* in the bushes. It was a quiet sound, but in the night time stillness it sounded like a gunshot. *It's probably just a twig breaking*, Jack thought. But twigs didn't break on their own, and if it was a Potestate, Jack knew he'd be on the floor with a

cable-tie around his wrists within seconds. A bead of sweat ran down the small of his back. If it wasn't a Potestate, then who was it?

Taking a deep breath, Jack turned around. There was nothing. He felt like a coward. He *was* a coward. And then the bushes moved. Jack wanted to run, but his legs wouldn't let him.

The first thing he saw was a hand pushing aside the leaves. The next thing he saw was a head, and that was enough to make his heart skip a beat. The hair was arranged in tightly knotted dreadlocks, and the eyes were a deep brown.

"What the hell are you doing out here?" he said.

"Same as you, I guess. Crop spraying."

"I mean out *here*."

Mary frowned. "Same as you. Escaping."

"What? Where do you plan on escaping to?"

"I dunno." Mary waved a hand at the dimly visible hills. "Out there somewhere. I wasn't planning on *escaping* exactly. More like a trip out. Call it a scouting mission."

"But why would you even think about escaping?"

"Are you serious? Why do I want to escape from The PIT? *The PIT*."

"I know but...there's nowhere to go."

"There's always somewhere to go. To be honest I'm surprised you haven't already gone."

"How come you're on a punishment detail? I thought trustee nurses would be immune?"

"I got sacked. Potestates accused me of stealing again."

"Were you stealing?"

Mary gave Jack a stern look, and he thought she was going to tell him off, but then she surprised him by saying: "I still have the picture you gave me. It's pretty good."

"Thanks."

"Why did you draw it?"

"I draw a lot of stuff."

"Do you always give your pictures to the people they're of?"

"Sometimes. Not usually. I mean..."

In the distance, a siren went off. It was coming from direction of The PIT, too far away to be anything to do with them or the rest of the work party, but it made Jack nervous all the same. The dawn was beginning in earnest now, and so they both hurried back to their sheds.

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The next morning, the Farm Supervisor had them digging holes in an empty field. Apparently the ground needed ‘burrowing’ for a new crop. Every Claimant was issued with a wooden stake and was asked to gouge out a fist-sized hole, twelve inches deep, at regular intervals along a straight line.

As usual, the female Claimants were working one side of the field while the male Claimants worked the other. Jack couldn’t see Mary through the line of Potestates separating the two groups. Not that it would make a difference if he could. The field itself was long and wide, and rested on the slope of a steep hill. They started at the bottom, with the aim of reaching the top before sunset. As a ‘motivation’, the evening meal had been placed at the summit of the hill. Anyone who didn’t meet the day’s target didn’t get to eat. Jack had been last in line for breakfast — a scrape of rubbery Scud-meal — and he was hungry. By the time the sun had reached its noon peak he was already half way up the hill. But the humidity was slowing him down.

“Here. Drink this.”

As he prepared to yank free his stake and begin another hole, a flask of water appeared in front of Jack’s face. He guzzled it down quickly, but immediately threw half of it back up.

“Thanks.”

“Don’t thank me,” said the Potestate. “If it was up to me you’d be getting a kick not a drink.”

“Then who...”

But the Potestate was already gone. Jack took a moment to finish off what was left in the flask, and then turned back to his work. At first he attacked it with fresh energy — the water had given him a renewed feeling of strength — but very soon he slowed down to an even more sluggish pace than before. The sun had moved a little way across the sky, and the heat of it was now beating down onto his back. To make matters worse, his stomach was growling with hunger, and he could feel his muscles beginning to cramp — he was barely halfway up the hill, and the other Claimant’s were beginning to overtake him.

“Here. You need to eat this.” It was the same Potestate as before. This time he held out a small, silvery packet.

Jack took the packet cautiously. He opened a corner and sniffed at it. “What is it?”

“Chocolate.”

Jack laughed. Chocolate cost more credit than almost any other food in Paradise. He’d only ever seen it once before, at a community party to celebrate the City Director’s birthday.



He didn't get to taste it, but he remembered it being a beige, almost grey colour. This little rectangle was a deep brown, nearly black. He bit off a small piece.

The taste was...strange. He'd expected it to be sweet, and it was, but it was also bitter and dark. It stuck to the roof of his mouth. At first he wasn't sure if he liked it, but then he bit off another piece, and then another and another, until all that was left was the grease on his fingers. He licked his fingers.

After that his digging sped up. Very quickly he was out in front again, leaving his fellow Claimants trembling with thirst and hunger. Every time he began to slow down, the Potestate returned, bringing water and chocolate. Jack's mind was full of digging and pain and sweat, and his thoughts were jumbled and clumsy, but part of him knew that this must be Gordon's doing. Far from The PIT, when he was most needed, Gordon was protecting him at last. The range of Gordon's power, and of his love, did not respect boundary fences. Why he had waited until now to return was a mystery, but it was happening — at last it was happening!

He was near the brow of the hill now, and the sun was beginning to sink toward the horizon. In the air, Jack could smell the unmistakable scent of wood-smoke and cooking meat. He finished digging the last few holes quickly. When Jack finally crested the hill, he dropped to his knees in exhaustion, his thin body wracked with aches and cramps, but soothed by a feeling of triumph. The nearest other Claimants would not be anywhere near finished for at least half an hour. Gordon had helped him. Maybe with his help, Jack could be one of the strong ones after all. He lifted his face to the wind.

Then he felt a hand reach down and pat him gently on the back. It had long, bony fingers.

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Jack was sure he'd be able to sleep — he was so exhausted from the day's work. At around one AM he gave up and opened his eyes. Gordon always said that if you couldn't sleep it was either because you felt guilty or you were in love. He didn't want to think about Gordon. Gordon had failed him.

It had been Raffa all along, giving him the water and the chocolate. Apparently, he was even responsible for getting the other Claimants to stop bullying him so much. Jack hadn't known what to say...or to think. He still didn't. It was probably just a way of bribing him, to get Jack to do as he was told. And yet, Raffa hadn't even mentioned Gordon, or his request that Jack act as an informant. All he'd wanted to talk about was Jack, and how much he had impressed him.

Jack decided to take a walk. Being careful not to wake anyone, he slipped out of the barn and walked down towards the bushes where he'd been the night before. The air outside was thick and humid. Perhaps that was why he couldn't sleep. His body was slick with perspiration, and he had a gnawing sense of thirst. He even imagined that he could hear flowing water close by, like a small stream, or a running tap. The noise got louder as he neared the bushes, and he quickly realised it wasn't just in his head. Just a few feet away from him, standing in the darkness with his back turned, was a Potestate, urinating. Jack held his breath and stood perfectly still. He tried to move his legs, but he was too afraid. The Potestate was almost finished. He'd be turning around at any moment.

Then a warm hand laid itself across Jack's mouth. Another grasped him by the shoulder and led him, moving backwards, behind a cluster of bushes. It was all done so gently, and so quickly and efficiently, that it did not even occur to Jack to cry out or struggle. Somehow he knew, instinctively, who it was. Before he turned his face to look at her, before she pressed a finger to her lips, before she pushed her hand onto his back and forced him to lie down in the grass next to her, he knew.

The Potestate finished, and before long he wandered back towards the farm buildings. Jack and Mary waited until they could no longer see his shadow moving, or hear the sound of his feet. Mary's hand was still resting on Jack's shoulder, but she didn't move it, even when Jack got back onto his feet.

"Are you okay?" she said.

"I think so."

"He almost saw you."

"But he didn't."

"You're welcome."

"I just froze for a minute. What are you doing out here again?"

"I told you last night, remember? I'm escaping."

"I thought you said you were just scouting?"

"That was last night. Now I'm escaping."

"Don't be stupid."

"There's a village on the other side of the hill. I guess it's where the other farm workers live, and maybe some of the teachers and Potestates, too. There's a food store down there, and a train track. I stashed a gas burner and a few other supplies nearby. All I need to do is steal some food and walk a little way along the track. When a train slows down for the bend I'll jump aboard and see where it takes me."

Mary said all this so casually that, if Jack had only been half listening, he might have thought she was talking about the weather.

“Are you serious?”

“Of course I am. You can come with me if you want? Usually I hate last minute changes of plan, but you’re here and...it might be nice to have company.”

“I can’t just run away!”

“Why not?”

*Because I’m a coward*, he thought. “It’s not that simple.”

“Then I’ll go on my own, I guess.”

Mary leaned forward and put her hand on Jack’s cheek. He pushed it away.

“I don’t want you to go,” said Jack.

Mary sighed. “We can *both* go.”

“I told you...”

“Yeah, okay, you can’t, but why not?”

Jack put a hand over his face. He didn’t want Mary to see him say it.

“I’m scared.”

“Aren’t you more afraid of staying?”

“I know what The PIT’s like, but out there it could be anything.”

“So it might be brilliant! It might be the best decision you ever make.”

“It might be awful.”

“But at least you’ll have tried. At least you’ll have made a choice.”

“I can’t.”

“I’ll go without you — I mean it.”

“Please don’t.” Jack didn’t know what words to use. “Please don’t leave me behind.”

She did something then that Jack would never have expected. She kissed him. He didn’t feel afraid, so he kissed her back.

## Chapter 10. The Greenhouse

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*'Flow'rs of all hue and without thorn the rose'*

*John Milton – Paradise Lost*

Until Mary told him about it, Jack hadn't realised the place existed. It was a high, glass-panelled dome, stuffed with snaking vines and sprawling ferns. The sign above the broken door said 'St Joseph's Greenhouse'.

It had been difficult to slip away from the Food Hall, but not nearly as hard as he might have expected. Jack was beginning to realise more and more that security in The PIT was not as tight as he once believed. All the guards, lists and the counts masked the truth — there was very little to prevent an escape. The watch patrols were rare and badly organised, the lists were hardly ever checked, the counts ignored. Raffa was right: there was very little 'order'. The real secret to The PIT's security was the lack of anywhere to escape *to*.

Mary knew of dozens of hiding places like the Greenhouse, scattered all over The PIT. Every time they met she would tell him how to find the next one, and give him a time to meet her there. So far, they had held hands in a potato cellar, kissed in an attic full of spiders, and eaten stolen biscuits in an abandoned guard station. How it was that Mary had discovered these places Jack could only guess, and when he asked her she just seemed surprised that everyone else didn't spend their time exploring like she did.

The Greenhouse felt different to the other places they'd met, though. The other places were ideal for secret meetings: out of sight of the Potestates but easy to get in and out of in a hurry. But the Greenhouse was about as far from the main facility as possible, and Jack was sure he'd been seen on the way there. Being seen wasn't a total disaster, however, now that he was Swedenborg's assistant. Since Mole-face's funeral, Jack had been given more responsibilities, which came with extra freedoms. Jack still had no clue as to who had killed Mole-face, though there were whispers it had indeed been a Claimant from Jack's dorm — no doubt one of the creeps from Mole-face's own gang.

As part of his new duties, the pastor had started taking Jack with him to more and more places: to cremations, to sermons, on visits to dorms and classrooms. He'd even given him a Hall Pass so he could run errands. A Hall Pass was something only the most valued trustee would usually get — a slip of paper granting a Claimant the freedom to move unsupervised through certain corridors, though never into another dorm. Gordon remained beyond his reach.

In fact, Jack was no longer sure he even wanted to see Gordon. He still couldn't believe Raffa's story that his friend had just 'dumped' him on a whim, but there was no denying that Gordon still hadn't reached out to him. And Raffa had been so kind to Jack out on the farm, giving him the water and the chocolate. Until then, Jack had almost forgotten what it was like to be told 'good job'. He didn't think he could ever bring himself to do as Raffa asked, and betray Gordon's secrets, but the question still remained: if Gordon hadn't dumped Jack, then why was Raffa the only one looking out for him?

It was a few minutes before Mary arrived at the Greenhouse. In the past, she'd always been at their meeting places before him. When she came in she was frowning, holding a cardboard box under her arm. It looked heavy.

"Are you alright?" he said. He walked over to her and kissed her on the cheek. It still felt odd. Thrilling and amazing, but odd.

"I suppose so." She smiled at him, but her eyes were still frowning.

"What's the matter?"

She sighed. "Let me show you."

Ducking beneath the fronds of an enormous fern, Mary led Jack deeper into the Greenhouse. It was clear that no one had tended to any of the plants in years. The stone flagging was carpeted in weeds and grass, and with every step he took Jack received a slap across the face from a thorn, a branch, or a bush of overhanging nettles. Eventually, the greenery began to thin out, until at last they stumbled out into an open space right at the very centre of the glass dome. Here, the tangle of plants was neatly trimmed back, and the flagstones had been ripped up to reveal the brown earth beneath. In little clusters all around the clearing were individual plots, ringed with rubble. In one corner were a group of yellow flowers, in another some tall, thick-stemmed plants with broad, green leaves, and in another a sprawl of vines with small, roundish fruits sprouting from them.

Mary crossed over to the centre of the clearing, sinking to her knees next to a large plastic tub, partly concealed by a piece of green netting. She opened the box she'd been carrying and gestured for Jack to come and look inside. He sat down next to her and gagged.

"That stinks!" he said. "What is it?"

"Rotten vegetables. It's for the compost."

Jack covered his nose with his sleeve. "Compost?"

Mary nodded at the plastic tub. "It's mostly dead leaves, grass cuttings and kitchen waste. I have a friend — she works in the Food Hall — who sneaks leftover peelings and stuff for me. But this batch is awful. Half of it's meat scraps, and they just attract animals."

"Wait...so you put all this dead stuff on the plants, and the plants grow?"

“Basically, yes.”

“And you grew all of this? How did you even know how?”

“Well the seeds were already here, and there was a book on gardening in one of the old sheds, though you kind of pick stuff up as you go along. I found the Greenhouse a few years ago, but it took me a while before I actually got anything to sprout. Do you like it?”

“It’s amazing. I just don’t get how you did it.”

Mary gave a rare smile. “I’ve never shown it to anyone else. Do you want to help?”

She pulled out a pair of thick gloves from her overall, tossed them over to Jack, and nodded to a garden fork stuck into the soil nearby. Under Mary’s careful instruction, Jack pulled up anything that looked like a weed, sprinkled forkfuls of the compost into the soil that Mary said needed it, and watered the plants themselves from a bucket of old rainwater. Then she produced a pair of strong, sharp scissors — Jack couldn’t even begin to imagine how she’d managed to conceal them from the Potestates — and began showing Jack the plants that needed ‘pruning’. Every time she cut off a branch, or a stalk or a leaf, she would get Jack to gather it up and add it to the compost pile, mixing it in with the fork.

When they were done, Jack was sweating. His clothes were dirty and his back ached. The rain was coming down heavily outside now, and the thunderous crashing of water on the glass roof above made him feel cocooned amid the warm, humid greenery. Mary was smiling again. Like Jack, she was red in the face and sweating — her dreadlocks were frizzy and loose — but with her shoulders thrown back, and her deep brown eyes sparkling, she looked more comfortable and in control than Jack had ever seen her.

“The compost is all out of balance now because of that last batch,” she said, “but it’s going to be potato for evening meal next week, so I should be able to get some good peelings.” She looked at Jack. “Thanks for helping.”

“I liked it. It reminds me of drawing. When I draw I don’t think about anything — I just draw the pictures that are in my head. It’s like I just know where the next line ought to go, so I put it there.”

“It’s nothing like drawing.”

“You didn’t look like you were thinking either. You were just doing the next thing that needed doing. And it made you happy. There aren’t many things that make people happy.”

Once they had tidied away the gloves and the garden tools, and brushed off the worst of the dirt from each other’s overalls, they walked out of the Greenhouse hand in hand.

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Jack and Mary met several more times over the next couple of weeks, often returning to the Greenhouse. It was like nothing that Jack had ever experienced before. It was almost enough

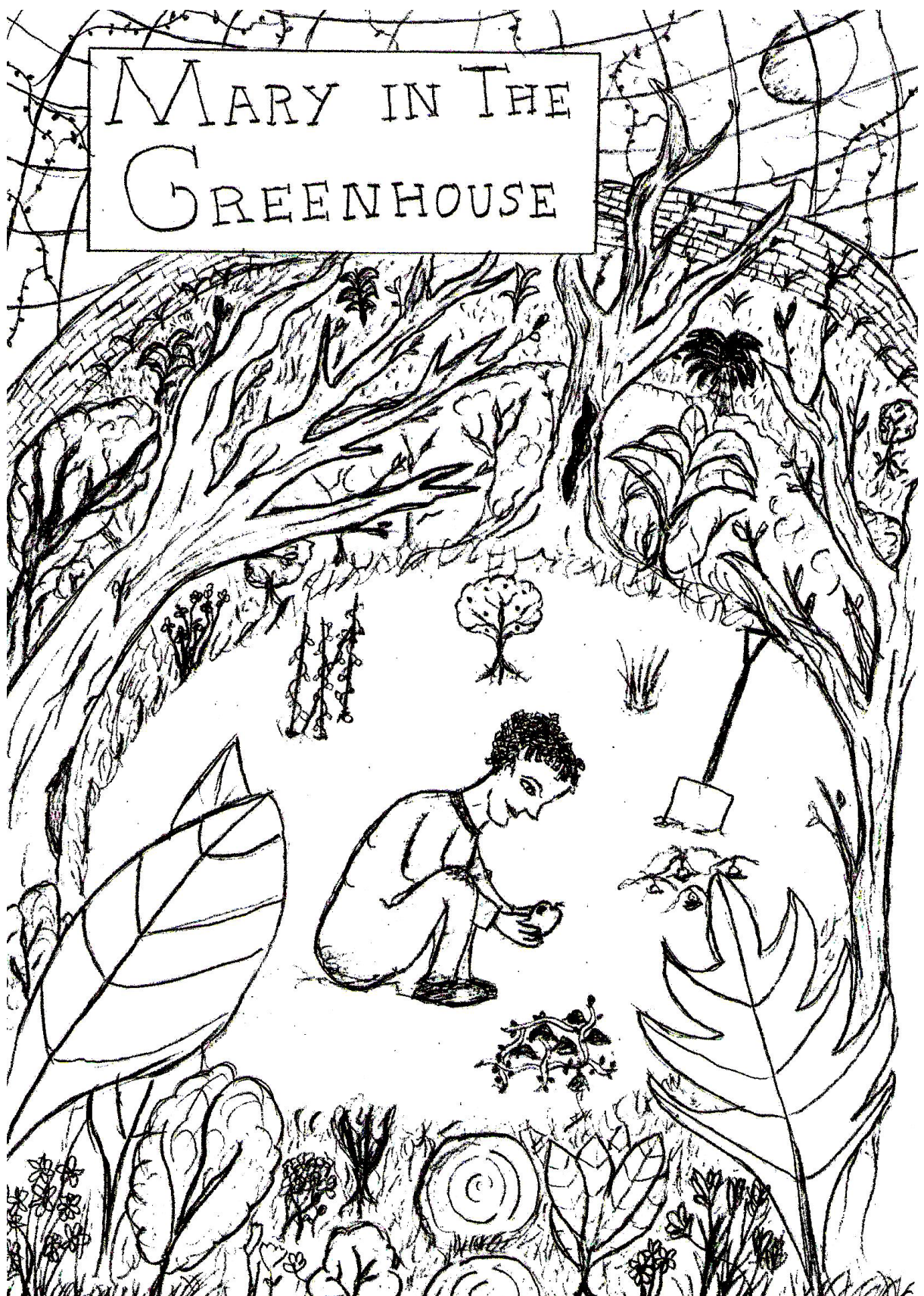


Figure 3.

to make him forget about Gordon, about Mole-face, Raffa — everything. He'd had friends before, but never like Mary. Other friends had made him laugh and smile, they'd helped him and encouraged him, or even made him cry, but he'd always understood the reason. Billy was brave and loyal, Gordon was inspiring and strong. Mary was all of these things and more.

Being at the back of the lines and the bottom of the lists didn't bother him so much anymore. Even lessons were easier to get through. When he was a Favourite, Jack could more or less do as he pleased. He used to sit and draw in most classes, and he'd join in with the ones that interested him, though they were rare enough. Now he had to play along or he'd get a thrashing like anyone else, and until he met Mary that had been difficult to accept. But now he realised that 'playing along' really was all you had to do. So long as you told the teachers what they wanted to hear, they left you alone. You didn't have to believe what they told you, you didn't have to enjoy what they made you do — just play along and inside your head you could be free.

There was one thing that had troubled Jack, though. He'd been working in Swedenborg's office, helping him try to arrange his papers, when there'd been a knock at the door. It was Mr Southey, one of the geography teachers — he wanted to ask whether Swedenborg would come and give a talk to the class about the land assets of the Authorised State Church.

Jack didn't like Southey, not since the time he'd whipped him for asking where the Enemy encampments were in The North. But the teacher hadn't come alone. Standing behind him, with his hands in his pockets and a glazed look on his face, was a boy not much younger than Jack. It was Southey's son, here because his school had been closed for repair work, and there was no one free to look after him. He was wearing denim pants and a yellow T-shirt, and he had a strange cap with a stiff peak jutting out from the front. It had 'punk' written on it. While Swedenborg and Southey talked, Jack stared at the boy in fascination. He was clean — even his fingernails and his shoes. It had never occurred to Jack before, but the teacher's were always clean, too. Even their uniforms. They weren't rich, they weren't Creators, but they were clean, and their children were clean.

Mr Southey insisted that Swedenborg come with him to his classroom, so he could walk him through his lesson plan. When they left, Mr Southey told his son to stay behind and wait for him. Jack continued to sort through the stacks of papers, not knowing what else to do. He found that he was holding his breath, though he couldn't have explained why. The boy looked on edge, too. He was sitting in the far corner of the office, with the desk firmly between himself and Jack. Every time Jack glanced over at him, the boy winced.

"Are you alright?" said Jack, after a while. "There's water to drink if you're thirsty."



The boy nodded, and so Jack poured him a glass from the tap. When he went to hand it to him, however, the boy leaned back into the wall and gestured for Jack to put the glass down on the desk.

“Why can’t you just take it from me?” said Jack.

The boy’s voice sounded hoarse and strangled. “It’s nothing personal, but my dad told me about you kids in here.”

“So you don’t want the water then?” Jack held out the glass again, and this time the boy reached out and grabbed it, sucking down its contents in one gulp. When he was done, he dropped the cup on the floor.

“Hey! I have to clean up in here you know.”

“I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to....please don’t hurt me.”

Jack almost laughed. The boy was a good six inches taller than him, and considerably more bulky, and yet he was squirming like Jack was some kind of wild beast.

“What exactly did your dad say about us?”

According to Martin — that was the boy’s name — his dad told him that all The PIT children were basically feral, kept locked away until they could be broken and trained. He seemed to think that Claimants were monsters, like the ugly silhouettes on Swedenborg’s Enemy propaganda posters. Jack tried to explain to him the way that things really were. The PIT kids weren’t feral, but by the time they left they were often broken.

When Swedenborg and Southey came back, the two boys were kneeling on the floor together, organising the chaplain’s papers. The teacher barked at his son angrily and yanked him to his feet, muttering something about the cost of trousers and dusty knees.

“So what?” said Mary, when he told her the story afterwards.

“What do you think it’s like to be that kid?”

“What’s a ‘punk’?”

“I dunno.”

It was a small thing, but it seemed important somehow. It was one of the rare times since he’d been seeing Mary that Jack really missed Gordon. Gordon always seemed to have answers to these kinds of questions.

“Maybe his life’s just like ours,” Mary said later. “Only he gets clean clothes.”

“Yeah,” said Jack. It didn’t sound like something Gordon would have said.

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It was two weeks later that Jack awoke to the sound of shouting. At first he thought he was still dreaming, but when he opened his eyes he saw a crowd of Claimants and Potestates gathered around a bunk, all yelling and jostling. It was Billy’s bunk. There were around ten

Potestates, all stood in a ring with their backs facing outwards. The Claimants were huddled round the circle, straining to see what was going on. Jack jumped up and squirmed his way to the front.

Billy was standing by his bunk, dressed only in his underwear. His clothes were strewn across the floor, as if they'd been thrown there. Behind Billy, one of the Potestates had broken away from the circle and was cutting open Billy's mattress with a jagged knife. Once he'd made a number of long tears, he began pulling out the cotton wool stuffing and throwing it at Billy. Some of it landed in his hair, making him look like an old man: white headed and ridiculous. After the mattress had been completely emptied, the Potestate began work on the pillow, and then the sheets and the covers.

Through all of this, Billy stood quietly and passively, staring straight ahead, until suddenly he let out a gasp. Felix's box must have been disturbed during the search, and he'd gotten loose. Billy made a move to go after him, but the Potestate with the knife was quicker. His boot made a soft, crunching sound.

Billy roared like an animal, but before he could grab hold of the Potestate he was cut short by a sudden kick to back of his legs that sent him sprawling. In an instant, four other Potestates were on him, kicking and clubbing him where he lay.

For a split second, Jack felt the old sense of fear and paralysis wash over him — the same terror that had allowed him to lie helplessly on the ground when Mole-face and his gang attacked Billy. *Not this time*, he thought. *Not again*.

Before anyone could stop him, Jack snaked his way through the crowd and darted towards the place where Billy lay. Jack hated violence, but a small kid in tough places learns how to fight dirty. He flung his full weight into a flying kick at a Potestate's kneecap, before whirling round to deliver a punch at another one's groin. For a few blessed seconds, Jack was a blur of fists and feet, and the Potestates couldn't lay a finger on him.

Then a heavy fist struck Jack across the jaw, sending him thudding to the ground. He braced himself for the next blow.

“Stop this at once!”

Jack recognised the voice immediately.

## Chapter 11. A Request

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*'what cause*

*Moved our grand parents in that happy state,*

*Favoured of Heav'n so highly, to fall off*

*From their Creator, and transgress His will'*

***John Milton – Paradise Lost***

According to Matron Sullivan, Billy's jaw was probably fractured, and he had black bruising all over his ribs, indicating that at least one of them was broken. His left ankle was badly sprained, too. He'd been taken to the infirmary, of course, and Jack had gone with him. Normally this wouldn't have been allowed, but Raffa insisted that it would be best for Billy to have a friend nearby. He seemed to genuinely care about Billy's wellbeing. After he'd broken up the fight and sent the Potestates away, Raffa had personally carried Billy onto the trolley which took him to the infirmary. Jack was used to seeing the Chief Administrator being powerful, strong — even scary — so it was odd to see him look so gentle.

"I'm so sorry about this, my lad," he told Jack, as they walked back to the dorm from the infirmary.

"Why are you sorry? It was you that saved him."

Raffa sighed. The PIT was supposed to be his kingdom, he said. But he couldn't even keep Jack and his friends safe. For the first time since Jack had known him, Raffa looked old and tired. Jack did his best to reassure him: The PIT had always been a cruel and violent place. The Potestates attacked people all the time, and the Claimant's themselves were often no better. As he spoke, Jack thought of Mole-face, and again the question of who had killed the boy nagged at him. Could it even have been a rogue group of Potestates, like the ones who'd attacked Billy?

"You used to be safe, though. Didn't you, Jack?"

Raffa had stopped halfway along a deserted corridor. He seemed so frail and worn out. He even had to lean on Jack for support, clasping his long, bony fingers on the boy's shoulder.

"What do you mean?"

Raffa didn't answer, but gave Jack a rueful smile. Of course, Jack knew what he meant. In the past, Gordon would never have let Jack get hurt. That was hard enough to take, but it had never occurred to him until now that Billy was also at risk now that the power of Gordon's protection had been withdrawn. When Raffa had first told Jack that Gordon had

dumped him just because he'd got bored of him, Jack couldn't believe it. Gordon had many Favourites, but Jack was his *friend*.

But the truth was that Jack could find no other explanation for what had happened. He didn't want to believe it, but perhaps Raffa had been right all along.

As if reading his thoughts, Raffa reached out and stroked Jack's hair. "I'm sorry, my lad. I know it's hard to face."

For a moment, Jack wanted nothing more than to bury his head in Raffa's arms and cry. But then he thought of Billy, and how strong and brave he was, and so he held the tears back.

"I'm fine," he said. "I'm just worried."

"I know. But this is what happens when order breaks down. I wish this was the only incident of Potestates beating the Claimants, but I see things like this happening all the time. I'm sorry to say this Jack, because I know that you cared for him, but I blame Gordon. The Potestates behave as they do because there is no discipline! How can there be, when the orders of their superiors are undermined by a child of sixteen? I need you to help me *end this*."

End this? Jack's heart was beating fast. When they'd first met properly, in the old swimming pool, Raffa had asked Jack to tell him Gordon's secrets, and to help him fight Gordon's influence in The PIT. But something in the way he spoke told Jack that Raffa was talking about something more this time.

"I need you to do this thing for me, Jack." Raffa was leaning in close now, his fingers clutched tightly around Jack's shoulders. "The Potestates are too afraid of him. I don't trust the other Claimants. You won't be safe until it's done — Billy won't be safe. Not until there's *order*. If I can get you in a room with him, will you do this thing for me?"

"I don't understand. What thing?"

"I want you to kill George Gordon."

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Billy had been in the infirmary for days now, and he didn't seem to be getting any better. One or two of the other Claimants even gave Jack some gifts to take for him — toys, cigarettes, even a piece of stolen chocolate. That really scared Jack. If the others were being kind, it meant that they thought Billy was going to die.

Raffa's request hung over Jack like a dark cloud, but he tried to thrust it out of his mind. It was a ridiculous idea. He was angry with Gordon for abandoning him, of course, and he was even angrier about what had happened to Billy. But he could never kill Gordon — Jack was no murderer. Even if he'd wanted to do it, why would Raffa choose him? If you

were looking for a killer, there were plenty of them to be found in The PIT. Raffa said he didn't trust anyone else, that Jack was the only one he believed in. Was that why Raffa had been so kind to him? The Chief Administrator treated him like a son — more so than his real father had ever done — but was he really just trying to mould him into a reliable assassin? He buried the thoughts as best he could. Raffa hadn't demanded an answer yet. He still had time to think of a way out.

Billy spent most of his time sleeping, excused from classes until things were 'resolved'. When Jack could, he spent most of his time sitting at his bedside, talking to him whether he was conscious or not. Matron Sullivan said that Billy might have a serious head injury, and that it was good to try and keep his brain active at all times, even when asleep. She'd suggested singing to him, but Jack didn't know many songs, so he'd decided to tell him stories instead. To begin with, he had gone through all the ones he'd learned as a child — The Wicked Beggar, The Happy Lordlings, The Triumph of the Morlocks. Then he'd read his way through a book of parables that Swedenborg had given him — The Prodigal Son and The Workers of the Vineyard.

All of these stories felt wrong to Jack. If the purpose was to stimulate Billy's mind, then these tales weren't going to do it. Billy hated make-believe, and he found religion confusing. Jack liked to live in fantasies — it was why he loved to draw — but Billy was always a creature of the real world. It was this that caused Jack to remember the story of Robin Hood. Of course, this story was no more 'real life' than any of the others — a knight robbing from the rich to give to the poor — but it was linked in Jack's mind with another story, one he'd been told a long time before. It was this story that he decided to tell to the sleeping Billy.

When Jack first became a Favourite, Gordon took him to one side to explain how it was that he, the son of one of the most powerful Creator families in Paradise, had ended up in The PIT. It was a question Jack had often pondered, but never asked. You never asked Gordon questions, you simply waited for him to give you the answers.

Gordon began by telling Jack about Robin Hood and his Merry Men. It was not a story Jack had ever heard before, and he could see why. It was at odds with everything he'd ever been taught. The idea that it could be virtuous to steal was bizarre enough, but then to give away those ill-gotten gains to people who had done nothing to earn them? It made no sense. He'd been told over and over again that there was No Dignity in Charity, but there could be Pride in Poverty.

Gordon then explained that it was Robin Hood that had landed him in The PIT. Jack didn't understand, but Gordon said that some stories have the power to change things — even

people. The first time Gordon heard about Robin Hood was from one of his nannies: a very old lady who knew a lot of stories, both real and made up. She could remember as far back as The Sea Wall being built, and knew all kinds of history. And yet it was the story of Robin Hood that seemed to matter most.

When Gordon asked his father about the nanny's tales he'd been furious. The old woman was sent away, and replaced by a young man with a hard face and a lot of dull books that he'd forced Gordon to read.

Gordon's family weren't aristocrats like Robin Hood — they were Creators, and what they created was wealth. Quite how they did this was not something Gordon had ever truly understood, though his father tried to explain it to him. They owned factories that made things people needed. They paid people to work in the factories and make things, which they then sold to other people. They also owned houses, as well as schools and hospitals, which they charged people to use, including their own workers. This was good, because it meant that they got most of the wages they paid out back. The more they did this, the more wealth was created, so they bought more factories, more homes, more shops, more schools and hospitals. It seemed to Gordon that the only thing that grew in this equation was his *father's* wealth.

He first started stealing from his father at mealtimes. They always ate their supper together when they were both at home — Mr Gordon insisted upon it. The things Gordon stole were minor trinkets: silver cutlery, crystal glasses, china caviar pots. He'd sneak them to his servants as gifts, fancying that they would be grateful to him. Indeed, most of them thanked him for his generosity, but not one of them would actually agree to take anything.

The problem, Gordon guessed, was that the things he'd given away were not helpful to ordinary people. What good was silverware when they struggled to afford food? If he was going to steal, he'd have to steal something useful. That was when he hatched the plan to steal clothes. Clothes were something that everybody needed, and everybody could use. His family's servants were all provided with their own special uniforms of course, but he had seen them leaving the house at the end of the day in their own ragged outfits.

Stealing his father's clothes was obviously too risky to even begin to contemplate. Fortunately, Gordon did know of one stash of clothes that nobody ever used. It was a shame that they were only women's clothes — gowns, shawls, dresses — but they could surely be cut up and altered to make something suitable for a man or a child. He took as much as he could carry and hid it in his bedroom. His father would never know they'd gone.

But Gordon was wrong. The very next morning, his father burst into his room, screaming his head off about Gordon 'disrespecting his mother'. Gordon was confused. He didn't have a mother. He tried to explain what he'd been doing, but it just made things worse.

Gordon would only see his father again one more time after that day, when he signed him over into the care of The PIT.

When Jack was done telling the story, Billy was beginning to stir from his sleep. Jack leaned down and stroked his friend's cheek. He knew that he could never kill Gordon — not even for Raffa. He knew what he had to do.

## Chapter 12. Fire from the Gods

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*I filled a hollow reed with fire,*

*Stolen from heaven'*

***Prometheus Bound - Aeschylus***

“It’s impossible.”

“That’s not what you said when we were on the farm.”

“But we’re not on the farm anymore. It probably wouldn’t have worked anyway.”

“But you said yourself that getting out of The PIT would be easy.”

“In theory. It’s the bit *after* we escape that worries me now.”

“We could go to The North.”

“Where The Enemy lives?”

“I know, but maybe they’d help us. They’re the enemies of Paradise after all, and so would we be, if we run away from The PIT.”

Mary sighed and sat down on the dirt. She had insisted that they met in the Greenhouse because she was worried that her rhubarb crop was being attacked by some kind of disease.

“How would we travel?” Mary asked.

“You said there was a train in the village. If we could get there...”

“We’d be missed before we got anywhere close and they’d find us.”

“There has to be a way.” Jack slumped to the floor next to Mary and put his head on her shoulder. “I can’t stay here.”

He told Mary about the mess he was in — about the attack on Billy, and about Raffa’s terrifying request. The only way out of the whole situation was to run.

“There must be buses and trucks and things,” said Jack, eventually. “We could steal one.”

“Neither of us know how to drive.”

“We could take a Potestate hostage. Make him drive for us.”

“What’s gotten into you?”

Jack got back to his feet and stalked across the allotment, kicking out at the compost bin as he passed it, spilling its contents across the ground. Immediately, Mary picked up a nearby spade and began shovelling the compost back into its container. Jack watched her sulkily, too ashamed to apologise, too angry to help. When Mary had finished, she picked up a piece of bamboo and started to draw lines in the dirt.



“What are you doing?”

Mary didn't answer. She was drawing a collection of shapes, mostly squares and rectangles, with the occasional circle thrown in here and there.

“It's beautiful,” he said.

“Trust you to find a map beautiful.”

“A map of where?”

“I must be crap at drawing. It's a map of The PIT. And a few of the places around it.”

Jack looked at the marks in the dirt more closely, and sure enough, now that he knew what to look for, he could see the sense in it: the big circle jutting out to one side was The Dome, a smaller one off to the top right hand corner was the Greenhouse, that cluster of wonky rectangles was the Old Buildings.

“How does this help us?”

“I don't know yet,” said Mary. “Give me a chance to think.”

She stared at the map for a full five minutes before speaking again. Jack nearly passed out from holding his breath.

“What if we get a lift?”

“A what?”

Mary pointed her stick at a rectangle by her feet. “This is the garage. It's where the teachers who don't live on site get dropped off and picked up. There're buses that leave every day before lights out — I'm pretty certain they go to the town out past the farm.”

“How would we get on it?” Jack could feel his heart beating faster.

“It should be simple enough. The garage is on the other side of the New Buildings, but there's a way in to them near an old classroom, not too far from your pastor's office. You could make up some excuse to get away with your Hall Pass and sneak in. It's not too far from my dorm either. I should be able to figure something out.”

“Then what?”

“So long as we get there in time, we can stow away in one of the bus's luggage holds. I've been in the garage before — the drivers turn up hours before they actually have to pick anybody up, and they spend most of it standing about outside and smoking. The buses will be unguarded...probably.”

“Then once we're at the town we just have to sneak off and get onto the train!”

“That won't be easy. Remember, I'm not even sure where it goes. It starts off heading north, but it might turn. If we get lucky we can jump on a freight carriage on one of the night trains. We just have to hope it takes us somewhere we can survive for a while. We'll need to take supplies of course, and I'll get you some clothes made, too.”

“Clothes?”

“You weren’t expecting to escape in your PIT overalls were you? I’ll make them out of old uniforms and dye them with some nettles. The colour won’t be very flattering, but at least you won’t look like a PIT kid.”

“Is there anything I can do?”

“You can try and gather up anything you think might be useful. It might be good to draw up a copy of this map, too, so you know where you’re going.”

“Mary...”

“Yeah?”

“Is this going to work?”

Mary grinned. “Do you have a better idea?”

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The next few days were torture for Jack. He’d hardly seen Mary since their discussion in the Greenhouse, as she’d been too busy making preparations. She’d been pretty tight-lipped about exactly what these ‘preparations’ were, but she was clear that they were important, delicate, and time consuming. The waiting was unbearable, and every moment he was afraid that Raffa would appear, seeking an answer. Jack couldn’t bear the thought of having to say no to him — even when the request was so grisly. Raffa had shown him such kindness.

Jack did have some distractions. His lessons continued, of course, and it seemed like every day there were new subjects being added to the curriculum. Mostly they were VA’s (Vocation Activities). In their maths lessons they were now spending half of the class learning about trigonometry by assembling wooden and cardboard crates — apparently box shapes contained interesting angles. Even Wambach’s history and culture classes were changing; instead of listening to him talk, and having discussions about the founding ideology of Paradise — Opportunity in Adversity, Work as Reward, Dignity in Toil — they were spending most of their lessons stapling together the pages of catalogues and directories, shipped in from an off-site print works. Jack almost felt bad for Wambach — without the chance to preach, the fire seemed to have drained out of him, and he spent most of the lessons just staring out of the window.

The other thing Jack had to divert his attention was supply gathering. Mary had just told him to get whatever he thought might be useful, but that she’d cover the essentials like food and water. His first idea had been to try and get some weapons — a knife maybe — but every time he thought about using it his stomach turned. The whole point of escaping was so that he wouldn’t have to hurt anybody. If he had to hurt someone in order to escape, then he might as well stay put.

His second idea was fire. They would need warmth, and maybe something to cook on, so fire seemed like a must. To begin with he was stumped, but then he thought about smoking. A lot of Claimants and Potestates smoked, and they all used matches. When he was a Favourite, one of Jack's main duties had been dishing out matches and cigarettes to Claimants. God only knew where Gordon got them, but he seemed to have an almost limitless supply. He used to get some of the boys to spend hours strapping individual matches to individual cigarettes, using elastic bands to hold them together. In return, he'd let each Favourite take a handful out of each batch.

But a few matches would be no good to Jack, and there was no Favourite he could ask, anyway. The few that he sometimes saw at mealtimes, or in The Dome, shunned him completely. What Jack wanted was a lighter — as good as a hundred matches — and he knew of only one man in The PIT who possessed one.

Swedenborg's pipe was famous among Claimants. He didn't smoke it in public very often, but when he did it was always an occasion. It was made from some kind of animal horn by the look of it: a wide, curving bowl which tapered into a silver-plated mouthpiece. He stuffed it with thick swatches of black tobacco, which he lit with a steel lighter. The pipe itself spent most of its time locked in a filing cabinet, but the lighter was always kept in the chaplain's pocket. Jack often saw him take it out and play with it, absentmindedly snapping the lid back and forth, flicking the flame into life with his thumb.

Stealing the thing was not going to be an easy task, but Jack was determined to try. Mary hadn't given a definitive timeframe for the escape, but he knew he had no time to lose, so the very first Sunday that he was working with Swedenborg, Jack decided put his plan into action.

The basis of the plan was simple. Sunday was a sermon day, which meant that the chaplain would change into his formal robes. Usually he would take off his jacket before doing this, and the lighter was always kept in the breast pocket. All Jack had to do was wait until Swedenborg left, take the lighter, and hide it in his shoe. The chaplain was so disorganised, and he had so much trust in Jack, that there was no way he'd ever imagine it had been stolen — he'd simply assume that he'd lost it. He'd probably even ask Jack to help him look for it.

When the day actually arrived, Jack was beginning to feel less confident. Swedenborg was late in preparing his sermon, and he was sweating and agitated — his habitually smiling face was creased with frustration, as he waited for the ancient speech-presser to feed out the final pages of his script.

“I must ask for a new one of these,” muttered Swedenborg. “I’ve had this one for twenty years, and it wasn’t new then.” He banged a fist on top of the paper loading mechanism. It rattled, but the paper came no faster. “Garbage.”

“If you like, you can take the pages that are already printed and I’ll bring the rest out to you when they’re done? You’ll be late.”

Swedenborg snatched a look at his watch and groaned. “Fine. Don’t dawdle though. If I have to stop and wait for you half way through a sermon I shan’t be best pleased.”

The pastor left at a shambling jog, his robes fluttering behind him. Finally, Jack was alone. Swedenborg’s jacket was hanging from the back of his chair. Jack eyed it warily. Now that the chance was here, he felt strangely hesitant. It wasn’t fear that held him, but he was reluctant nevertheless. He still carried the two coins that Swedenborg had given him after Mole-face’s funeral. They were a strange present, but still the only proper gift that any adult ever gave him.

But he needed fire. Without fire, what use was he?

Before he knew it, he had crossed the office floor and was standing by the chair. The heavy speech-presser on the desk filled the room with a repetitive thudding and hissing as it hammered out Swedenborg’s words. Slowly, Jack reached up and put his hand into the breast pocket of the chaplain’s coat, his finger closing around the lighter. All he had to do was take it.

“What in the name of all that’s holy are you doing, boy?!”

Jack snatched out his hand, sending the lighter tumbling to the floor. It landed with a clunk at Swedenborg’s feet.

“You’re back?” Jack stammered.

“I forgot my prayer book.” Swedenborg leaned forward and picked up the lighter from the floor. “Were you...were you trying to steal from me, boy?”

“No.”

“What were you doing?”

Jack’s brained whirred. Mary would know what to say. His hand went to his pocket and closed around the coins that Swedenborg had given him. There was only one thing he could say, he realised.

“I’m sorry. I was trying to steal from you. I’m trying to escape, and I need something to make fire with. I need your lighter, sir.”

Swedenborg’s face turned violet, and he was visibly shaking. He staggered across the room, passed Jack, and unlocked a draw in one of his filing cabinets. With his back turned, Jack couldn’t see what the chaplain was doing, but he heard the unmistakable pop of a cork

being pulled loose. When Swedenborg turned around the shaking was less pronounced. He shambled across to the office door and flicked the latch, locking them both inside.

“My boy,” he whispered. “I’m *sure* I misheard you just now, didn’t I?”

“I don’t know sir. I said I was trying to escape and I need your lighter. Is that what you heard, sir?” Jack felt like he was falling from the top of a building.

“You’ve gone mad, child.”

“No, sir.”

“There is no escaping from The PIT!”

“Please, sir. All I need is the lighter.”

Swedenborg opened and closed his mouth, but his hand moved to his pocket and withdrew the lighter. Mouth still flapping, wordlessly, he handed it over to Jack, who immediately shoved it into his boot. The speech-presser jerked to a sudden halt, filling the room with silence.

“Thank you, sir.”

“If you’re caught with that, I will say you stole it. I will suggest that you are beaten and deported with immediate effect.” Swedenborg leaned forward and placed a hand on Jack’s shoulder. “The first man to steal fire had his liver pecked out by birds,” he said.

## Chapter 13. Betrayals

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*'It is for God to punish wicked people; we should learn to forgive'*

*Emily Brontë – Wuthering Heights*

The attic was dark and smelled of damp. The only light came from the soapy tallow of the candle, and the fumes caught in Jack's throat.

"Why did we have to meet here? What's wrong with the Greenhouse?"

The candlelight made Mary look more serious than usual. In her dusty overalls, fading to grey in some places, she looked older than a girl of fourteen.

"We've met there too many times recently. It's not safe to keep going back."

"I thought you said the Potestates were useless."

"It's not just them we've got to worry about though, is it? There's teachers, the Matrons. And the other Claimants, too. If the wrong one finds out what we're doing, they could be just as dangerous."

Jack thought of Mole-face, almost certainly killed by another Claimant.

"I've been doing what you told me," he said. "Doubling back along corridors, counting to ten before I go through a door to make sure no one comes up behind me. All that stuff."

Mary frowned, as though she didn't believe him, but nodded anyway. "There's Raffa to think about as well. We don't know what he might be up to."

Jack shrugged. He didn't think Raffa would have him followed. Although Jack knew that what the Chief Administrator wanted him to do was wrong, he still believed that Raffa was a good man at heart. He'd saved Jack and Billy from the Potestates, and he'd been looking out for them even before then.

"What did we need to meet about anyway?" said Jack, eager to change the subject. "I told you I got the lighter, you're getting the clothes and the supplies..."

"I've sorted all that."

"Good. Then you should be working out how you're going to move it all without being seen and..."

"It's done. All of it. Jack, we're ready."

"It's only been a week."

"There really wasn't that much to prepare. I think we should go on Saturday."

"But that's only four days away!"

“I thought you wanted to escape.” Mary stood up and stalked off into the far corner of the attic. It was a big space, and beyond the circle of candlelight there was only darkness.

“I do,” said Jack. “I just...didn’t think it would be so soon.”

“Well it is. Okay?”

Jack wanted to speak, but he didn’t know what to say. Mary was usually so calm, so in control. The way she was talking now, she almost sounded angry. Or afraid.

“How did the clothes turn out?”

“Fine.” Mary stepped back into the light, the deep brown of her eyes flickering in the orange flame. “The dye didn’t take properly on your shirt, though. It still looks blue in places.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

They stood in silence for a few moments, while the candle guttered and spat. There was a strong draught blowing in from somewhere, but it wasn’t cold. It was dry and warm, and it made the back of Jack’s overall cling to his back.

“Is there anything else?” Jack said at last. “We’ll meet on Saturday, where you said.”

“At seven.”

“Seven. Right.”

Jack turned to find the hatch he’d come up through, but before he could move Mary put her hand on his arm.

“Can we just...talk for a while?” she said.

“What is it?”

“Nothing. I’m not very good at this.”

“I couldn’t do this by myself.”

“No. I mean...talking.”

“I’m not much good at it either.”

“Don’t lie. You’re smart. You can talk about anything, I’ve heard you.”

“I’m not so smart. I can draw a bit, and remember stuff if I try. I’m quite good at making things with my hands, but nowhere near as good as you. I couldn’t make a garden grow.”

“Of course you could. It’s easy.”

“Well, maybe I *could*. I wouldn’t though. I’d give up after the first carrot died.”

Mary smiled, but Jack could tell she was forcing it.

“I just like being on my own. I don’t know how to...talk about stuff,” she said.

“You can talk to me. I like being on my own, too.” Jack tried to think of something to say that would make it all better — something that Gordon would’ve said, back when they were friends. “We can be on our own together.”

“I’m being stupid. I should go.”

“I’m scared too, you know?”

Mary didn’t smile this time. She didn’t seem to know what to do: she just stared at him, her brown eyes flashing in the candlelight.

“It’s alright to be scared,” Jack continued. “I didn’t used to think so. I used to think being scared meant I was a coward.”

“I’m not frightened.”

“What makes you a coward isn’t being scared — it’s doing nothing. If you’re scared of something, then you need to do something about it. I’ve lost count of the times I’ve been afraid of something and just sat there and done nothing.”

“What changed?”

Jack didn’t reply, but he hoped that she knew the answer. It was Mary — she had changed him. A lot of stuff had happened to Jack over the last several weeks: being cut off from Gordon; getting beaten up; Billy going to the infirmary; Mole-face’s murder — it went on and on. Without Mary, those things would have made him weaker and more afraid than ever. With Mary, he felt as though they had strengthened him.

As if she could tell what he was thinking, Mary laid a hand on Jack’s shoulder. Then, with a sudden shake of her head, she drew herself up and grinned, and all at once she seemed herself again: the girl that grew vegetables and made daring escape plans. The girl who would notice a horse drawn out of perspective. The girl he was in love with, he realised.

“Mary...”

“Did I ever tell you how I ended up here?”

Jack paused, confused. “How you ended up here? Yeah. Your parents died. There was an accident at the fish factory.”

“That’s part of it...”

And there, in the candlelight, Mary began to tell Jack the story of how she ended up in The PIT. Every Claimant had a story like hers, but you only ever told the real one to the people you trusted the most. To the people you cared about.

When she was six, Mary’s parents had both died, and she was left in the care of her brothers: Michael and Obadiah. Michael was eighteen, Oby was fifteen. At six, Mary had the choice of either paying to go to school, or going to work with her brothers in the fish factory. Mary wanted to go to school, and Michael agreed, but Oby didn’t want to share his wages.



Michael was so angry that he kicked his brother out of the house. Oby hated Michael for that, and so he left the town altogether, saying he couldn't live in the same square mile as Michael. Nobody knew where he went.

"I went to a free school when I was little," said Jack. "There was an old couple lived in the flat next to my dad that ran a class for the local kids. To learn reading and writing and stuff. I used to go when he was at the pub."

"You were lucky, then. Michael tried to save up enough money to send me to school, but it was hard on one man's wages."

"Why didn't you just go to work and help him save up?"

"Because once you start work they don't let you leave. Least not for school, anyway."

So this situation carried on for over a year — Mary hiding in a tiny flat, only going out in the evenings, and even then only rarely. But Michael was working hard, and in a couple more months he would have saved up enough for Mary to take a year of schooling.

But then Oby came home.

At this point in the story, Mary stopped, and she looked like she might start to cry. Jack leaned forward to comfort her, but she snapped his hand away. After a minute or two she gathered herself again. Jack asked her why her brother's return should make her so upset, but when she told him, he understood completely.

When Oby came home, it was as a PIT Bull.

Jack was stunned. Nobody wanted to be a PIT Bull. It was a dirty job, and they gave it to dirty men — robbers, murderers, thieves — people who'd normally be hanged. A PIT Bull's job was to round up the children who weren't in work or school — often the children of their friends, their neighbours — and to send them off to The PIT, or to some other institution just like it.

"What did he do to you?" asked Jack.

"He brought me here, of course, but that wasn't the worst of it. Hiding a child from the PIT Bulls is a hanging offence."

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The next few days were agonising. Every lesson seemed to last twice as long as it ought to, and everything anyone said sounded like a threat, or a hint that they knew about Jack's plans. Even Billy, usually so reliably bluff and cheerful, seemed off, as though he sensed something wasn't right. Maybe it was just that he missed Felix.

At least he had started to recover from his injuries, though he still had to walk with crutches, and often complained of pain. Matron Sullivan had even released him back in to the dorm, though he was still being excused from attending classes.

Jack hadn't told Billy about the escape. He told himself that it was safer not to tell him, but deep down he knew that it was because he felt guilty. There was no way they could take him with them — not with his injuries — and Jack was afraid of what would happen to Billy when he was gone. When Jack and Mary escaped, at least they'd have each other. Who would Billy have? He couldn't shake the feeling that he was abandoning him.

Billy did at least have company for the moment. Ever since he'd been strong enough to sit up in bed, the old history and culture teacher, Wambach, had been coming to give Billy lessons in the dorm. He'd come in the evening, after the regular day was over, and sit on the end of Billy's bunk, reading in a low whisper from a stack of books he carted around with him on a trolley. Jack managed to catch sight of a couple of the titles, and was surprised to see *Conserving Greatness in a Changing World*, and *Paradise: The Resurrection of Old Values*. They had been two of Wambach's favourites, but Raffa banned them from the curriculum weeks ago. Since then, the only philosophy book they were supposed to read from in culture class was *The End of Weakness*. Jack had never liked Wambach's books — they were all about how great the world *used* to be, and *might* be again — but he liked Raffa's choice even less. At least Wambach's books imagined that the world could be a good place. *The End of Weakness* just asked you to accept the world as it was, and to take what you could for yourself.

Jack asked Billy once, after Wambach had left, what the old teacher had been saying to him.

"He started off just reading the books to me, like he would do in class. Then recently he's been getting a little creepy."

"He's always been creepy."

"Not like this." Billy twisted in his bed, wincing at the pain in his ribs. "Yesterday...I think he was crying."

"Wambach? He once hit a boy for sneezing!"

"I'm telling you. He was reading out this bit from a book...I don't remember which one...but it was something about Paradise, like when they first made it or something. He read this bit about the Angels. Then he cried."

Wambach loved to talk about the Angels. That was his word for the ordinary people of Paradise: the workers, the builders, the teachers etc. When he talked about the history of Paradise, it was always from the viewpoint of the Angels. Gordon had always told Jack that the Creators had got rid of The Enemy, and built Paradise as way to serve their own ends: to make them even richer and more powerful than they already were. But Wambach told it

different. He though Paradise was built for the Angels, as a way to give ordinary people a chance to find dignity.

“I think he’s sad because the world didn’t turn out like the books said it would.” Jack was guessing, but he knew what it was like to imagine a life that could never happen.

“Maybe,” said Billy. “Or maybe he had the life he wanted already, and it got took away from him.”

“Well, him and the other teachers don’t seem to mind doing that to us. We had lives before we came here.”

“I like my life in here better than I ever did out there. At least there’s food and a proper bed. And people.”

“But you always said you liked the outside? I thought you liked being free to do what you want.”

“I guess. But what was there to do out there except fight and run and hide? I didn’t have any friends.”

“What about your family?” Jack thought about Mary’s brothers. “You never talk about them.”

“I never knew them. The earliest thing I remember is being at a work crèche. One of those places in factories where people can dump their kids. I don’t know what happened to my mother, but no one ever came to get me. The workers raised me in the factory. Took turns looking after me until I was old enough to work, but there wasn’t no jobs for me to take on. That’s when I ran off. If I’d stayed, the Bulls would have come for me.”

“They got you in the end, anyway.”

“Yeah. Looking back I should’ve just stayed put.”

They sat quietly for a while, listening to the chattering of the other Claimants, until at last Billy cleared his throat. “I think I figured out why Wambach was crying,” he said. “It was the book.”

“It was so bad he cried?”

Billy smiled, but shook his head. “No. He only cried after he asked me who’d written it. I didn’t know the answer.”

“Does it matter?”

“It was him. It was Wambach’s book. *He* wrote the bloody thing.”

“That doesn’t seem like something that would make a man cry.”

Billy shrugged, flinching at the pain in his side.

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It was two days before the escape that Jack got the note. One of the Dollies brought it to the dorm, stuffed between a fold in his pillowcase. It simply read: *The Arch. G.* Jack's hands shook as he turned the paper over and over. There was only one person the note could have come from.

At first, he wasn't sure if he should go. As much as he'd tried to find another explanation, Raffa's story that Gordon had simply dumped Jack seemed like the only logical answer. He couldn't imagine doing as Raffa asked, and killing Gordon, but still — why should Jack go running now, just because Gordon whistled?

And yet, he couldn't help but keep re-reading the note. Every time he closed his eyes, or tried to draw, or to concentrate on something else, he found his hands wandering, as if of their own accord, back to the paper. Each time he read it, his resolve broke down just little bit more. Perhaps it really was just a big understanding. Maybe, if Jack just listened, Gordon could explain everything — make it all alright again. Maybe...maybe...

He had to give Gordon one last chance.

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The Arch was a thick band of black steel, running from east to west along the curve of The Dome. On the western side, the Arch sunk into the outer wall of The PIT, overhanging the main gateway back into the facility. On the Eastern side, it provided the only solid wall in the otherwise open meshwork of The Dome. It was a prized location on days when it was raining, or the wind was blowing. Jack had sat there many times himself, when he was still a Favourite.

Now, however, the sun was out and shining, and Jack no longer wore a red armband. When Jack approached the Arch, no one stopped him — there was nobody there *to* stop him. He sat down and leaned his back against the metal, but when it touched the bare skin on his neck it burned, so he slouched forward. What had he expected? A welcoming party? Gordon himself, standing there with open arms and a friendly smile?

Exercise time was almost done before the boy approached him. Jack had spent the best part of his time trying to fix the image of the boys in The Dome to the back of his mind, hoping to draw a picture of them later, but they kept moving and shifting before he could remember them properly. When the boy walked out of the milling crowd, and sat down next to him, Jack almost didn't notice. But then he saw the red rag tied around his arm.

Jack had thought he knew all the Favourites — by sight if not by name — but this was clearly one of the New Boys, not much older than eight or nine by the look of him. It was unusual to be made a Favourite so young. This one seemed like he was barely out of nappies, with his wispy, white-blond hair and smooth, pink cheeks.

He didn't say anything as he sat down, just perched gingerly on the floor, tucking his boots in beneath his thighs so his overalls wouldn't touch the dirt. *Christ the Carpenter!*, thought Jack, *he's so raw he's still trying to keep his clothes clean*. He didn't say anything to the boy. You never spoke first in a situation like this. Jack knew better than anyone that when a Favourite wanted to speak to you, you kept your trap shut until it was time to answer a question.

But the boy didn't speak. He reached into his pocket and handed Jack another note. His hand shook as he passed it over, and Jack realised for the first time that the little boy was terrified. His own hands were steady. When he'd first received the summons he'd shook like a leaf, but now that he was here, in the open sunshine, with a trembling child sitting next to him, he felt utterly calm. Relaxed even.

The note was folded over, and glued shut with a glob of candle wax. That was very like Gordon. He enjoyed little flourishes like that — things that harked back to the olden days, when kings would stamp their royal seal onto letters, so you'd know it was truly from them and not some imposter. Gordon didn't have a seal, and he'd always claimed to despise the idea of kings, but he was the only person Jack knew who closed his letters with wax.

He opened it carefully, afraid to rip the paper and destroy the message inside. It was only a couple of lines, but when he looked up, having read it, the young Favourite had already scuttled off into the crowd. Jack stood up and walked over to the mesh wall of The Dome, folded up the piece of paper, and shoved it through one of the gaps.

That night he couldn't sleep. Why did it have to be now, so close to the end? He'd almost made himself believe that they weren't ever friends. But all it took was two lines on a piece of paper from Gordon to make Jack feel like a scared kid again, pathetically grateful for the merest scrap of affection. But he wasn't that boy anymore. Was he?

*Meet me in the Food Hall. Your hiding place. We need to talk. Alone. G.*

## Chapter 14. A Test

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*'Honest people don't hide their deeds'*

*Emily Brontë - Wuthering Heights*

It was maths for first lesson. At least Cripslock was being allowed to do some real teaching today — apparently they had run out of boxes and crates to assemble. He was trying to show them how to do long division again, which Jack always struggled with. No matter how hard he tried to keep a note of all the extra numbers, he always had too many left over at the end. Cripslock said it was because he was stupid, but Jack knew he was smarter than most of the other kids in the class. One of the first things that Gordon ever taught him was that some people were good at certain things, and others weren't.

The next lesson of the day was science. They were still doing component assembly in pairs, but with Billy unable to attend lessons Jack been partnered with one of the New Boys — a scrawny kid with a pinched face and a broken nose. Jack tried talking to him a few times, but the boy just scowled at him.

Miss South was still in charge of the lessons, and she still kept her two Potestates with her at all times — Rex and Fido as Jack liked to call them. They followed her everywhere around The PIT, even into the bathrooms according to some of the kids, though Jack suspected that was just something they liked to snigger about. At first, she didn't seem like someone Raffa would like. She smiled a lot, with her large white teeth, and spoke with a polished, soft accent, not dissimilar to Gordon's. When Raffa spoke, you could still just about hear the hard rasp of the boy from the tower blocks.

Jack couldn't see why Raffa would choose a woman like Miss South to teach them, but as the lessons had gone on he began to understand. She was good at her job. Admittedly, her job was easy, showing Claimants how to assemble basic pieces of wiring, and supervising them as they did, but she was good at it nonetheless. In fact, she was *perfect* for the job. A job that required nothing of her but to stick pieces of metal together, and smile her pretty smile at a group of simple boys. If one of them asked a question, or tried to cause trouble, Rex and Fido would deal with them, and she would smile.

Raffa had told Jack that if you deserved it, and you tried hard enough, you could pull yourself out of the gutter and achieve great things. But he didn't like to say much about the people who didn't deserve it, and who didn't try hard. Ms South was just talented enough at a fairly simple task to land a job showing other simple minds how to copy her, but not so talented that she might accidentally teach them anything else.

The third lesson of the day was history and culture. Wambach was teaching, but there was a younger man in the classroom with him, dressed in a shiny suit and a peaked cap, much smarter than anything the other teachers wore. But Jack knew for a fact that Wambach hated hats. He considered them to be a relic of some vaguely defined, terrifying past, associated in his mind with drugs and violence, and other sins associated with idleness. But he never said anything about this young man's hat. He didn't say anything at all, really, not even to read from *The End of Weakness*. He just let them get on with binding catalogues, while the young man watched him and made notes from time to time. Jack couldn't help but feel sorry for Wambach. He was mean and unpleasant, yes, but he really did believe in things. Jack had never seen the young man with the hat before, but something about the glaze in his eyes, and the seemingly permanent smirk on his lips, told him that this person did not really *believe* in anything. He was here, no doubt, because like Miss South he would be good at his job. Wambach's job.

When it was finally time to go to the Food Hall, Jack felt numb. He'd been waiting for this since the moment that Reaver sent him to the back of the counting line. Nothing in his life had been right since then, and he'd felt Gordon's absence like a snagged toenail, grinding and pinching every moment of every day. Now it was going to be over. Gordon was going to explain everything, and everything would go back to like it was before. Jack just knew it!

Jack didn't go straight to the waste cupboard, as it would attract attention if he didn't eat. Besides, it was fish day, and that only came along once every three weeks or so. Since Jack was at the back of the queue, his portion was mostly just thick, pale sauce, heavy with uncooked lumps of flour, though the one or two small pieces of soft, white flesh almost made it a pleasant meal. Once he'd finished, rather than getting up immediately he lingered for a while. Though there was nobody around who he could talk to, he sat and listened in to some of the conversations going on around him. There was a new Laundry Dolly that Sprattly claimed he'd kissed. Maccle had beaten up a New Boy outside the workshop. Mr Grant had been sacked after turning up drunk again. Jack usually hated gossip, but there was something soothing about it today. It was all so unimportant that just listening to it was like washing his mind clean of the heavy, black seriousness that had left its mark there.

He was jerked out of his daydreaming by a crash. It was only someone dropping their tray, but it was enough to remind Jack of his situation. It would be the end of mealtime soon. He didn't have long before the Potestates and the Kitchen Matrons would be calling out for the first load of Claimants to form a lesson line. He stood up and made for the waste cupboard — the tiny, stinking room that had been his sanctuary from Mole-face and his gang.

He was nearly at the door now — the waste room was located right at the back of the Food Hall, and the rest of the Claimants gave it a wide berth because of the foul smell. Jack had forgotten to bring his home-made nosebag full of mothballs, but in a way he felt glad of the odour, as it made his eyes water enough that he could almost convince himself he wasn't crying. Whether they were tears of happiness or apprehension, he could not say.

The waste cupboard was, in truth, rather larger than a cupboard. At some point in the past it had probably been a lavatory, judging by the cracked porcelain tiling and the jutting, un-fixed piping that stuck out of the walls and floor on all sides. There was no light in the room apart from a small orange glow, emanating from an old fuse switch. It offered just enough visibility to make out the shapes of the bins and troughs that held the week's rotting leftovers.

"Hello?" whispered Jack, peering around in the hope that a familiar silhouette would emerge from the shadows. "Gordon? It's me."

There was no answer from the darkness, and Jack felt a pressing weight on his chest. If Gordon hadn't come, it could only mean that something terrible had happened to him. Or else he had just been playing with Jack all along — some sick game to amuse himself and the other Favourites. Jack didn't know what troubled him more: the idea that Gordon might be hurt, or that he might be so cruel.

But then he heard a sound. A scratching, snuffling sound, too heavy to be a rat. He followed the noise to its source, huddled behind two very large plastic containers. It was the boy from The Dome: the one who looked half a baby still, aside from the red rag tied around his bicep. He was crying.

"Where's Gordon?" Jack demanded, rather more harshly than he'd intended.

The boy continued to cry, heaving out damp, wailing sobs.

"Look," said Jack. "I can see you're upset about something, but your letter told me to meet Gordon here. Is he coming or not? It's nearly the end of mealtime."

The boy looked up at Jack, tears and snot streaming down his face. "He...he t-told me to give you the l-letter," he stammered. "He didn't t-tell me I'd have to..."

Jack sighed as the child broke down into another fit of wailing. "What didn't Gordon tell you? Do you have another letter for me?" Jack reached down to try and pull the boy to his feet but, as soon as he moved, the boy shrieked so loudly that Jack feared someone outside might hear. "I'm not going to hurt you. I just want you to tell me what's going on."

"He told me to...to wear the r-red thing."

"I don't know what Gordon told you, but I'm not dangerous, I swear. And that 'red thing' is your Favourite's armband. Surely Gordon told you that much?"



“Who...who’s Gordon?”

“What do you mean? You’re a Favourite. Gordon gave you the letter telling me to meet him here. Why the hell am I telling you this? You were there!”

“I just did what I was told.”

Jack took a deep breath in through his nose, and exhaled through his mouth — just as Gordon had taught him.

“I need you to calm down,” he said. “Just tell me what the guy who gave you the letter said.”

The colour drained from the little boy’s face, and he jabbed a finger into the darkness behind Jack. “Ask him! It was him!”

“Gordon?” Jack whirled on his heels and stepped forward.

“I knew you weren’t ready, my lad,” said Raffa.

## Chapter 15. A Miscalculation

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*'The first sort by their own suggestions fell,  
Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls deceived  
By the other first: man therefore shall find grace,  
The other none'  
John Milton – Paradise Lost*

Jack didn't know what time it was. It didn't seem long since the Potestates had bundled the sack over his head and carried him out of the waste cupboard. It felt like only a matter of minutes had passed since they tore the sack off again, and dumped him into the room he was now locked in. When he'd seen the picture of the horse hanging from the wall he had laughed like a madman, but only for a few seconds, surely. If they let him go, he would still be able to escape on Saturday. *If they let him go.*

There was no window in the waiting room, just a yellow, un-shaded light bulb hanging from the ceiling. It buzzed. To begin with it was tolerable, but after a while the sound of it began to fill Jack's mind, blocking out his thoughts as he tried to understand what was happening. In the end, he smashed the bulb with his boot. It meant he was stuck in darkness, but at least he could think.

When Raffa confronted him in the waste cupboard, Jack was sure something dreadful was going to happen — perhaps a deportation. But if that was the plan, why take him to this place? The whole thing: the note, the little boy who didn't know what a Favourite was — could it all have been just a *test*? A way to see if Jack was ready to commit murder? Raffa had always been so kind to him, and it hurt Jack to think that he might just have been using him.

When the door opened, Jack was momentarily blinded by the glare of a Potestate's torch in his eyes. Rough hands pulled him to his feet, dragging him along familiar passages and hallways towards the H.E's office. When they arrived, though, it was not the sneering old bureaucrat sitting in his chair, but Raffa, his long legs resting on the desk, and his bony fingers clasped around the back of his head. He looked utterly relaxed, even down to his clothes — a loose fitting linen suit and a pair of leather brogues. Only his eyes, framed by his steel-rimmed spectacles, betrayed any sense of hardness.

"My lad," he said, as two Potestates shoved Jack into a wooden chair opposite the desk. "It's good to see you again. So sorry to make you wait, but I had a few things to prepare."

Jack had told Mary that he didn't think of himself as a coward any longer, but it didn't change the fact that his chest was tight and breathless, and his tongue was dry as sandpaper. *He's not going to hurt you*, he told himself. *Raffa saved you. And Billy. He's a good man.* But it was no use. He couldn't speak. He couldn't move.

"You've probably worked out by now that I've played a rather mean trick on you. I'd hoped that you might have seen a bit of sense and brought a knife to your meeting with 'Gordon'. But it seems you require a final *push* over the threshold." Raffa smiled. His teeth were long and narrow, and sat uncomfortably in his soft, rounded face. "But we'll come to that a bit later on. For now, I simply want to talk with you. Do you think that's something you could agree to?"

Jack nodded. In his experience, when someone asked if they could talk *with* you, they were really just asking permission to talk *at* you.

"Did I ever tell you my story, Jack? How I became what I am?"

"You told me a man helped you."

"I was a boy like you, Jack, born into stinking poverty. But while it was the PIT Bulls that came for you, I had a different rescuer. My parents were dead, and I was only thirteen years old. The only other adult in my life was a local teacher, a fellow who came around the flats to offer cheap reading lessons. He was an idiot, but still more capable than most. He at least saw the potential in me. It was him that took me in."

"And he was the one that helped you?" said Jack.

"Don't be absurd. He was a doddering old fart who believed himself to be an 'intellectual'. He wasn't fit to raise me. But I do owe him a debt, nevertheless. It was him that introduced me to my master."

Jack nodded. He didn't know what else to do. Raffa had taken off his glasses, and Jack could see the lines of age and tiredness that surrounded those hard, black eyes.

When he was child, Raffa explained, there had been such a thing as a local council. This was a body of men, voted for by the residents of a particular district, who made decisions about the way the area should be run. Councils were banned nowadays, and rightly so, according to Raffa. The money that the councillors spent wasn't their own — it came from something called a 'tax', taken from ordinary workers' pay packets. It was the leader of this council that Raffa was introduced to by his teacher.

"Did the other man adopt you, then?" Jack interrupted. "The council leader?"

"Adoption is for sentimental old women. My master *apprenticed* me."

"What do you mean?"

“I mean that he became my real teacher. But instead of lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic, he taught me how to win.”

“To win at games?”

“At everything, my lad.”

Raffa’s master taught him that life was all a game, and that there were only winners and losers. The council leader didn’t believe in democracy any more than Raffa did, but he took the job anyway, as it gave him an opportunity to improve his own lot: to win.

“My master saw in me a capacity for something greater, stifled by the weakness of others.” Raffa continued. “In a way, that is how I see you, my lad. You haven’t had a day’s training in your life, but you’ve taught yourself to create masterpieces out of scraps of note paper and matchsticks. You can draw a face from memory after seeing it for a few seconds. With me it was numbers. I can make a row of columns dance to any tune.”

After several years working alongside his master, Raffa successfully slashed back the council’s budget to bone. When the old council leader died, Raffa took over his seat and, in his fist and final act, abolished the council altogether. That was when the Creators started to take notice of him, and began to put him in charge of special projects. Projects like The PIT.

“I don’t understand,” said Jack. What do you see in me that reminds you of *you*. I’m just good at pictures. I don’t know what a ‘budget’ is. I can’t even do long division.”

“It’s not about being able to draw well, my lad. Art isn’t worth a thing, in and of itself. It’s the fact that you were able to teach yourself that’s important!”

Raffa leaned over the desk and stared into Jack’s eyes. All Jack had to do was trust him, he said. The other children in The PIT were just drones, going through life on other people’s terms. Jack could be better than that — Raffa could see it. All he had to do was one little thing, and then Jack could become Raffa’s apprentice. They could run The PIT together, if he wanted.

Jack felt tired and confused. Raffa was talking in circles.

“I can’t kill him,” said Jack. “Why do I have to kill him?”

“You know why. He breeds disorder, and that’s the most dangerous thing of all. Remember, those Potestates only hurt Billy because Gordon has so undermined the discipline of this place. The things he has whispered in your ear over the years are wrong. If he continues to whisper them to others, then the whole foundation of Paradise might shake. For now he’s just a noisome boy, but one day he might come back into his inheritance. Then he will be a danger to the very fabric of our society. Idleness and charity would reign once again.”

“I can’t do it!”

Raffa leaned forward in his chair, locking his gaze with Jack's.

“Tonight, I will give you one more chance to see things my way.”

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The Potestates didn't take him back to the waiting room. Instead, he was put into what seemed like a flat, but bigger than the one Jack used to share with his father. It had three rooms: a kitchen, a bathroom, and a kind of sitting room. The sitting room had a brown couch and a low table, with coloured pencils and sheets of paper spread across the top of it. There was also a small bookshelf, though Jack didn't recognise the titles of any of the texts — *Atlas Shrugged*; *The Will to Power*; *The Prince*. The covers looked old and well-used, and the pages showed signs of having been folded at the corners many times over. There were as many as twelve books in all. Jack had never seen so many books all together.

The bathroom had a bucket in one corner, and a large plastic tub in the centre. The tub was already filled with steaming hot water when Jack arrived. At first, he assumed that the water was intended for someone else, but when he asked the Potestate posted outside his door he was told that Raffa wanted him to make use of the bath himself. Jack had never had a proper bath before. Claimants usually just washed themselves out of a communal sink during the week, and the weekend showers were always overcrowded, and the water cold.

Nervously, Jack stripped off his overalls and sunk into the bath. The feeling was strange and wonderful. The tension in his muscles dissolved, and he felt as though he was washing away more than just dirt. It was as if the trip to the waste cupboard had never happened. When the water began to turn cool, he rose and went back into the other room, where he discovered, next to his old, soiled uniform, a new set of clean and pressed overalls. The fabric felt soft and gentle on his skin.

Raffa had promised Jack that he would come and collect him at nine o'clock that evening, and the clock on the wall only read six thirty. To occupy himself, Jack searched the kitchen, where he found a loaf of bread, half a cooked bird, and a pitcher of something orange and sweet tasting. It was a simple meal, but by far the best that he'd ever eaten within the walls of The PIT.

After he'd eaten, he sat down at the table with the paper and pencils and began to draw. At first, he didn't know what to put down. He tried a few sketches of the flat, but they seemed dull and pointless, so he tried to conjure something from his imagination. Mary seemed like the obvious subject — he always liked to draw her when he was lost for inspiration, placing her in different locations, with different people and in different roles. Sometimes he would make her a doctor in a hospital, other times he'd imagine that they were

married together, living in castle with lots of children. Jack never used to think about having children, still less a wife, but with Mary it all seemed possible.

But when he tried to draw her face, sitting in his clean overalls with a belly full of food, he found that he couldn't drag the image of her out of his head, or place it on the page. Instead, her big brown eyes curled into harsh black circles. The curve of her lips twisted into a narrow sneer. The line of her jaw wobbled and bent into a weak chin. He had drawn Raffa in the place of the girl he loved, leering out of the paper with a look of pure contempt. *Do winners doodle pictures of their sweethearts?* His face seemed to ask. *Or do they do what is necessary to give them what they deserve?*

Jack tried another picture. This time he attempted to draw Billy. He missed his friend now — he could always rely on his strength and kindness. He was another one who would probably tell Jack not to do what Raffa asked of him. Although, having said that, Billy had never really liked Gordon. He only put up with him because he was Jack's friend. And Billy would do anything for Jack. Surely Billy could forgive Jack for freeing himself of Gordon?

But when Jack tried to draw the solid, blockish arch of Billy's shoulders, and the rough, bristly hollows of his cheeks, the lines shifted and buckled. Billy's frame shrank and shrivelled into the small, elegant figure of George Gordon. His brawny, square features softened and flexed into Gordon's. And yet, the eyes were neither Billy's dark green, nor Gordon's sparkling blue. They were dead eyes — yellow and un-seeing — and the lids were the blue-purple of a corpse.

When Jack saw what he'd made he screwed it into a ball and hurled it across the room. What right did a picture have to judge him? He was born into a world without choices, without options, and now that he finally had one his own mind was conspiring to make him reject it. Raffa was right to question his weakness.

But he wasn't a coward anymore. Not now. He was prepared to do what had to be done, and make himself a worthy apprentice.

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The Potestates did not bring Jack back to the H.E's office like he'd expected. Instead, they took him to a place he'd never seen before. Like the H.E's office it was part of the New Buildings, with the same sharp, angular lines and sparse decoration. This particular room reminded Jack of one of the warehouses he'd worked in as a child. It was a long, high-ceilinged chamber, floored in polished concrete — the only light coming from a single strip of humming fluorescent tubing that ran the entire length of the roof. All in all, it would have been a totally unremarkable room, but for the walls. In every PIT room that Jack had ever

seen, the walls were bare wood panelling, grey whitewash, or peeling, yellow wallpaper. In this room, however, the walls were alive with colour.

At first, Jack thought they were just bright swirls and patterns, but when he looked closer he saw that they were in fact detailed landscapes and portraits, layered and joined with one other, like an enormous painted jig-saw. He could see sunsets bleeding into green fields and silver cityscapes, bowls of fruit exploding up into flames, and the faces of old women and young children, drawn cheek by jowl. And standing in the centre of it all was Raffa, his glasses flashing with a thousand different colours.

“Do you like it, my lad?”

“It’s wonderful,” said Jack. “Did you do all this?”

“I did. Though I had some help from the Potestates. With a guiding hand showing them what to do they are as good as any other brush.”

“I thought you were good at numbers.”

“I have learned many other skills since my childhood, Jack. I already gave you that portrait of your mother, remember?”

Jack did remember. He’d kept it safely beneath his bed ever since, occasionally pulling it out at night whenever he felt lonely or afraid. It seemed to him to be a better picture of what she might have looked like than anything he could have done.

“I must confess,” Raffa continued, “that I am rather proud of this effort. I don’t usually approve of indulgences like this, but I find art to be a good exception. Once you acknowledge that it is a worthless pursuit, it becomes truly relaxing.”

“How could this be worthless?” Jack whispered. “It’s beautiful.”

“And what is beauty worth? I have heard people say that art reveals something about the world, but it’s a con trick. I can paint whatever I like, and make it say whatever I like. It’s simply a clever way of lying, like most things.”

Jack thought of the crumpled drawings he’d left in the apartment. “I don’t think I always choose what I draw. Not exactly.”

“That is just your weakness. You should always be in control.”

Jack looked around the walls of the chamber. They didn’t look like the man who’d painted them was in control. They were scattered images, individually perfect, but arranged in no particular order that he could see. Although there was beauty in it, there was no purpose to it — it was art drawn by a man who did not believe in art. A man who thought that it was just a way of passing the time.

“Why did you bring me here?”

“I suppose I was showing off, my lad.” Raffa smiled. “And I thought it might be a nice place for you to meet an old friend, if that is the right word.”

Before Jack had time to answer, Raffa clapped his hands together, and a door at the far end of the room swung open. Three men stood in the archway, two of them dour-faced Potestates, the third a small, dishevelled man with a greasy mop of hair. The Potestates on either side held him up by the armpits, carrying him bodily to where Raffa stood. Once there, they set him down on a wooden chair, where he slumped forward, apparently unconscious.

“He will come around presently,” said Raffa. “He was rather aggressive when we brought him in, and we’ve had to sedate him. The effects are only short term, though.”

Even as Raffa was speaking, the man in the chair began to move, stretching out his arms and legs, like somebody waking up from a deep sleep.

“Who is it?” said Jack. When Raffa had mentioned an old friend, he had expected Gordon or Billy — part of him even feared that they’d discovered Mary.

Raffa didn’t answer him, but instead turned to the old man and grasped a handful of his thick, grey hair, hauling him to his feet. The man howled in pain, and Jack felt a shiver run through his body. He knew that voice.

“Do you recognise him now, my lad?” said Raffa.

“Put him down. Please.”

Raffa shrugged, releasing his grip, and Jack’s father fell back into the chair with a thump.

“Where did you find him?” Jack asked, quietly.

“He was working in a mine, out in the Green Belt. We found him drinking away his wages in some cesspit.”

“Why? Why bring him here?”

“Please Jacky.” Jack’s father spoke in cracked, hoarse tones. “Don’t let him hurt me. They said you could protect me. They put needles in me, Jacky. They threatened me and took away my drink!”

“Shut up!” It took a moment for Jack to realise that it was him who had spoken.

“Don’t be too hard on the poor creature,” said Raffa, striding across the floor and placing his hand on Jack’s shoulder. “He isn’t like you and me. He’s a loser. It’s not his fault — he was born that way.”

“I don’t want you to hurt him.”

“Who said anything about hurting him? I’m offering you the chance to help him.”

“What do you mean?”





Figure 4.

“I have said that he is a loser. That much is true. But he could be cleaned up, given new clothes, even cured of his alcoholism in time. I have it in my power to find a nice little house for him, or perhaps he could even live with you. Would you like that? To live as a proper family, in a house with a garden?”

Jack could feel tears beading up in his eyes. He had drawn a hundred pictures of the scene that Raffa had described, though usually his mother was there instead. Perhaps if he told Raffa about Mary, he would let her live with them as well.

“I could be your dad, Jacky. Please...just do what the man says.”

“Listen to your father, Jack.”

“I want to...I just don’t think I can.”

Raffa snorted. “What are you afraid of, Jack? Would you let your weakness rob you of all this? Would you let your misplaced loyalty to Gordon rob you of your father?”

“What happens to him if I say no?”

Raffa’s answer chilled Jack to the bone, and made his dad burst into tears. The Chief Administrator prided himself on his gift with numbers, but he had made a grave miscalculation. Jack had been ready to do what he’d been asked — to kill Gordon and take up a place as Raffa’s apprentice — but only because he believed that Raffa truly cared for him. But how could he serve him now? After threatening to kill his father, Jack could never trust Raffa again.

## Chapter 16. Nowhere to Run

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*'Toil — and wherefore should I toil? Because  
My father could not keep his place in Eden?*

*Lord Byron - Cain*

Jack's dad had raised him single-handedly after his mum died. It had to have been single-handed, because the other hand was always holding a bottle. He swore blind that he wasn't an alcoholic, but that he suffered with grief. They'd lived in a tiny apartment in one of the huge concrete towers on the southern bank of the Thames Ditch — close enough to the dockyard that you could see the Tractor-Barges rolling their way down from the Inner Flood Wall on the Deltaway, with their crates of frozen crops, gas canisters, munitions and barbed wire. That was where he and dad worked, rolling deliveries into the warehouses. The best days were when one of the enormous Truck-Galleys came in from outside the Wall, with cargos of sugar, spices, rocks and minerals. But they were rare, and seemed to get even rarer the older he got. The news-casts said it was The Enemy's fault — they were jealous of Paradise's wealth, so they sent pirates to sink her cargo.

Despite their problems, Jack and his dad did have some fun — like when they went to the football together. Some of the old folks said that in the past there used to be huge fields where people went to watch games, but nowadays it was mostly played on old bits of waste ground. The teams were made up of local people, mostly divided up by workplaces. The last time they ever watched a match together it was the Southern Bank Textile Workers versus the Ditch Maintenance Crew. They played on the site of the old Fire Station: it was mostly flat ground, and the piles of rubble at the edges gave people a place to sit and watch.

Jack's dad hadn't drunk anything for that whole day. He was probably hung over, but he was feeling well enough to laugh and tell jokes, like he used to when his wife was still alive. Jack's memories of his mum were very faint, but they came back so much clearer when his dad was happy.

The match finished 3-1 to the Ditch Crew. It was a good win, said Jack's dad, because their best player had drowned in a mud collapse the week before. Jack hoped he would never have to work in the Ditch — it sounded horrible. Working at the docks with his dad was great, though. Sometimes it was hard, like when they had to move big shipments, or if it was cold and raining, but at least he was safe with his dad to watch out for him.

After the match, one of the Ditch men came over to speak with Jack's dad. The man was called Timber — the player who'd scored two of the goals — and he gave the match ball to Jack. To keep! Jack was so excited he squealed, and his dad laughed and ruffled his hair.

By that time most of the crowd had moved off, and Jack's father wanted them to leave as well, but Jack pleaded with him to stay and kick the ball around with him. Because he was sober and in a good mood, the old man agreed.

Jack'd never really played football before. Balls were expensive things. Timber probably only gave him this one because it had a bit of a puncture. You had to kick it really hard to get it to roll across the ground, and the tough leather made Jack's toes ache. At first they just played one on one, taking it in turns to try and shoot past each other, but pretty soon some other kids, who'd been hanging around after the match, came over and joined in. After a while they had a proper game going, with two teams of six playing against each other.

Jack's team lost 4-2, but he didn't mind. It was the most fun he'd had in ages, and his dad seemed happy too. Jack was enjoying himself so much that he wanted to play another game, but it was starting to get dark, and his dad reminded him that they both had to get up for work the next day. After a fair bit of whinging and moaning, Jack agreed to call it a day, but when he went to get his ball, one of the other boys picked it up first. It was his ball now, the boy said, because his team had won the match and he was the team captain.

Jack didn't know what to do. The boy was older than he was, and a good deal bigger. He called his dad over.

By now, the other boy's friends had come to join him. There were about eight of them, ranging in age from seven to fifteen. Jack knew some of them from his block of flats. A couple of them even worked with him at the docks.

Dad was still smiling, but his face dropped when he realised what was going on. He asked the boy to give the ball back. The boy refused. *Now you've done it*, Jack thought to himself. *My dad's gonna make mincemeat out of you.*

But when Jack's dad leaned forward to take the ball back, the boy shoved him away. The old man lost his balance and fell on his backside, right into a puddle of mud. When he tried to get back up, the group of boys pushed him back down and laughed at him. When they finally let him get back up, he grabbed Jack's hand and hauled him away, leaving the ball in the hands of the other boy.

As they walked away, the gang shouted things after them: 'pisshead', 'loser', 'waster'. Then they started throwing things, like lumps of dirt and bits of stone. When one of them chucked a glass bottle, Jack's dad started running, leaving Jack to keep up as best as he could. Even after they'd gotten away, Jack could still hear the laughing in his head.

Once they were back in the flat, the drinking started straight away. The big bottle of Grafter's Gift — the cheap, white spirit that was Jack's dad's favourite — was half gone within twenty minutes, and soon he was in to his familiar routine of ranting and raving about all the injustices he'd had to suffer: the death of his wife; his low wages; his bad back; the price of drink; the supervisor who hated him; the teenager who was after his job; the poor quality of tobacco; and, of course, his ungrateful son.

Jack let it wash over him. Even so young as he was, he already knew the best way to deal with a drunk. It was just like when they had to put out an oil fire down at the dock. Sometimes all you could do was let the flames burn themselves out. And sure enough, pretty soon his dad stopped yelling and shouting, and went deadly quiet. Until he started to snore.

Jack looked at the old man, slumped over his chair, drool running down his chin. Until that day he'd believed that his dad was a good man, but that drink made him weak and cowardly. For the first time he understood that he was looking at the thing in the wrong order. His dad drank *because* he was weak and cowardly.

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It was a week later when it happened. It must have been a Sunday, because at first Jack didn't worry about his dad not coming home. Like a lot of warehouse men, Jack's dad had Sunday afternoons off, and he quite often didn't come home until well into the early hours, so Jack thought nothing of it. When he still hadn't come back by Monday morning, Jack started to get worried. The Productivity Masts sang out their 6AM blast, and Jack got onto the bus to the dockyard all by himself. *He'll already be there when I arrive*, he thought. But he wasn't. And he wasn't waiting back at the flat either.

That night was the first time Jack drew a proper picture. He'd sketched it out on the back of a piece of cardboard. It wasn't anything interesting — it might have been a bird, or a piece of food, or a cloud. Jack couldn't remember. It was just a way to distract himself, that was all.

Running was a ridiculous idea, but what else could Jack have done? His dad had missed two days of work — it could only be a matter of time before someone important noticed. The Dock Supervisor already hated Jack — he seemed to hate all kids — and he would just love to call in the PIT Bulls. If it had been any other week, Jack might have stayed, might have trusted that his dad would come back. But the taunts of the boys from the football match still haunted him, and the sight of his father's back as he ran, leaving his own son in his wake, was burned into his mind. Even if his dad did come back — why should he stay with a man like that? No...a *coward* like that?

The only problem was where to run. London was a huge city, but Jack didn't know any of it beyond the area around the flats and the docks. There was an abandoned garage about a mile away, where he and his friends sometimes played. He knew there was an old mattress in there, but you couldn't live like that forever. If he'd been older then it might have been possible to stay at the dockyard. Sometimes they took on apprentices, who they let sleep in the warehouses, but they were all teenagers, nearly grown men.

In the end, he'd just thrown all the food he had in the house into a bag and left. It was mostly Mulch, a fibrous paste that came in foil bags and smelled of feet. His dad liked it because it was cheap and could be eaten cold out of the packet. At first, not sure where to go, Jack simply followed the Ditch towards the east of the city. Once, when he was six, his dad had taken him for a walk to see God's Shard, and they'd gone east to get there. It'd been the day the new Vice-Bishop was getting anointed and some other bigwig had flown in to oversee the ceremony. They'd been stuck right at the back of the crowd, but they could still see everything on one of the screens fitted up outside the tower. The bigwig had a moustache. The Vice-Bishop was bald. It had been a good day out.

But Jack couldn't find the Shard the night he ran. He'd thought he'd be able to see it, but it was dark. He knew that there was a left turn he needed to take, but he must have taken the wrong one. The streets were unfamiliar and none of the lamps were lit. There weren't any people either. His friends had told him about places like this — the Ghost Streets. Once they'd been full of people, so full that there were even people sleeping on the streets. But that was before The Wall. Before the Angels made their Paradise and cast down The Enemy.

We could have lived in one of these houses, Jack thought. Me and dad. There was probably enough room for the entire block to move in down here. He knew why they didn't, of course. Even at eight he understood about money. People like Jack and his dad couldn't have nice houses, even if they were empty, because they didn't deserve them. If they worked harder then they'd have more money, and then they'd deserve a nice house.

He'd slept in one of the empty houses for several days. It was two storeys high, with its own bathroom. The taps even still worked, though the water was brown and tasted bitter. There was no bed, but Jack did find a musty blanket in one of the cupboards, as well as an itchy roll of carpet to lie down on.

When the Mulch ran out, Jack knew that he had to move on. Maybe he could find a house with some food in, or perhaps steal some from a shop. If he was quick, they would never notice that he was alone, or they might even take pity on him and adopt him.

But there was no food in the other houses, nor could he find a shop to steal from. When he got back to the flat, the PIT Bulls were waiting for him.

## Chapter 17. The Escape

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*'He fled; not hoping to escape, but shun*

*The present'*

*John Milton – Paradise Lost*

Raffa had returned Jack to his dorm, giving him two days 'to consider his options'. At the end of the two days, if Jack didn't cooperate, his father would be killed.

Jack felt like a fool for ever trusting Raffa. It seemed obvious to him now that every bad thing that had happened to him, right from the start, had been orchestrated by the Chief Administrator. It was *Raffa* who had caused Gordon to abandon him — probably by tricking him into thinking Jack had turned informant. It was *Raffa* that had put Jack to the bottom of all the lists. And it was *Raffa*, undoubtedly, who had set the Potestates on Billy. Jack was in no doubt that Billy would be killed, too, if his father's murder didn't prove enough to persuade him to do as he was told.

The one thing that Jack still couldn't fully understand was why Raffa had picked *him*. Of all the kids in The PIT that he could have chosen to play the assassin, why had Raffa put so much energy into Jack? According to Raffa, he saw something in Jack that reminded him of himself. Could that be it? Could this whole thing actually be about trying to mould Jack into what Raffa called a 'winner'? Could the Chief Administrator really be that twisted? Or was it simply that he thought Jack could be easily controlled? He'd stripped away Gordon's protection, crippled Billy, and so the only person Jack had left was Raffa.

But Raffa didn't know about Mary.

All of this brought him back to the escape, scheduled for Saturday evening, also two days from now. If he could get away — from Raffa, from The PIT, from all of it — then maybe things could still be alright. He'd be with Mary, and Raffa would have no reason to hurt Billy. Maybe he'd even let his dad go. It was a long shot, but it was all he had.

The preparations for the escape were all still in place. All Jack needed to do was meet Mary in an old, unused classroom at seven o'clock on Saturday night, as they'd agreed. Until then, all he could do was wait, and pretend everything was normal. Sitting through lessons was maddening, though it was the first time Jack had been glad of the increased focus on 'Vocation Activity'. Binding catalogues, assembling boxes and barbed wire, mindless as it was, at least gave him some distraction. Working with his hands had always helped him to keep his thoughts under control.

The only problem was Billy. He'd been allowed to return to classes, though he still needed crutches to get about. Jack knew that must be Raffa's doing, too. Raffa wanted Jack to see as much of Billy as possible over the next two days — a visible reminder of what Jack still had to lose. When they went for their meals together, Billy kept trying to ask where Jack had been on the night Raffa had taken him, and Jack tried to deflect the questions away as best he could. But Billy had been Jack's friend for over six years. His *best* friend, in truth. The idea of just leaving him behind weighed heavily on him.

Jack decided that the least he could do was find a suitable parting gift. In the metal-work classroom there was a lot of damp, and it attracted small insects. It took Jack a while to choose the right one, and even longer to trap it without the teachers or the Potestates noticing, but in the end he managed it. Billy decided to call the beetle Dodo, and he cried when Jack gave it to him. It was probably the tears that broke Jack in the end. Billy was a mountain of a boy — not just in his physical size, but in his capacity to take whatever the world threw at him. He'd been beaten near to death — twice in just one summer — but instead of becoming callous and cold, he still had the ability to weep over a new pet. A boy like that didn't deserve to be abandoned without a word. A boy like that could handle the truth in a way that Jack never could.

And so Jack told him everything: Gordon, Mary, Raffa's ultimatum, his father — the whole stinking mess. When he got to the part about the escape — about leaving Billy behind — Jack thought that his heart might break. But Billy surprised him.

"Running is the only smart thing to do," said Billy.

"But won't you miss me?"

"I'll miss you even more if you're dead, or I'm dead. Anyway, if you kill Gordon, you won't be you anymore. You're not a killer."

Jack had nothing to say to that, so he just put his arms around Billy's massive shoulders and squeezed. He could hear the other Claimants in the dorm laughing, but he didn't care. People thought that Billy was stupid, but he often managed to say exactly the right thing.

The penultimate lesson on Saturday finished, as always, at six o'clock, with the shill clanging of the evening bell. When the duty Potestate shepherded the Claimants into a line, ready to move onto their final class, Jack flashed them his Hall Pass and said he'd been asked to attend chaplain Swedenborg in his office. The Potestate was one Jack recognised: a heavy, ugly man with a moustache. He had a nickname among the Claimants of 'Gurgle', due to his habit of falling asleep and snoring. Fortunately for Jack, Gurgle gave Jack's request as much



care and attention as he did everything else, and sent him on his way under the promise that he should return to his dorm in time for counting.

As Jack walked along the series of corridors and pathways that led to his meeting place with Mary, he was conscious that he didn't feel afraid. His legs swung freely as he walked, and he had no sense of nausea or sickness. The old classroom they'd agreed to meet in was not one he knew, but the pattern of the map Mary had drawn on the Greenhouse floor was stuck in the back of his mind, and he unpeeled it as he walked, step by step.

He met very few people as he travelled. A couple of Potestates eyed him warily as he crossed a small courtyard, but were too busy smoking to be bothered with questioning him.

The classroom they'd agreed to meet in was located at the juncture between the Old and the New Buildings. It hadn't been in use at any time anyone could remember, and no longer even had a door. When Jack entered, he almost tripped over a bag of ancient cement. It looked as though the room had been used to store building supplies, and judging by the layers of dust and cobwebs it was possible they'd been used in the original construction of the New Buildings, pre-dating the foundation of The PIT itself.

Mary was nowhere to be seen, but it wasn't yet seven. There was a tall, narrow window on the western side of the room, with a large stone sill. Jack climbed up onto it and let the warm, orange light of the evening sun wash over him. Through the window, he could see a small patch of grass, a cracked piece of stone that might once have been a statue, and a bird, fluttering in the open air. On the opposite edge of the little lawn was the start of the New Buildings — bare, grey blocks and shuttered windows, heavy with rust.

Jack thought about what The PIT must have been like before, when it was still St Joseph's School for Boys. The Old Buildings were designed in such a haphazard way, with grand halls, tiny offices and secret courtyards, all stitched together with long and winding corridors. Given freedom to roam, it must have been a great place to go to school: an enormous playground, perfect for hide and seek. The New Buildings — built after the revolution — were sterile by comparison. Everything was ordered — everything had a specific purpose. Even the room that Raffa painted was probably originally designed as a storehouse, before he made it into his personal gallery.

The Old Buildings felt so much more...natural. They were poorly insulated, badly maintained, rotting away in some places, and there was always a lingering smell of damp. Perhaps it was their age — they were the *Old Building* after all — that made them feel more comfortable. A living memory of a time before Paradise, before Potestates, before PIT Bulls.

It must have been The Enemy who'd built the old school, thought Jack. They had built lots of things. They'd had too, because there were so many people back then. Wambach said

that in the old days the land was nearly all covered over in buildings, and they had to build houses day and night just to keep up with the flow of people coming across the sea.

The light of the sun had all but faded by the time Mary finally arrived. She was sweating and out of breath, but she smiled when she noticed Jack. She'd had to run for the last part of her journey after nearly bumping into a Sweeper Dolly Patrol. The PIT didn't pay for cleaners, so they used Dollies instead. They were always accompanied by at least one Potestate. There were a lot of Claimants over the years who'd been caught out of bed by a Sweeper Dolly Patrol, and been dragged back to their dorms with the red imprint of a broom handle across their backside.

"Are you ready to go?" Jack asked her. "Where's all our stuff?"

"It's already here," she said, pulling aside a strip of mangy old oilcloth. Beneath it were two canvas backpacks, full to bursting by the look of them. "There's enough food in there to last us three weeks. And your new outfit, too. You'd best put it on now." Mary was already wearing hers under her uniform.

Jack undressed in the corner, half crouching behind a pile of cinderblocks. He imagined that he could feel Mary's eyes crawling over his scrawny, naked body, taking in the goose-fleshed arms and the acne across his back. But when he stole a glance over to her corner of the room, he found she was staring off in the opposite direction, apparently uninterested. Somehow that was even worse.

"You look very smart, Jack," Mary told him, once he was dressed.

"You don't need to smirk. How come yours is all the same shade? Mine looks like it was made by a blind man in a dark room!"

"There's gratitude for you."

They both laughed, but the sound echoed strangely in the old, empty room. Suddenly, Jack felt that the place had gotten colder, and there seemed to be less light coming through the window.

"I suppose we'd better go," he said. "If we don't, we'll never get another chance." He'd decided not to tell her about the meeting with Raffa and his father. It would only complicate things, and not talking about it helped him to ignore how guilty he was feeling.

They left the abandoned classroom and walked down the short passageway which joined the Old Buildings to the New. None of the doors were locked at night, save for the dorms themselves and a few special security areas, and aside from the Dolly Sweepers there were relatively few patrols. The PIT was vast, much too big to police properly, so the Potestates didn't even try. The only security measure that really worried Jack was the

counting lists. When the Potestate at his dorm did the nightly count before lights out, he would surely notice that Jack was missing. Mary tried to reassure him.

“Half the time they don’t even do the count properly. They just mark the names off and then pretend they’ve done it.”

“What if they do it properly this time, though?”

“Then we’ll be reported missing and they’ll mark us down for punishment, as and when we can be found. But we *won’t be found*. We’ll be miles from here by the time it’s morning.”

“But if they raise a search party?”

“They won’t. And if they do, we’ll avoid it. I never met a Potestate I couldn’t avoid if I wanted to. They couldn’t find a piece of hay in a haystack.”

*They found dad*, thought Jack. *If they can find the father, then why not the son?* Not for the first time, he felt a surge of guilt at what he was doing. Even if they escaped, there was no way he could guarantee that Raffa wouldn’t just kill his dad anyway.

The garages where the buses were kept were on the far side of the facility, part of a series of buildings that jutted out into the west, towards the hills and the farm where Jack and Mary first kissed. To get there they needed to sneak along miles of empty corridors, and up and down endless flights of stairs. Every so often they would hear the sound of footsteps, or come across a door that ought to have been open but they found to be locked. At first, Mary seemed fairly calm about these diversions, but as they progressed she seemed to get more and more agitated, and Jack could hear her muttering swearwords and curses under her breath.

“Are we lost?” he said at last, as they reached another dead end. “I thought you said it was easy to find your way around the New Buildings.”

“It is,” she snapped. “But something’s not right. There shouldn’t be this many locked doors. And how many patrols did we hear? Five? Six? I would’ve found just one surprising. It’s like they know what we’re trying to do.”

Jack’s gut tightened. “Can we go around?”

“Sure. But I’ve never been this way before. I’m mostly just guessing.”

They struggled on for what seemed like hours, but could only have been a few minutes, when Mary stopped again.

“We’re getting closer,” she whispered. “I think I recognise this place.”

They were in a long corridor, each wall decorated with photographs: portraits of the previous PIT Administrators, Jack realised. The faces of so many dead old men reminded him of his father. He felt another stab of guilt.

As they moved forward, they began to hear a low rumbling sound, getting louder the further forward they went. They followed the sound down another corridor, until they found themselves outside a steel door, where the noise was so loud they had to speak above a whisper to be heard.

“It’s engines,” said Jack, his voice shaking with excitement. “It’s engines, isn’t it?”

Mary nodded. “This is the dangerous part. This door will take us into the back of one of the garages. With any luck, the drivers will be out at the front, smoking, so the bus will be between us and them.” She pulled out a watch — God knows where she’d found it — and scowled. “We were slower than I hoped, but we should still have time before the teachers arrive. We need to get in and hide in the luggage hold before then. Are you ready?”

Jack was about to nod, when a door further along the corridor screeched open. Mary pulled Jack into the shadows of a nearby alcove, and they both held their breath as an elderly Potestate shuffled past them. When the old man reached the door at other end of the corridor, he unlocked it and passed through, leaving the door ajar behind him. In that moment, the memory of the map that Mary had drawn of The PIT welled up in Jack’s mind.

“That door. The corridor behind it leads to the Painted Room.”

“Come on. We need to go.”

Jack stood up, but when Mary tugged on his sleeve he didn’t move.

“I need to go back,” he said.

Mary smiled. “Good one, Jack. But we haven’t got time to mess about.”

“It’s not a joke. I need to go back...I’m sorry”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Mary glanced at her watch again. “We’ve only got a few minutes left before teachers start turning up. Come *on*.”

Mary tugged at Jack’s sleeve again, this time with more force, but he struggled away from her.

“You wait here. I’ll come back, I promise. I can’t just *leave him!*”

“Leave who? You’re not making any sense.”

“My *dad!*” said Jack, much louder than he’d intended. “He’s got my dad in there. That’s who they’re guarding. I can’t go without my dad.”

Mary seemed too stunned to speak for a moment, but when she finally did, she had steel in her voice. “I don’t understand what’s happened here, but I can’t let you do this.”

“I’ll come back...”

“No you won’t. There isn’t time, and even if there was you’d get caught. Even if I came and helped, there’s no way we could do it. There’s got to be more Potestates guarding him back there. What are you going to fight them off with?”

“I’ll sneak past them, like you showed me!”

Jack was shouting now, and there were tears in his eyes. Mary tried to calm him, but it was too late. Before she could grab hold of him, Jack dashed out from the shade of the alcove and ran for the open door.

After running for a couple of minutes he came to a halt in a wide hallway, lined with doors on either side.

He made his mind up just to pick a door at random and keep on going, but when he tried to move he found that he couldn’t. His legs were frozen, and no matter how much he willed himself to, he couldn’t take a step. *You’re not supposed to be a coward anymore*, he thought. *You act on your fears now. You don’t freeze.*

It didn’t help. He was stuck, and he could feel the panic rising in his throat. How could he have been so stupid? What would happen to Mary? He hoped she’d escape without him. She would be better off without him. He couldn’t go forwards. He couldn’t go backwards. The sound of steps coming up behind him was almost a relief. But the footfalls were too soft to be those of a heavy-booted Potestate, and as they got nearer, Jack felt his heart begin to ache.

“What are you doing here?” he said.

“Come on,” said Mary. “We need to get back right now.”

“I told you...” Jack wanted to weep, he felt so tired. “I can’t leave him here. I tried, but I couldn’t do it.”

“Well you can’t rescue him. It’s impossible. But if you come now, right now, we can still get away.”

“It’s not right.” As Jack spoke, he felt the blood flowing back into his legs. “It can’t end like this. If I run off with you and leave him behind, where’s the right in that?”

“We don’t have time for this!” Mary clasped her hand to Jack’s cheek, and he felt her sweat, cold and clammy. “There’s no right or wrong here. There’s just the possible and the bloody *impossible*.”

“I don’t want to leave him,” he said.

“I know.”

He reached out and took Mary’s hand. She curled her fingers into his.

## Chapter 18. Knives and Blood

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*'Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends'*

**Mary Shelley – Frankenstein**

It was no surprise to Jack when he was dragged back to the Painted Room. He and Mary had tried to make their way onto one of the busses, but by the time they reached the garage it was already busy with teachers and Potestates. Mary tried every trick she knew to sneak past, ducking and weaving from shadow to shadow while Jack kept as close as he could. But it was no use. There were too many eyes and too much light. Finally they were caught, and rough hands dragged them apart.

The Painted Room was lit by red candlelight, casting magnificent, terrifying silhouettes against the brightly coloured walls. His dad was tied to a chair in the centre of the room, with Raffa standing over him. The Chief Administrator smiled, baring his teeth.

“Please...” said Jack.

“I am a man of my word, my lad,” Raffa said, reaching into his pocket and withdrawing a long, silver knife. “I promised you that you could be my apprentice. That promise still holds. I promised that if you defied me, there would be consequences. That also holds.”

Jack wept and screamed until he was hoarse. His dad joined in, thrashing against his restraints with all his strength. The only thing that prevented Jack from physically tearing the blade from Raffa’s hands was Mary. That was the unspoken promise. *If I can kill your father, I can kill her too.*

There was less blood than Jack had expected.

Afterwards, Jack was left alone with his father’s body — Raffa and the Potestates allowed him that much at least. The tears had stopped as soon as the knife was withdrawn, and all that Jack felt now was a hollow space in his chest. He groped clumsily at the open wound in his dad’s neck, and did his best to clear away the mess, and to arrange the old man’s limbs with some kind of dignity.

“I hated you,” said Jack, after sitting in silence for several long minutes. “I remember...I remember you took me to see the Trench Parade. And...and you gave me your share of the fruit ration on my birthday, even though it was your favourite. I still hated you.”

The words were inadequate and harsh. Jack knew that he had to do something. He dipped a trembling finger into the spreading pool of blood, and traced out a simple image on the cold floor. It was two stick figures. One was taller than the other. Their hands were joined together.

“I hated you,” said Jack. “You were still my dad.”

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There was no choice left now, other than to kill Gordon. If Jack didn't go through with it, Mary would die — there was no longer any hope of escape. The plan for the murder itself had been devised weeks ago. Raffa had assigned men to watch Gordon, and knew the details of his routine intimately. It seemed that between the hours of noon and one o'clock, every other Sunday, Gordon was by himself in the old abandoned chapel, while everyone else listened to Swedenborg's sermon in the Assembly Hall. For all his boasts of despising organised religion, it seemed that Gordon did have some kind of faith: one that he kept privately. This hour of unguarded solitude — just one night away — was the perfect opportunity for Jack to strike.

After the meeting with Raffa and his father, Jack was placed back into his old dorm, just in time for the lights going out. When Billy saw him, he rushed forward and locked his friend in a bear-hug, and the tears streamed down Jack's cheeks. Later, when Jack told Billy what had happened, and what he was going to do, Billy said nothing. He simply took Dodo out of his box and offered to let Jack play with him until the morning. Neither of them would be able to sleep.

Sunday's lessons passed by in a grey blur. The teachers spoke, but Jack didn't hear them. The only time he felt anything was in metal-work class — the first class he'd ever shared with Mole-face, all those weeks ago. They'd moved on from making barbed wire and chains, and were now making toe-caps for boots. Each Claimant was provided with a square sheet of thin metal, which they clamped into a special machine that looked a bit like a vice. A few hard twists on the hand crank, and the metal bent and buckled into the shape of a boot-tip. ‘If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever’. Gordon used to say that sometimes, when he was angry or upset.

When the noon bell rang, Jack knew it was time to make his way to the old chapel. Nobody tried to stop him as he travelled through the winding corridors of the Old Buildings. Perhaps Raffa had passed down instructions that he was to be given free passage, or maybe the PIT staff simply didn't care. The chapel wasn't a long walk, so Jack decided to take his time. He went into empty classrooms and leafed through the books on the shelves, passed through abandoned halls and chambers, and bathrooms that hadn't had running water in years.

Emptied of people, the crumbling state of The PIT was all the more apparent. At least when there were Claimants and Potestates, bustling from one class to the next, there was an illusion of life and busyness. But when you were alone, and given a chance to explore, it was staggering the amount of space that was never used.

Shoved in the Food Hall, made to eat cheek by jowl alongside rows upon rows of boys, you could be forgiven for thinking that the place was fit to burst with overcrowding, but the reality was anything but. The reason they lived at such close quarters wasn't a lack of space, but a lack of *liveable* space. So much had been allowed to rot. Whenever a water pipe burst it was shut off and never repaired. When a roof collapsed in on itself a tarp was rigged up to cover the hole, and the room itself was never used again. It seemed to Jack that the Claimants could have fixed these problems themselves, if someone showed them how, but apparently assembling boxes and crates, and stapling catalogues, and forging toecaps and chains were more important skills for people like them to learn.

The chapel door was already open when Jack arrived, and there was no sign of anyone outside. This surprised him. He'd been expecting at least a bit of security — that was why he'd strapped the knife Raffa gave him to the inside of his leg. Most times no one bothered to frisk there.

Inside, the chapel was empty. No one used the place anymore since a fire burned out a large section of floorboards on the east side of the gallery, but it was still an impressive room. The ceiling was a steep arch, reinforced with heavy oak beams, and the walls were draped in old velvet curtains, except for where the flames had burned them away. A broad aisle ran up the centre, and had once been flanked by sets of pews. Most of these were lost in the fire, or stripped out and put to use elsewhere in The PIT, but the steel rungs which they'd been fitted to still remained.

At the far end of the chapel, beyond the altar, was another door. This led to the rectory — the little room where the priest used to get ready for sermons. This door was closed. It must have been past one o'clock now, and there was no sign of anyone in the main hall.

Carefully, Jack reached down and unstrapped the knife from the inside of his leg. It was an ugly thing: black steel with a plastic handle. Raffa himself had shown him how to use it — where to stab.

Jack stood with the blade in one hand, and the other reaching out for the door handle. But then he froze. All that morning he'd allowed his mind to sleep, shutting out every thought of this moment.

From above the rectory door, a likeness of the Mother Mary looked down on him. In the official stories, like the ones Swedenborg told, she was the first of the Great Employers to



recognise the value of child labour, putting her son — Christ The Carpenter — to work when he was still an infant. And yet, Jack remembered as a child some of the older folks talking about her as though she were a different kind of woman, more like his own Mary: kind, patient, forgiving. The old folks often seemed to look at the world in a strange way.

Would either Mary forgive him for what he was going to do?

It was pitch-dark in the rectory. Jack slipped the hand with the knife into his overall pocket.

“Hello?” he said. “Gordon?”

There was no answer, so Jack stepped forward. His foot bumped into something soft and heavy.

“Can you turn the lights on?” he said. “I...I need to see you.”

The silence continued, but just on the edge of hearing Jack thought he could make out the sound of breathing. Slowly, he backed away towards the door he’d entered by, and fumbled on the wall for a switch. With a series of clunks, a fluorescent light flickered into life. Jack gasped. The rectory was in disarray. Books from the shelves were scattered across the floor. A table had been upended, and a chair smashed into pieces. But all that faded in to the background when Jack saw what it was he had stumbled on.

Laying on the floor, his arms and legs spread out to either side, was Gordon.

“Now he’ll let you go. Won’t he, Jack?”

The sight of Gordon had distracted Jack so much that, at first, he hadn’t seen the other figure in the room. It was Billy. And there was blood all over him.

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They sat together on the alter. There’d been some rainwater in a bucket under a crack in the ceiling, and Jack had done his best, but Billy’s overalls still bore several dark stains.

“Just say it’s wood varnish or something,” said Jack. “They won’t bother to check.”

“Shouldn’t you go and tell Raffa that it’s done?”

Jack shrugged. “I guess we still have a while before anyone gets suspicious.”

They sat in silence for a few moments.

“So,” said Billy, “where will you go?”

“I’ll give you time to get away from the chapel, then I guess I’ll go back to the dorm, and the Potestates will take me to...”

“No. I mean afterwards. You and Mary.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Raffa will have to let you go now. He likes you, and I don’t think he’ll kill you. If he thinks you killed Gordon, then he’ll owe you.”

It took everything Jack had not to cry.

“Why did you do it, Billy?”

“It made me angry when I heard you talk about what Raffa did,” said Billy. “I wanted to help, and I know you cared about Gordon. I didn’t think you’d do it, and then your friend Mary would die.”

“I would’ve done it myself.”

“You never killed no one before.”

“And you have killed before?”

Billy frowned. He looked anxious. “When you got beat up...I thought Mole-face killed you. I was mad.”

*Mole-face.* “Jesus, Billy.”

“You always looked after me. I just want to do the same.”

“This is different.”

“And now you can be happy.”

“Billy. I don’t even know for sure if Raffa will let me and Mary go. But you...I don’t think he’d let you come with us. I can’t tell him that it was you who killed Gordon.”

Billy lowered his head and clenched his fists. For a moment, Jack thought his friend was going to punch him. But then Billy turned his head, and Jack could see the tears in his eyes. It was only then that Jack realised — Billy must have known all along that he would have to be left behind. He put his arms around Billy’s shoulders and squeezed as tightly as he could.

## Chapter 19. A Choice

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*'Choose betwixt love and knowledge since there is*

*No other choice'*

*Lord Byron - Cain*

Whatever else he was, Raffa was a man who believed in giving people choices, though they were usually unpleasant ones. After Jack had returned from the old chapel, a Potestate had taken him to Raffa's office. Raffa had smiled as Jack was brought in, and even gave him a hug. There was a time when Jack would have given anything for a smile and a hug from Raffa, but that part of him was dead now, along with his father.

The Chief Administrator was so pleased with Jack's service that he wanted to give him the chance to carry on serving. If Jack played along, he could live with Raffa in luxury, learning from him every day. Jack could help him run The PIT, and maybe even take it over himself some day. Mary would be sent away some place not too uncomfortable, but Jack must never see her again.

Killing Gordon had been important — if he had lived to inherit his family's power and status, he could have destroyed the way that Paradise was run. Raffa could not have done the murder without the help of a Claimant, but he had chosen Jack over all the others. It was important to Raffa that Jack understood this. From the moment that he had first met him, that day in the H.E's office, Raffa had sensed a capacity for greatness in Jack — an intelligence and sensitivity beyond that of the other children. Raffa would help Jack live up to that potential, but he could not force it on him. Jack must choose it.

The other choice was for Jack and Mary to leave The PIT, together, taking their chances out in the world, with no help and no protection. They would probably starve to death within a month, said Raffa.

It didn't take Jack long to make his choice.

## Epilogue

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*'Shade above shade, a woody theatre  
Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops  
The verduous wall of Paradise up sprung'*

***John Milton – Paradise Lost***

They found the horses wandering in a field. They looked wild, but Jack guessed they must once have belonged to a farm, because they were very easy to tame. A few handfuls of grass, a rub on the nose, and they let them climb up on their backs. Neither of them had ever ridden before, but it'd been weeks since they'd gotten off the train, and all the walking was starting to tell on their feet.

Billy — the name Jack gave to the larger of the two animals — acted as a pack horse, while Jack and Mary rode together on the back of Dodo. Billy didn't have a lot to carry. All Raffa gave them on the day he let them go was a Citizen Card, with a couple of credits on it, and some packets of Mulch. Since then they'd picked things up as they went along. Mary made them a couple of fishing poles, using some twine and old nails she'd found in an abandoned barn, while Jack managed to turn an oilskin tarp into a reasonable tent. They ate as little as possible, and tried to store as much food as they could: nuts, nettles, shrivelled apples. The countryside of Paradise was a wild place, full of food for those who knew what to look for, but Jack had never had any kind of training for this life, and Mary didn't know the terrain they were heading in to. The summer was over, and autumn would soon turn to winter.

The horses were difficult enough to control on the flatlands, but as they continued, the ground became increasingly steep and bumpy, and soon they were travelling along rocky valleys between looming hills. Often, they had to dismount and lead the animals along by foot, as neither of them were confident enough riders to manage over such unpredictable ground.

When the rain started, they were grateful at first. They'd come across a couple of rivers as they travelled, but they were few and far between, and you could never be sure if it was safe to drink. The rain water was always clean, and they happily filled their bottles with it.

But the rain kept coming. For days and days it went on, until every piece of clothing and equipment was soaked, including the few matches they still had left. Mary tried to light a fire using sticks, but they were too damp.

Eventually the rains gave way, but only to freezing winds and fog. At least the land was becoming flatter than it had been, and the ground less rocky. Mary seemed to think this was a good sign, but she was always saying that, and things almost always got worse.

As they were making their way across a dry river bed, Billy slipped and fell on his side. Even after they took off all his bags and coaxed him back to his feet, his legs were still shaking with exhaustion. They decided they had to let him go. He was beginning to get too thin anyway.

After that they took it in turns to ride on Dodo, and tried to carry their own baggage as much as possible. Their progress was slower with the extra weight, and they took a lot more rests stops. One evening, after they'd failed yet again to light a fire, Jack raised the idea of turning around.

Mary went mad. They'd travelled for weeks and weeks, and now he wanted to give up? How could he even think of it? In a way it was relief to Jack that she was angry. At least now he was getting some of what he deserved. It was his fault that they were in this mess, or so he felt. They slept apart that night, shivering under piles of dry leaves in a small patch of woodland.

They hardly spoke to each other after that — for days and days — but they kept on going. Doubts began to prey on Jack all the time: Were they going the right way? What would they find? What if there was nothing there? Did they have enough food to make a return journey?

The land was gradually sloping upwards again as they moved forward, though there were no more mountains like the ones they'd passed before. This land was hilly, cold and bare. For miles around there was hardly a tree in sight, and no caves or other forms of shelter. They had to use the tent, and despite the anger they still felt at each other, they were forced to huddle together to keep from freezing. Dodo was feeling the effects of the weather, too, but they had no way to protect her. Soon she began to stumble whenever they rode her. After that they tried just using her to carry their packs, but even that was too much for her. By the time they realised how bad she was it was too late. Jack wondered if maybe they should use the meat, but he couldn't say it out loud.

Walking was tough. They dumped a lot of the stuff that wasn't absolutely essential, but even then their loads were heavy, and they were running low on food. Nothing grew in this place except scrub grass and weeds. Sometimes Mary would manage to catch a rabbit or a weasel with a snare, but without a fire they had to eat the meat raw, and it usually made them both sick.

When they'd started the journey, it never crossed Jack's mind that they might not make it. It seemed so simple in his head. But then his plans always did have a way of going wrong: running away from home; breaking into Gordon's dorm; escaping from The PIT. Every time he tried, he failed. But this time was supposed to be different. This time he had Mary.

At last they reached a place where they could take shelter from the wind. It wasn't really a cave, more of a hollow beneath an overhanging rock formation — a lonely fist of granite sticking up out of the plain. There were even some small trees nearby, with wood so dry that they managed to start a fire.

Mary was the first to apologise, though Jack knew it should have been him. She always had more grace than he did. Though the fire and the shelter kept them warm, they still huddled together that night. Jack fell asleep smiling.

The lack of food was still a problem. They were making less and less progress each day, and felt more and more tired each morning. Soon, Jack knew, they would run out of energy, but they had to keep going just a little bit longer. Mary suggested that they try to find a place to rest up for a few days, get another fire going and see if they could find a stream to fish, or a rabbit warren to hunt — anything to get their strength back up. But Jack knew, deep in his gut, that if they delayed any longer the old fear and doubt would come back at him, and soon he'd be turning around and running like he always did. So they pressed on.

When they first saw it, they thought that it was a trick of the light: a thin grey streak on the horizon. But as they marched, the streak grew larger and larger, and they both knew it wasn't an illusion.

It was not as Jack imagined it. In the stories, The Wall was an impenetrable barrier of steel and concrete, hundreds of feet high. This wall was still big, maybe forty feet high and five feet deep, but it was cracked and crumbling, and in places it had collapsed altogether. There were supposed to be forts, patrols, helicopters, but it looked as though no one had been there in years.

They clambered up through one of the gaps and stepped out on to the other side. There was woodland all around them, with mountains in the distance. Not far away, they could hear the sound of running water. But Jack and Mary didn't notice any of that, because in front of them there was an old woman, dressed in a simple woollen dress.

"Hello," said Jack. "We're looking for The Enemy. We heard there were bases here. Armies and things. We want to help you fight."

The woman looked puzzled. "I never heard of no Enemy."

# THE NORTHERN WALL



Figure 5.

And then Jack and Mary did look around, and between the clusters of trees they saw more people like the old woman. Not soldiers, not the fearsome Enemy they had been raised to fear and despise, but just ordinary people. They could see huts made of wood; families huddled around campfires; horses and cattle. Jack and Mary had come looking for a war, but there was none to be found here.

Jack slumped to the ground, exhausted from hunger, travel and disappointment. Mary knelt down beside him and sent the old woman to fetch water.

“There’s nothing here,” he said. “There was supposed to be an army.”

Mary ran her fingers through his hair. “What good would have an army have been, anyway? We’re not soldiers. You want to be an artist, remember? And it looks like I could have a garden, too.” She gestured to a fenced off area nearby, where tall yellow crops were waiting to be harvested.

It wasn’t enough, Jack knew, but he smiled anyway. Mary left him to go and find the old woman, and while she was gone Jack slipped out a piece of paper and one of his last sticks of charcoal. At first, not knowing why, he drew a copy of one of the pictures Wambach used to hang in his classrooms — a propaganda poster against The Enemy. But as he continued, instead of drawing one of the hulking, formless shadows that usually made up the background, he drew a different shape: one with a tall, angular frame, and long, pointed fingers.

For all of his life Jack had believed that Paradise was the best that the world could do — it wasn’t perfect, but at least they were better off than The Enemy. His plan had been to come here and help them — to join them in their fight and rescue them from the way they had been forced to live. But now, at last, he understood. It was the people in Paradise who were trapped. It was they that needed rescuing. The people were happy here, and Mary felt that they should stay and be happy too, but every time Jack closed his eyes he saw Billy, alone in The PIT, or Gordon on the chapel floor.

Jack stood up, and using a snagged piece of rock, he hooked the poster to the foot of The Wall. It was an image of Raffa, standing over a dead child. Beneath it ran the words: The Enemy. The old woman had said she’d never heard of an Enemy. Jack would make sure that changed.

**The End**





## **Miltonic Ideas of The Fall in Romantic Literature**

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**Word Count: 33356**

## Chapter 1. Romantic Poets' Responses to Miltonic Ideas of the Fall

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Full of doubt I stand,  
Whether I should repent me now of sin  
By me done and occasioned, or rejoice  
Much more that much more good thereof shall spring<sup>1</sup>

These lines, spoken by Adam in the final book of *Paradise Lost*, describe one of the central ideas of the Miltonic Fall. In essence, it is a contradiction: the Original Sin, the taking of knowledge, is a necessary fall. It equips mankind with the tools to understand their own evil, but also the potential to achieve Grace. It evokes a clash between Jesuit pragmatism and Puritan idealism. William Blake famously confronted this tension when he wrote that:

the reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote  
of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell  
is because he was a true poet, and of the Devil's party  
Without knowing it<sup>2</sup>

In my opinion, Milton may have been more cognisant of the link than Blake gave him credit for. In his book, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (2005), William Poole describes a 'dynamic, potentially dangerous Milton', who subverts the traditional notions of his political, religious, and poetical orthodoxy.<sup>3</sup> In the first part of this chapter I will build on these ideas with a specific focus on *Paradise Lost*. I will argue that the poem introduces marked parallels between Milton and Satan. In particular, I will suggest that Satan is a poet figure within the text, and that fallenness itself forms an integral aspect of poet figures more widely.

John Milton, and *Paradise Lost* in particular, had an immense influence on the Romantic poets. Lucy Newlyn even credits the poem with providing a template for poetic

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<sup>1</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Gordon Teskey (London: Norton, 2005), 5. 20-23. All subsequent line references are from this edition, abbreviated as 'PL', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in *William Blake: The Complete Poems*, ed. by Alicia Ostriker (New York: Penguin, 1977), 21. 23. All subsequent plate and line references are from this edition, abbreviated as 'MHH', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>3</sup> William Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 195.

‘sublimity’ in the Romantic period.<sup>4</sup> Given Milton’s significance to this group of writers, I will also use this chapter to discuss how the Romantic poets respond to these Miltonic ideas of the Fall in their poetry. My discussion is in two parts: one looking at the first generation Romantics, and another at the second generation. In the first section I will focus specifically on Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth, and in the latter, Byron and Keats. Across the chapter I will seek to explore how these poets use Miltonic ideas of the Fall as a response to the turbulent political and artistic period in which they were writing. In particular, I hope to show how each of these writers uses Miltonic ideas to define their own identity as poets.

### 1.1. Milton and *Paradise Lost*: The Necessary Fall and the Fallen Poet Figure

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To understand what is meant by a ‘fallen’ poet figure, it is first important to be clear about what I mean by the term ‘poet figure’. In the words of Daniel Morse, these are characters which inhabit the text of a poem, providing a ‘reflective and contemplative’ avatar for the poet.<sup>5</sup> For many scholars, this is the role of the epic narrator in *Paradise Lost*. His opening assertion that he will ‘justify the ways of God to Men’ (*PL*, 1. 26) has led some to suggest that Milton is directly assuming the role of ‘mediator between God and man’. Indeed, Michael Leib suggests that he assumes a role of ‘prophet, king and priest’;<sup>6</sup> a triumvirate which characterises the poet figure as one who is privy to both the spiritual and the temporal spheres, and one who is bound to share this knowledge.

The idea that the narrator is there to represent Milton has been used to dismiss the idea of a sympathetic link with Satan. Frank Kermode, in his important essay ‘Adam Unparadised’ (1960), asserts the ‘epic poet’s privilege of intervening in his own voice’.<sup>7</sup> For Kermode, the epic voice is there to provide a direct interpretation of the poem from Milton himself. For instance, during the demonic council, where Satan and his fellow Fallen Angels are at the height of their persuasive oratories, the epic narrator injects a note of caution:

By falsities and lies the greatest part  
Of mankind they corrupted to forsake  
God their Creator, and th’ invisible  
Glory of him that made them transform

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<sup>4</sup> Lucy Newlyn, *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> David Morse, *The Age of Virtue* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 280.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Lieb, *The Dialectics of Creation: Patterns of Birth & Regeneration in Paradise Lost* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), pp. 38-40.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Kermode, ‘Adam Unparadised’, in *The Living Milton: Essays by Various Hands*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Routledge, 1960), pp. 99-120 (p. 106).

Oft to the image of a brute, adorned  
With gay religions full of pomp and gold,  
And devils to adore for deities (*PL*, 1. 367-373)

This Puritanical attack on the sinfulness of decorative religious expression appears to be a direct reflection of Milton's personal views, and it makes a compelling case for Kermode's argument. With such an overt correlation between the author and the narrator, it would seem awkward to persevere with the notion of Satan as a poet figure.

However, more recent critics, such as Peter Herman, have observed that 'the speeches of the fallen angels recycle elements of Milton's own prose'.<sup>8</sup> For example, in *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660), an anti-monarchist tract written seven years before the first publication of *Paradise Lost*, Milton pours scorn on Charles I and his courtiers, writing of how he would 'pageant himself up and down in progress among the perpetual bowings and scrapings of an abject people, on either side deifying and adoring him'.<sup>9</sup> In a reflection of this, Satan rhetorically inquires of his fellow demons, still recumbent after their defeat, 'in this abject posture have ye sworn/ To adore the Conqueror?' (*PL*, 1. 322-323). The similarity of Satan's 'political' rhetoric to Milton's would seem to disrupt Kermode's assertion that the epic narrator is the sole mouthpiece of the poet.

If we return to the three roles of the poet figure which Leib identifies: prophet, king, and priest, the issue becomes further complicated. It is Satan who introduces the 'ancient and prophetic' (*PL*, 2. 346) rumours of Earth, and it is he who sits on the 'throne of royal state' (*PL*, 2. 1). And yet, the epic narrator could be deemed the priestlier of the two, as it is he who invokes the names of saints, and of God himself, throughout the poem. What we have, it seems, is a splitting of the poet figure. Catherine Bates describes Satan as fashioning 'himself poetically [...] from one self-authored role, or 'borrowed visage' to another'.<sup>10</sup> But this argument does not go far enough. The epic narrator and Satan are themselves borrowed visages; each a different mask for Milton, each a different aspect of the poet figure.

What is happening here is a reassertion of the poem's central conflict between good and evil. In his polemic on the freedom of the press, *The Areopagitica* (1644), Milton describes the awkward relationship between these moral opposites:

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<sup>8</sup> Peter C. Herman, *Destabilizing Milton: "Paradise Lost" and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> John Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way* (London: 1660), VII, p. 426.

<sup>10</sup> <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=V99567> [accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2013]

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Bates, 'No Sin but Irony: Kierkegaard and Milton's Satan', *Literature & Theology*, 1 (1997) 1-26 (5).

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned [...] It was from out of the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world.<sup>11</sup>

Just as the apple contains knowledge of both good and evil, so too does the poet figure. What the poem has done is to separate these two binary strands, and to give each a face. Satan is evil — it is he who tempts Eve into knowledge. The narrator is good — he seeks to direct that knowledge toward the good, to justify the ways of God.

*Paradise Lost*, then, can begin to be seen as something more than just an epic about morality, but about the specific morality of poets and poetry. Sigmund Freud's description of the poet is of a child at play, always seeking to 'rearrange the things of his world in a way which pleases him'.<sup>12</sup> And of course, this is what Milton has done with *Paradise Lost*, taking the Bible and reimagining its content. It is a curiously subversive act for a man so famously Puritan. Poole makes the point that there are those even today who consider 'such literary attempts to be impious, shaking the walls of the world [by] talking about things using the wrong language'.<sup>13</sup> And yet, Milton clearly believes that this potential irreverence is justified. In Book Five, the angel Raphael neatly summarises the concept. Forced to relate the events of the conflict in Heaven to Adam and Eve, he asks:

how shall I relate [...]  
The secrets of another world, perhaps  
Not lawful to reveal? Yet for thy good  
This is dispensed. (*PL*, 5. 564-570)

This is the very essence of the conflict between the two sides of the poet figure. On the one hand is the motive to achieve something good — the enlightenment of mankind. On the other is the necessity of sin to achieve it. In *Paradise Lost* the poet figure has been physically divided. The narrator is all motive — the virtuous desire, like Raphael, to impart knowledge

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<sup>11</sup> John Milton, *The Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, (London: MacMillan, 1904), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming', in *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000*, ed. by Jon Cook (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), pp. 41-46 (p. 42).

<sup>13</sup> Poole, p. 178.

of a higher realm. But it is Satan who achieves the desired ends through the temptation of Eve.

Of course, one might suggest that this reading of the poem undermines Milton's primary purpose. He is, after all, making a broad point about the relationship between God and humanity in general. To suggest this is an allegory specifically about poets would seem a private conceit rather than an act of virtue. Milton himself warns us of the dangers of allegory and metaphor in his philosophical treatise, *The Art of Logic* (1672), published after *Paradise Lost*:

warning [...] should be given that likes whether of short or full form are not to be urged beyond that quality which the man making the comparison intended to show as the same in both [...] Nothing similar is identical; likeness does not run four feet; every likeness hobbles.<sup>14</sup>

And yet, if we focus on the character of Satan, the temptation is to deepen the allegory still further. If we return to Freud's understanding of the poet, as one who does not so much create, but rearranges the world around them, we find that Satan does exactly the same thing. In Book One he observes that the 'mind is its own place, and in itself/ Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven' (*PL*, 1. 254-255). He seems to be signposting his role in this allegory as the creative force of the poet. This position is reinforced by Satan's relationship with Chaos: the thing which separates Heaven and Hell from Earth. This barrier is described by the narrator as a realm of:

Rumour [...] Chance  
And Tumult, and Confusion, all embroiled,  
And Discord with a thousand various mouths (*PL*, 2. 965-967)

Like Freud's poet, Satan is faced with a malleable, disordered world that he must make sense of. Indeed, he does not merely need to impose an order on it, but to make a bridge of it — a physical thing to connect together the spiritual and temporal spheres. The 'broad and beaten way' that Satan creates 'Over the dark abyss' (*PL*, 2. 1026-1027) can be seen as an allegory of poetic construction itself. It is the physical realisation of a creative thought in the same way that Freud visualises a poem.

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<sup>14</sup> John Milton, *The Art of Logic* (London: 1673), p. 195, cited in, Poole, p. 168.

But if *Paradise Lost* is, in part, a self-reflexive piece about the nature of poets and poetry, does this give credence to the view that this is an inward-looking work, more about John Milton's own personal relationship with God than with humanity as a whole? Again we are forced to turn to the epic narrator, and consider the duality of the poet figure. The narrator appears acutely conscious of the risk that *Paradise Lost* might be perceived as an exercise in egotism, and at the very beginning of the poem seeks to negate this. Addressing the Muse, the narrator implores: 'O Spirit [...] Instruct me, for Thou know'st' (*PL*, 1. 17-19). He deliberately debases his own attributes, and seeks to attribute any greater skill or wisdom onto the Muse itself: 'what in me is dark/ Illumine, what is low raise and support' (*PL*, 1. 22-23). Any hint of arrogance is pushed firmly onto Satan.

We see this action repeated throughout the poem. In the scene following her creation, Eve comes close to an act of egocentricity:

As I bent down to look, just opposite,  
A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared,  
Bending to look on me. I started back  
It started back; but pleased I soon returned. (*PL*, 4. 460-461)

She does not complete this narcissistic act of self love, however, as she is joined by Adam, to whom her affection is turned instead. Her conduct here is 'a fall averted', a fact which Milton signposts before the event.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it is God himself who proclaims that Satan's Fall is 'self-tempted, self depraved', whereas Eve 'falls, deceived/ By the other' (*PL*, 3. 130-131).

What we see here is the re-emergence of a pattern within the poem of Satan being used as a device to offset the sin of others; a pattern that can only endorse the view of him as a poet figure. Satan's crime is the same as Narcissus: he esteems himself above others. And yet it is this flaw in his character that drives him to tempt mankind into knowledge of good and evil. His sin provides man with the eventual key to salvation. This, then, is the gift of Milton and Satan. Milton's own God predicts that humanity will 'find grace' (*PL*, 3. 131) through knowledge of their own sin. Thus, by tempting Adam and Eve into knowledge, Satan's apparently evil behaviour causes 'immeasurably greater benefits for man than could conceivably have been otherwise obtained.'<sup>16</sup> Satan's fall becomes an act of self-sacrifice equivalent to Milton's risking blasphemy for the benefit of mankind. Satan cannot truly

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<sup>15</sup> Poole, p. 169.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall' in *Milton's Epic Poetry*, ed. by C.A. Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 55-73 (p. 56).



benefit by his actions, as he is barred from redemption, just as Milton cannot be benefited by his potentially heretical poetry, and yet both bring the rest of humanity closer to Grace. Both are a necessary fall.

In this opening section I have sought to define the terms of discussion for the rest of this chapter, and the thesis as a whole. The idea of the split poet figure, at once fallen and exalted, as well as the concept of the necessary Fall, are the key ‘Miltonic ideas of the Fall’ which I referred to in my introduction. In the discussion that follows, my arguments will rest heavily on these ideas, taking into account their impact on the first and second generation Romantic poets, and their own understanding of what it means to fall.

## **1.2. First Generation Romantics: Revolutionary Responses to Miltonic Ideas of the Fall**

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The responses of the first generation Romantics — specifically Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake — to Milton and *Paradise Lost* are curious. Their styles of poetry and prose are typically dissimilar, and their philosophies tend to contradict one another. And yet, time and again these poets are seen to draw upon Milton’s work. In my view, it is their mutual experience of political revolutions which connects these poets, and perhaps more potently, the failure of these revolutions to realise each man’s hopes. John Milton was a great supporter of the Parliamentarians during the English Civil War, and of the Commonwealth and Protectorate after it. Ultimately, however, he lived to witness the reinstatement of the monarchy, and thus the failure of the republican government he had wished for. Likewise, the Romantic poets began their careers as passionate advocates of the French Revolution — and republicanism in general — but were forced to witness the political idealism of the Revolution’s beginnings turn into an increasingly bloody and ideologically twisted conflict.

What I will argue here is that this mutual disappointment in the failure of revolution is reflected in a common preoccupation with fallenness in the poetry of both Milton and the first generation Romantics. In particular, I will seek to demonstrate how the first generation Romantics express their anxiety about the political role of the poet in a post-revolution age through their engagement with Miltonic ideas of the Fall.

The link between the political concerns of Milton and the Romantics is one that has been recognised frequently by academics. Sir Herbert Grierson wrote the following in his book, *Milton & Wordsworth: Poets and Prophets* (1937):

If we reflect on the possible experiences of a poet like Milton, Blake or Wordsworth, in passing through a revolution, a man of deep sensibilities, of active intellectual and imaginative reactions to the sensations and emotions which his temperament make so acute, and, finally, endowed with the power to express, to communicate to others, what he feels and thinks [...] One thing is certain – the high hopes, the passionate agitations which the first movement of sympathy with a great effort to renew the life of a people arouses will be followed by an acute reaction, a profound sense of disillusionment.<sup>17</sup>

Here, Grierson draws a direct link between poets and revolution. Indeed, he suggests an inevitability about the relationship — firstly that they will have strong feelings about revolution, and will be compelled to express those feelings, and secondly that they will ultimately be left bitterly disappointed by the outcome.

Grierson's thinking may have been influenced by his own experience. He acknowledges as much in his book, pointing to Turkey, Russia and Spain as examples of contemporary revolutions which appeared to promise 'mutual goodwill' before turning to 'frightful consequences'.<sup>18</sup> And yet, it would be foolish to dismiss his argument as anachronistic, or founded on personal prejudice. The essence of his argument is useful: that Milton and the first generation Romantics react so strongly to revolution because they each see the role of the poet as being politically significant.

### **1.2.1 William Blake: Poetry as Rebellion — Reconciling Blake and Milton**

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If we turn first to William Blake, we see that his poetry is heavy with both revolutionary zeal and the influence of John Milton. What I wish to demonstrate here is how the nature of Blake's revolutionary spirit changes over time, and how this manifests itself in his poetry through his engagement with Miltonic ideas of the Fall. In order to do this, I shall compare Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) and *Milton* (1804), arguing that one can perceive a marked process of moderation between the two poems, as Blake moves from a position which appears to endorse violent rebellion towards a more nuanced, intellectual position, which I shall elucidate as the discussion develops.

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<sup>17</sup> Herbert Grierson, *Milton & Wordsworth: Poets and Prophets* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 147.

<sup>18</sup> Grierson, p. 147.

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* was composed in the optimistic first few years of the French Revolution, only a year after the fall of the Bastille. Richard Cronin suggests that the poem ‘decisively signals Blake’s progression [...] to “political radicalism.”’<sup>19</sup> It is certainly true that the poem reflects Blake’s initial enthusiasm for revolution. This can most clearly be seen in ‘A Song of Liberty’, the final section of *The Marriage*. In this short piece of highly bombastic rhetoric, Blake urges France to ‘rend down thy dungeon’ and Spain to ‘burst the barriers of Old Rome’ (*MHH*, 25. 6-8). Indeed, the poem as a whole is very much concerned with the destruction of old frameworks, both physical and mental.

In particular, the poem engages with Emmanuel Swedenborg’s work *Heaven and Hell* (1758), in which Swedenborg proposes an innate conflict between the binaries of man’s ‘hereditary Evil’ and the goodness of God.<sup>20</sup> Swedenborg posits that humanity must allow God to act through them, and essentially to resist their own nature to achieve ‘goodness’. Blake disrupts this philosophy entirely, arguing that Swedenborg’s assertions are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of morality, writing that:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and  
Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are  
necessary to Human existence. (*MHH*, 3. 7-9)

It seems apparent, then, that at this stage in his career, before the ‘first movement of sympathy’, as Grierson calls it, with the French Revolution has dissipated, Blake is not especially concerned with any Miltonic idea of fallenness. For Blake, the biblical Fall is a nonsense. If it is better to ‘murder an infant in the cradle than nurse unacted desires’ (*MHH*, 10. 7), then the impulse to eat a piece of fruit cannot be a meaningful expression of sin.

When Blake writes, then, that Milton was of the ‘Devil’s party/ Without knowing it’ (*MHH*, 5. 23), we can read this as simply being part of Blake’s wider intention of discrediting old modes of thought or understanding. Blake does not read *Paradise Lost* as being deliberately engaged in a subversive examination of the awkward relationship between good and evil, but as a work that merely falls into these ideas by accident whilst delivering an orthodox sermon. What makes this such a potent criticism is Blake’s view of the poet as having a prophetic duty to uphold. In one of his ‘Memorable Fancies’, Blake depicts a conversation between himself and the prophet Isaiah:

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Cronin, *The Politics of Romantic Poetry: In Search of the Pure Commonwealth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew M. Stauffer, Marilyn Butler and James Chandler, *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 81.

I asked: does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so?

He replied. All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything (*MMH*, 12. 10-16)

Milton, in Blake's eyes, does not meet Isaiah's criteria for the prophet/poet. If he is on one hand justifying the ways of 'God to Men', and on the other a member of the 'Devil's party', then he cannot be of a 'firm persuasion'. For Blake, *Paradise Lost* cannot succeed in its stated aim of justifying or explaining God to its readers because, to Blake, Milton's orthodox message is betrayed by his unconsciously subversive spirit.

It is not until later that we see Blake seriously reassess his understanding of Milton and *Paradise Lost*. Ian Balfour rightly observes that 'No other Romantic poet confronts Milton so directly' as when Blake writes *Milton*.<sup>21</sup> The poem is, like *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a response to *Paradise Lost*. And yet the nature of the response is different, although both texts appear to share a revolutionary theme. In the preface to *Milton* we find Blake very much invested in a rabble-rousing form of rhetoric:

Rouze up O Young Men of the New Age!  
set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have  
Hirelings in the Camp, the Court & the University:  
who would if they could, forever depress the Mental and  
prolong Corporeal War.<sup>22</sup>

And yet, even this apparent commonality with *The Marriage* seems subtly different in *Milton*. Whereas in *The Marriage* Blake is urging the French to cast down their dungeon in what seems a very physical sense, here we see a deliberate appeal to shift the focus from the 'Corporeal' to the 'Mental'. In *The Marriage*, Blake is swift to mock those who see a binary division between 'Reason' and 'Energy', the 'passive' and the 'active' (*MMH*, 3. 11-12), and so this acknowledgement of the separation of mind and body appears a significant move towards a more moderate, considered stance.

It seems odd, however, that in this condemnation of violence the French Revolution is never addressed in direct terms. Rather than attack those anonymous, war-mongering

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<sup>21</sup> Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> William Blake, *Milton*, in *William Blake: the Complete Poems* ed. by Alicia Ostriker (New York: Penguin, 1977), 1. 11-15. All subsequent plate and line references are from this addition, abbreviated as 'M', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

‘Hirelings’, Blake chooses to vent his fury instead upon the ‘silly Greek and Latin slaves of the sword’ (*M*, 1. 10). One could suggest that this is simply Blake’s way of avoiding talking about politics in direct terms — perhaps being wary of charges of sedition. Balfour, however, sees the reference to Greek and Latin as a direct reflection of Blake’s dislike of the epic, specifically ‘the war epic of Homer and his imitators’.<sup>23</sup> Balfour cites an appendix to *The Prophetic Books*, entitled ‘On Virgil’, in support of this claim. In it, Blake quotes a line from the *Aeneid*: ‘Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War and Dominion’. Blake goes on to criticise Virgil, Homer, and Ovid directly, suggesting that their work is undermined by the militancy of its cultural origin: ‘Rome and Greece swept Art into their maw and destroyed it; a warlike State never can produce Art’.<sup>24</sup> In his poetry, Blake thrives on ideas of conflict and collision, but he sees war as the antithesis of Art. Herbert Tucker suggests that Blake, particularly in *Milton*, deliberately seeks to subvert the classical tradition of the epic as a celebration of violence by investing the ‘virtues of strife’, such as heroism and bravery, ‘in arts and peace’.<sup>25</sup> In writing *Milton* as an epic, but without the warlike themes of Homer, Blake is simultaneously seeking to redeem that form of poetry and the higher ideals of the French Revolution, both of which he deems to have been marred by war.

That, of course, is why *Paradise Lost* and John Milton are both the model and the subject of Blake’s poem. *Paradise Lost* is an epic unlike most others in that it is very much about ‘Mental’, as opposed to ‘Corporeal’, conflict. Indeed, the only violence has already taken place, described by the Angel Raphael in Book Five as the ‘invisible exploits/ Of warring Spirits’ (*PL*, 5. 565-566). As for choosing Milton as the hero, Balfour speculates that ‘Blake felt compelled to summon back Milton’ because he was ‘a poet for whom prophecy and poetry were virtually identical.’<sup>26</sup> This, too, seems to represent a change from the Blake who wrote *The Marriage* — since in that poem there are very few voices that are clearly attributed to specific speakers. Even in the section entitled ‘The Voice of the Devil’, it is not made explicit whether what follows is meant to be literally read as the voice of Satan. In *Milton*, however, there are three dominant, well defined voices: the epic narrator, the Bard, and Milton.

It might be argued, of course, that Blake’s use of different voices can be misleading. J. Bronowski makes the point that attempting to attribute any particular line in Blake’s poetry to

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<sup>23</sup> Balfour, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> Blake, ‘On Virgil’, Appendix to *The Prophetic Books*, ll. 5-8.  
<<http://www.bartleby.com/235/343.html>> [accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014]

<sup>25</sup> Herbert Tucker, *Epic: Britain’s Heroic Muse 1790-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> Balfour, p. 154.

a particular source or voice is rarely as straightforward as it might appear, and is often not a useful task to pursue. He points to the sheer diversity of influences present in Blake:

the more symbols we find Blake to have picked up, and the more random their sources, the plainer it becomes that he took them less by choice than by habit. All these symbols were alike to Blake, because all were to him shadows of the same mystery.<sup>27</sup>

In a sense, this is what makes *Milton* so interesting. Although it contains all of the seeming ‘randomness’ that Bronowski identifies, it is relatively singular among Blake’s works in its adherence to form, specifically the epic form. This is significant, as the epic has at its core a well defined set of voices and characters — the epic narrator and the hero being the most fundamental.

Earlier, I suggested that in *Paradise Lost* Milton used this clear division of voices to illustrate the two conflicting aspects of the poet: the prophetic, divine side and the fallen side. I believe that Blake does something very similar, but for a different purpose. Not only is Blake’s sense of fallenness more explicitly bound up in a sense of political defeat, it is also more morally complex. Milton wished to justify the ways of God to men, to find a way to excuse sin for a greater good. Blake’s intentions are less easily defined, as he does not see any useful distinction between the ‘contraries’ of good and evil. In this sense, *Milton*’s purpose is antithetical to *Paradise Lost*. Whereas the latter seeks to express morality in binary terms, the former looks to collapse these binaries. *Milton* is a journey that sees the two ‘contraries’ of William Blake and John Milton, the radical and the Puritan, transform and unify.

At the beginning of the poem we find ‘Milton’ dissatisfied but uncomplaining: ‘Unhappy tho in heav’n, he obey’d, he murmur’d not.’ (*M*, 2. 18) For Blake, this is sinfulness incarnate, the nursing of ‘unacted desires’. In contrast we have the ‘loud voic’d Bard’ (*M*, 14. 9), an extension of the epic narrator, who sings without caution. The Bard is certain of his own authority as one privy to the ‘inspiration of Poetic Genius’ (*M*, 14. 1). This is something of an inversion of *Paradise Lost*, where the narrator has a reserved voice, interjecting at points to bemoan Satan’s lack of humility. In *Milton*, the narrator unashamedly boasts of his own power: ‘I am Inspired! I know it is Truth! for I Sing’ (*M*, 13. 51).

Ultimately, the Bard moves ‘Milton’ to fall from heaven to purge his own orthodoxy. Mirroring Blake’s lines in *The Marriage*, ‘Milton’ declares: ‘I am in my Selfhood that Satan: I am that Evil One!’ (*M*, 14. 30) As the epic continues, ‘Milton’ joins and interacts with

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<sup>27</sup> J. Bronowski, *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 32.

different people and objects, including Blake's foot and his own 'hermaphroditic' shadow (*M*, 140. 37). Any trace of the restrictive, 'sensible' voice of *Paradise Lost*'s narrator is gone.

My argument, then, that *Milton* represents a shift towards moderation, could be problematic. Blake may begin with an orthodox epic framework, and an orthodox hero, but he swiftly undermines them, and leads us back into his familiar state of imaginative anarchy. However, although the images and symbols Blake draws upon are strange and incompatible, they are not mindless, and they serve a direct purpose, as Bronowski suggests:

Blake himself knew that, at the bottom, his symbolism is held together only by his energy and his imaginative insight. For Blake was not trying to puzzle out a secret or a system. He was trying to make men give up systems, rationalist and religious alike.<sup>28</sup>

What Bronowski identifies here is, in a sense, Blake's political manifesto — the undermining of restrictive systems of government and belief. And yet, what I find to be so significant about *Milton* is not that it undermines these systems, but that it undermines them through poetry. *Milton* is not violently coerced by the Bard, but persuaded through song. 'Milton' doesn't return to the Earth as a warlike scourge, but instead as one reproving the nations of Earth for their 'warlike Selfhood' (*M*, 14. 16).

Although Blake is disillusioned by the outcome of the French Revolution, his principles are not altered as a result, but strengthened. As Balfour reminds us, Blake always professed an 'abhorrence of war', but in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* it seemed he was prepared to sacrifice this principle.<sup>29</sup> In *Milton*, none of the goals have changed — the orthodox establishment is still clearly defined as the enemy — but the methods Blake is prepared to employ to combat it have been refined. In *Paradise Lost* he finds his model, a 'poem that broke with tradition as much as it followed it', and delivered its message without recourse to war.<sup>30</sup> *Milton* is Blake's homage to this concept, and his blueprint for all future revolutions. By providing an artistic, poetic alternative to the physical conflict of revolution, Blake creates a political role for the poet which abstracts itself from the baseness of partisanship and violence.

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<sup>28</sup> Bronowski, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Balfour, p. 141.

<sup>30</sup> Balfour, p. 147.

### 1.2.2. Coleridge: *Retrospective Conservatism and the Intervening Voice*

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Like Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was undoubtedly moved by the French Revolution to the ‘high hopes’ and ‘passionate agitations’ that Grierson writes about — and equally hurt by the inevitable sense of disillusionment that followed. However, Coleridge’s reaction to this disillusionment differs significantly to Blake’s. Whereas Blake remains ideologically consistent in his politics, Coleridge is far more malleable, moving from a politically radical position in the 1790s to an increasingly conservative stance in the post-revolutionary period. In the following discussion my principle argument is that Coleridge seeks, retrospectively, to impose these later conservative values onto the poetry of his radical past. I shall argue that this represents a fundamental change in Coleridge’s view of the political role of the poet, whereby he moves from a position which holds poetry to be a vehicle for change to one that is increasingly concerned with supporting the status quo.

I have said that the failure of the French Revolution was the key factor in changing Coleridge’s political outlook from radical to conservative. In ‘France, An Ode’ (1798) Coleridge describes what seems to be the primary catalyst for this change. In the poem, he writes of his initial jubilation when France ‘Stamp’t her strong foot and said, she would be free’, but swiftly points to the invasion of Switzerland by France as the moment he loses all faith in the revolution<sup>31</sup>:

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive these dreams!  
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,  
From bleak Helvetica’s icy caverns sent –  
[...] forgive me, that I cherish’d  
One thought, that ever bless’d your cruel foes (‘France’, ll. 64-71)

Although Coleridge seeks to reaffirm his love of freedom and liberty in the poem, ‘With what deep worship I have still ador’d/ The spirit of divinest liberty’ (‘France’, ll. 20-21), it is difficult not to read a weakening of his convictions in the poem. When he writes ‘O Liberty! With profitless endeavour/ Have I pursued thee many a weary hour’ (‘France’, ll. 89-91), one is left with the deep sense that Coleridge has begun a serious re-evaluation of his principles and beliefs. A process of re-evaluation which I believe encompasses not only his politics, but

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<sup>31</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘France, an Ode’, in *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*, 1. 4. All subsequent line references are from this edition, abbreviated as ‘France’, and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.



also his religious and poetic ideologies, and which has a profound impact on his ideas about the role of the poet.

If we take *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1798), and its subsequent reworking, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1817), as examples, it is possible to trace how Coleridge's transition toward religious and poetic orthodoxy presents itself in his poetry. When we compare the Argument of the 1798 version with the epigraph that replaces it in the latter, we see the first example of this change. In the Argument of 1798 Coleridge merely describes, in simple terms, the nature of the poem — that it concerns a mariner and 'the strange things that befell' him.<sup>32</sup> The epigraph of 1817 is in stark contrast to this simplicity. Taken from Thomas Burnet's *Archaeologiae Philisophicae* (1692), the short quotation, written in Latin, speculates on the existence of 'invisible [...] beings' and their distinguishing 'features and functions'. The extract ends with a caution that 'we must be watchful for the truth and keep a sense of proportion.'<sup>33</sup> The choice of Latin is significant, as it is the traditional language of the Church. One could argue that this is simply an attempt to evoke the same Pre-Reformation world that we see in *Christabel* (1816): an indication that the Mariner's wisdom stems from a philosophy that in some way precludes the infighting of an increasingly diverse Christian landscape. However, I would suggest that the purpose of the Latin epigraph is more specific than this. Marilyn Butler notes that the failure of the radical ideals of the French Revolution caused Coleridge to become increasingly 'conservative', not only politically, but also in his religious affiliation. She points to his book, *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830), describing it as an 'idealized, half-nostalgic portrait of how a paternalistic old system worked' — referring to the idea of both the church and the state as 'father figures'.<sup>34</sup> The Latin of the epigraph recalls this system, whereby a Latin speaking priest was necessarily required as a guide and interpreter: a father figure. This, coupled with the paternal caution to 'be watchful for the truth and keep a sense of proportion', suggests Coleridge's increased appetite for authority, structure and caution, both in society and religious belief.

In contrast to this, as a younger man Coleridge was far more adventurous in his religious beliefs. In 'The Eolian Harp' (1795) he espouses a pantheist philosophy, roughly

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<sup>32</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, in *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson and Raimonda Modiano (London: Norton, 2004), p. 58. All subsequent page and line references are from this addition, abbreviated as 'AM 98', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, p. 59. All subsequent page and line references are from this addition, abbreviated as 'AM 17', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>34</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 178.

defined as the belief that ‘God is everything and everything is God’.<sup>35</sup> In the poem, he speculates that all things may be animated by ‘one intellectual Breeze,/ At once the soul of each, and God of all’. He does go on, however, to register some guilt over this ‘unregenerate’ speculation, having received from his wife’s ‘serious eye a mild reproof’.<sup>36</sup> By the time he composes the 1817 version of *The Ancient Mariner*, it is as though Coleridge has internalised his wife’s disapproval and turned it on his own work. The addition of the marginal gloss to the text, as well as the modernising of some of the archaic language, such as ‘Ancyent Marinere’ to ‘Ancient Mariner’, seems to express an anxiety about a spirit of unconventionality that the author no longer fully subscribes to. Coleridge appears to have reconceptualised his role as a poet from one that is prepared to be speculative and experimental to one that is increasingly restrictive and conformist.

Given this change in attitude, it seems strange that Coleridge consistently sought to define *The Ancient Mariner* as a purely imaginative poem. He is famously quoted as having defended his poem against the accusation that it had no moral by saying:

The only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination.<sup>37</sup>

In this sense, *The Ancient Mariner*, particularly in the 1817 version, shares the tension between morality and imagination that we find in *Paradise Lost*. In the original 1798 poem, Coleridge does indeed seem at pains to exercise the freedom of the imagination, leaving ambiguities open to speculation. In the latter, however, the voice of the marginal gloss does not even allow the geography to pass unremarked: ‘the ship encounters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward even till it reaches the Line’ (*AM17*, p. 67). The function of this intervening voice can be seen as a reflection of the epic narrator’s role in *Paradise Lost*, a curb on the ‘unregenerate’, or fallen, aspect of the poet figure. Conversely, the Mariner stands as a parallel to Milton’s Satan. Both fit the mould of prophet — the Mariner’s ‘strange power of speech’ (*AM98*, l. 620) and compulsion to tell his tale are a testament to this fact — and they both follow the Miltonic pattern of the necessary fall. In Satan’s case he falls, and causes Adam and Eve to fall, in order that mankind can achieve Grace in future. The Mariner’s fall

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Levine, ‘Pantheism’, in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, 2012) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>> [accessed 28<sup>th</sup> October 2013]

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘The Eolian Harp’, in *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*, ll. 39-41.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, May 31<sup>st</sup> 1830, *Table Talk: Volume II*, ed. by Carl Woodring (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 249.

occasions a less universal redemption, that of the wedding guest, who ends the tale a ‘sadder and a wiser man’ (*AM98*, l. 657) for having heard the Mariner’s tale.

What makes Coleridge’s Miltonic self-regulation even more interesting is the political context in which he was writing. In 1817, the year in which the revised version of the *Ancient Mariner* was published in *Sibylline Leaves*, both the Treason Act and the Seditious Meetings Prevention Bill were passed. These, along with four other pieces of legislation, later known as the ‘gag acts’, were specifically designed to limit the freedom of political expression.<sup>38</sup> In this context, Coleridge’s desire to retrospectively impose a conservative voice onto his poetry may be interpreted in several different ways. One could simply read his actions as a means of appeasing a repressive regime, distancing himself from his radical associations as an act of self-defence against accusations of sedition. And yet, the *Ancient Mariner* is not an explicitly political poem, and if Coleridge had wished only to dispel the notion of himself as a seditious poet there are works which would have served this purpose better.

In my view, the reason that Coleridge uses *The Ancient Mariner* is because it allows him to confront the issue of guilt. If the transformation of his role as poet — moving from radical free-thinker to defender of the establishment — is to be credible, it is essential that Coleridge is able express his sincere regret for his former beliefs. Butler suggests that the significance of guilt in the *Ancient Mariner* lies in the parallel between Coleridge and the Mariner himself. She observes that the ‘*Ancient Mariner* depicts a man in whom moral isolation is inseparable from a sense of guilt.’<sup>39</sup> For her, Coleridge viewed his ‘isolated’ past as a radical in the same way as the Mariner considers his slaying of the albatross, as a mark of deeply personal shame. However, *The Ancient Mariner* is about more than the mere expression of regret. The narrative of the poem is a parable of how sin can lead to a moral outcome for the sinner. In the case of the Mariner, his slaying of the albatross, and his subsequent guilt, leads him to understand the moral worth of ‘All things both great and small’ (*AM17*, l. 615). For Coleridge, his guilt over supporting the French Revolution is what leads him to become the stalwart defender of political stability we see in *On the Constitution of Church and State*. Coleridge’s ‘retelling’ of the poem, with its clear moral message, mirrors the actions of the Mariner himself, who repeats his own story in order to atone for his past. In effect, the message of the poem reflects that of *Paradise Lost*: that sometimes a fall is necessary to occasion a greater moral outcome.

*The Ancient Mariner*, then, is a poem thoroughly rooted in *Paradise Lost*. The 1817 version has a division of voices comparable to Satan and the epic narrator, and both versions

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<sup>38</sup> James Chandler, *England in 1819* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 42-43.

<sup>39</sup> Butler, p. 83.

address the idea of the necessary Fall. Both *Paradise Lost* and *The Ancient Mariner* confront the issue of the role of the poet, but in significantly different ways. *Paradise Lost* addresses the evangelical function of poetry, and whether the poet is an appropriate agent for religious philosophy, whereas *The Ancient Mariner* engages with the topic on a level which is more personal to its author. The redemption of the Mariner, along with his ongoing suffering, bears a direct comparison with Coleridge's own experiences. In this sense, *The Ancient Mariner*, and the change which he makes to it, is more about Coleridge's individual relationship with poetry, as opposed to the more general engagement with the role of the poet we see in *Paradise Lost*.

At this point, it is worth reflecting on another poet who had a great influence on Coleridge — William Wordsworth — whose work provides us with a deeper understanding of the first generation Romantics' shared preoccupation with the Miltonic fall.

### **1.2.3. Wordsworth: 'Two Consciousnesses' and The Consummation of the Poet's Mind**

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Like Coleridge, William Wordsworth was deeply affected by the French Revolution. However, unlike Coleridge, Wordsworth actually lived in France in the early 1790s. Nicholas Roe notes how the first-hand nature of Wordsworth's contact with the French Revolution had a profound impact on his political sensibilities, suggesting that his 'political radicalism was bound up with his personal experience of revolution and responsive to its changing course'.<sup>40</sup> In the following discussion I will focus on Wordsworth's autobiographical epic poem, *The Prelude* (1805), arguing that its narrative about the growth and 'consummation of the Poet's mind' is directly linked to Wordsworth's experience of the Revolution, and to his evolving political ideologies.<sup>41</sup> I will suggest that he draws directly upon *Paradise Lost*, and the Miltonic idea of the split poetic identity, to make an explicit distinction between his pre and post-revolutionary selves, not only in terms of his changed political allegiances, but also his changed views on his role as a poet.

Very early on in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth introduces the idea of a strong division between his past and present selves. Indeed, he recalls his time as a schoolboy as if literally reflecting upon the life of a different person:

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<sup>40</sup> Roe, p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), XIII. 264. All subsequent book and line references are from this addition, abbreviated as 'TP', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

[...] so wide appears  
The vacancy between me and those days  
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind  
That, sometimes, when I think of it, I  
Seem two consciousnesses, conscious of myself  
And of some other Being (*TP*, II. 28-33)

What I want to suggest here is that it is the French Revolution that separates these two consciousnesses. In my view, the failure of the Revolution represents a kind of fall for Wordsworth — a loss of innocence which fundamentally alters his political outlook, moving him from a radical idealism to a more anxious conservatism. For me, this political difference is the key distinction between the two ‘consciousnesses’ which Wordsworth describes.

It may seem strange to argue that Wordsworth frames his childhood in a political context — when he talks about the ‘Sly subterfuge’ (*TP*, II. 106) of his childish escapades it is generally in reference to the breaking of petty rules rather than the overthrow of governments. However, I will make the case that the mischievous schoolboy and the political radical are merely different stages upon the same trajectory. Indeed, in Book IX of the *The Prelude* Wordsworth makes an explicit connection between his childhood, and indeed his childhood reading of poetry, with his pre-revolutionary politics:

Though untaught by thinking or by books [...]  
Tales of Poets, [...] made my heart  
Beat high and fill'd my fancy with fair forms,  
Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;  
Yet in the regal Sceptre, and the pomp  
Of Orders and Degrees, I nothing found  
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,  
That dazzled me; but rather what my soul  
Mourn'd for, or loath'd, beholding that the best  
Rul'd not, and feeling that they ought to rule. (*TP*, IX. 209-215)

He goes on to write that, as a child, he was predisposed to ‘the government of equal rights’, and that he was already a ‘Republican’ before he ever went to France (*TP*, IX. 230-248). Wordsworth seems to be suggesting, then, that his radical, republican ideology began in his ‘crudest youth’, and that poetry was a significant factor in its development. As a young man,

he appears to have seen poetry as serving a heroic function. Indeed, he seems to dismiss the idea of monarchy purely on the basis that regal ‘pomp’ does not capture his imagination in the way that the grand poetic narratives of ‘deeds’ and ‘sufferings’ are able to.

In the post-revolutionary period, however, Wordsworth’s attitudes to politics and poetry are significantly different. In his ‘Essay Supplementary to Preface’ (1815), Wordsworth gives an account of poetry and the reading public throughout history. The tone of the piece is fiercely didactic — David Duff describes it as an effort ‘to tell us how to read, and how *not* to read’, with particular emphasis on the latter.<sup>42</sup> Wordsworth is particularly keen to warn younger readers, ‘who in nothing can escape illusion’, about the dangerous passions that poetry can arouse:

what temptations to go astray are here held forth for them whose thoughts have been little disciplined by the understanding, and whose feelings revolt from the sway of reason!<sup>43</sup>

This reference to minds ‘little disciplined by the understanding’ is reminiscent of Wordsworth’s description of his younger self, ‘untaught by thinking or by books’. It seems that in the post-revolutionary period Wordsworth is far more wary of the seductively grand narratives of poetry. In addition, his position on the role of the poet has changed. As a youth he appears to have been inspired by poets to emulate the ‘deeds’ of ‘Old heroes’, and to indulge his flights of fancy. In 1815 — in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars — he is using his own position as a poet to discourage exactly that kind of behaviour.

As I have been suggesting, the cause of this profound alteration was Wordsworth’s reaction to the failure of the French Revolution, particularly the increasingly savage violence of the Terror. When Wordsworth describes this period in *The Prelude*, it is in stark, almost apocalyptic terms:

The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of a few  
Spread into madness of the many; blasts  
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.  
The sternness of the Just, the faith of those

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<sup>42</sup> David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 90.

<sup>43</sup> William Wordsworth, ‘Essay Supplementary to the Preface’ in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. III, ed. by W.J.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 63.

Who doubted not that Providence had times  
Of anger and of vengeance, theirs who throned  
The human understanding paramount  
And made of that their god, the hopes of those  
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs  
For a paradise of angels, the blind-rage  
Of insolent tempters (*TP*, X. 312-326)

Later on in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth acknowledges that, in the aftermath of all this bloodshed, a ‘shock had then been given/ To old opinions’, and that his mind was ‘let loose’ from his former beliefs (*TP*, X. 860-863). It is in this period of shock that the ‘two consciousnesses’ of Wordsworth are formed. The naive, pre-revolutionary version of himself that had absolute faith in the ‘mighty scheme of truth’ that only poets and prophets are ‘enabled to perceive’, is replaced by a more conservative, post-revolutionary self, wary of such grandiose self-mythologising (*TP*, XII, 302-304).

In this sense, the relationship between Wordsworth’s ‘two consciousness’ in *The Prelude* is comparable to the Satan/ epic narrator relationship in *Paradise Lost*. In both instances there are two competing voices, one compelled by passion and instinct, the other by sober consideration, with the latter acting as a curb on the former. Other critics have also commented on this Miltonic dynamic. Spiegelman makes a direct comparison between the pre-revolutionary Wordsworth and Satan, suggesting that the description of his character ‘is riddled with suggestions of malice [...] with muted echoes of satanic fall and vengeance’.<sup>44</sup> There is a good example of this in Book I, where Wordsworth describes his childhood self as a ‘fell destroyer’, capable of being led astray by passions that ‘O’erpowere’d [...] better reason’ (*TP*, I. 318-326). In contrast to this, at the end of *The Prelude* Wordsworth imagines his and Coleridge’s future roles as poets in almost priestly terms:

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak  
A lasting inspiration, sanctified  
By reason and by truth; what we have loved  
Others will love; and we may teach them how;  
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
On which he dwells, above this Frame of things

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<sup>44</sup> Willard Spiegelman, *Wordsworth’s Heroes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp.127-129.

(Which mid all revolutions in the hopes  
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged) (*TP*, XIII. 435-443)

In this passage, Wordsworth is no longer a destroyer, but a pedagogue. By highlighting the sanctity of reason — the quality which he struggled to master as a child — he emphasises the flaw in his younger self's character which led him into political radicalism. In this regard, *The Prelude* is doubly Miltonic, as it demonstrates how the failure of the French Revolution was a necessary fall in the growth and 'consummation' of Wordsworth's true 'Poet's mind' (*TP*, XIII. 264). Without the violent shock of the Terror, Wordsworth would not have reassessed his political/poetical ideologies, or as he refers to them: 'the errors into which I was betray'd' (*TP*, X. 881-886). Without this fall he would have remained the same man who wrote, in a letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, that in order for Liberty to 'reign in peace [she] must establish herself in violence'.<sup>45</sup> He would, in effect, have remained a poet ruled by passion and instinct, rather than by understanding and reason, and could not, therefore, be a fit guide to the next generation.

Indeed, this desire to pass on poetic wisdom seems to be central to Wordsworth's reconceptualisation of his role as a poet. I have already pointed to the heavily didactic 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface' as an example of Wordsworth in his role as a poet/teacher. Duff suggests that adopting this pedagogic guise is a deliberate strategy on the part of Wordsworth to insinuate himself into the political and literary establishment. His keenness to instruct the public on the proper way to read poetry in the 'Essay' is a 'defensive as well as assertive' gesture; insulating him from the potential 'misreading' of his early poetry, written under 'very different historical circumstances and with different ideological motives'.<sup>46</sup> In this regard, *The Prelude* serves a similar function, in that it prevents a 'misreading' of Wordsworth himself. He makes the Miltonic division between his two 'consciousnesses' as stark as possible, so that his readers will not judge the Wordsworth of the post-revolutionary period by the words and actions of the pre-revolutionary Wordsworth.

The purpose of *The Prelude*, then, is to describe Wordsworth's transition from a youth — inspired by the heroic glamour of poetry into supporting an uprising he was ill equipped to understand — to a mature poet, chastened by his experiences, but wiser as a result. In framing his narrative in this way, Wordsworth seeks to justify himself as a valid political voice to those who are wary of his former radicalism. In this, his actions resemble Coleridge's

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<sup>45</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Letter to the Bishops of Llandaff', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) p. 52.

<sup>46</sup> Duff, p. 90.



attempts to impose his new conservative voice onto his old poetry. Both poets seek to prove that their disavowal of the French Revolution is more than a hypocritical act of convenience, but a real and significant change in their political and poetical philosophies. The Miltonic ideas of the split poet figure, and of the necessary Fall, provide them with a compelling framework in which to make this argument — an explicit source which all of the poets discussed here are united in drawing upon.

I began this section by asserting that each of the first generation Romantics shared a political sensibility with Milton, a sensibility that expressed itself in an anxious preoccupation with fallenness. What I have tried to do subsequently is to demonstrate how, for each of these poets, the French Revolution was ineluctably linked to this anxiety. The failure of this political uprising to match their expectations forced a change in all of them, both political and poetical. In the case of William Blake this change was subtle but significant, not altering his political and ideological aspirations, but transforming his sense of how these aims ought to be achieved. For Coleridge and Wordsworth it was fundamental. Indeed, the alteration it elicited in these latter two was so powerful that it had profound implications for the generation of poets that followed them.

### **1.3. Byron and Keats: Intergenerational Conflict and Rising From the Fall**

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In the previous section I sought to demonstrate how the first generation Romantics changed the way in which they defined their politics, and their roles as poets, in response to the French Revolution. In the case of Wordsworth and Coleridge this involved a fundamental change in their attitudes, abandoning their revolutionary and republican agenda in favour of a more conformist, conservative position. For these poets, the idea of the biblical Fall had a profound relevance to their experience of the failure of the French Revolution and its radical ideals. Their political transformation emerged from a sense that their misplaced pride and ambition had been chastened by failure, in a way that echoed the fall of Adam and Eve, and indeed the fall of Satan.

In the following discussion I shall argue that the second generation Romantics — represented here by Byron and Keats — attempt to resurrect the radical ideologies abandoned by their predecessors. Referring principally to Byron's *Cain* (1821) and Keats's two unfinished versions of *Hyperion* (1818-1819), I will suggest that each of these poets uses the Miltonic idea of the necessary Fall — that a good outcome can emerge from failure — to criticise the first generation's political malleability, and to make the case for ideological integrity. Both Byron and Keats were influenced and inspired to pursue a broadly libertarian,

republican agenda by the early works of the first generation Romantics, and in *Cain* and *Hyperion* we see their attempts to confront the fall of these high ideals in a post-revolutionary world.

### 1.3.1. *Byron: 'being/ Yourselves in your resistance': The Value of Ideological Integrity in Cain*

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Byron's *Cain* is a play that is very much about intergenerational conflict. The relationship between the play's eponymous protagonist and his parents is analogous to the relationship between Byron and the first generation Romantics. Byron identifies himself with the character of Cain in order to project an image of himself as a 'gloomy rebel, upholding truth, justice and freedom' in opposition to 'those who would submit in fear and self-abasement'.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to Cain's stoicism, Byron deliberately frames the characters of Adam and Eve as timid and obsequious in the face of a repressive authority — an image which reflects Byron's view of the first generation Romantics and their political transformation.

In this way, Byron challenges the manner in which the first generation Romantics used the idea of the necessary Fall to justify their rejection of political radicalism. By juxtaposing the images of the worn down, depleted figures of Adam and Eve with the fiery conviction of Cain, Byron's play illustrates that it is more honourable to stick to your convictions, even at a severe cost, than to betray one's emotional and ideological instincts. In this sense, *Cain* disrupts the notion that an external event, such as the failure of the French Revolution, or indeed the Fall itself, should alter an individual's principles.

For both Cain and Byron, the principal cause of conflict between themselves and their predecessors is the feeling that the second generation has been denied a birthright. In the case of Cain, he resents Adam and Eve for his family's ejection from Eden, an event which has condemned him to a life of hard labour and mortality:

And this is  
Life. Toil! And wherefore should I toil? Because  
My father could not keep his place in Eden?  
What had I done in this? I was unborn;  
I sought not to be born; nor love the state

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<sup>47</sup> David Eggenchweiller, 'Byron's *Cain* and the Antimythological Myth', in *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 235.

To which that birth has brought me.<sup>48</sup>

This sense of having been robbed of a legacy also seems to reflect Byron's attitude toward the first generation Romantics, although in his case it is a less literal form of Paradise from which he has been excluded. For Byron, it is the radical, egalitarian model of the state — the model which inspired the French Revolution — that he has been denied from participating in. To understand what I mean by this, it is useful to return to *The Prelude*. In that poem, Wordsworth describes the early, optimistic years of the French Revolution in terms which evoke an image of Europe not dissimilar to the Garden of Eden:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very Heaven!  
[...] Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,  
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets,  
To take an image which was felt, no doubt,  
Among the bowers of Paradise itself,  
The budding rose above the rose full blown (*TP*, X. 693-706)

Although Byron was alive in the period that Wordsworth describes, he was so young that he may as well have been 'unborn' — he certainly had no opportunity to experience this 'bliss' first hand. Byron's only experience of this lost Paradise, like that of *Cain*, is in its aftermath. In Byron's long narrative poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), we see a stark example of the discrepancy between Wordsworth's and Byron's experiences of the Revolution. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth is able to recall a time when Europe appeared to have a positive vision for its future, whereas in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Byron is only able to portray 'a Europe in ruins, wrecked by the violence unleashed by the French Revolution'.<sup>49</sup> For all intents and purposes, Byron's Europe is the same 'Land without Paradise' (*C*. I. 1) that Cain inhabits.

Of course, one might argue that it is stretching credibility to suggest that Byron actually blamed the first generation Romantics for the failure of the French Revolution — after all, none of the Romantic poets had any great political influence in 1790s France. This argument, however, misses the subtlety of the message which *Cain* conveys. When Cain

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<sup>48</sup> George Gordon Byron, *Lord Byron's Cain*, ed. by T.G Steffan (Austin: University of Texas, 1968), X. 693-706. All subsequent line references are from this edition, abbreviated as 'C', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Cantor, 'The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism', *The Review of Politics*, 69. 3 (2007) 375-401 (393).

confronts Adam about the Fall he asks, ‘wherefore plucked ye not the tree of life?/ Ye might then have defied him’ (C, I. 33-34), and yet in truth, he knows that neither his father or mother could have successfully challenged the ‘all pow’rful’ God (C, I.76). What Cain resents his family for, then, is that in the face of their inevitable defeat, they surrendered to it with meek resignation, betraying their true characters and principles in the process:

[...] My father is  
Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind  
Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk  
Of an eternal curse (C, I. 179-182)

In this sense, Cain directly challenges the idea that his parents’ fall was necessary in order to achieve a greater good. For him, Adam and Eve’s argument that the Fall was God’s will, and therefore good, does not suffice. In his own words, Cain judges ‘but by the fruits — and they are bitter’ (C, I. 78).

It is exactly this kind of accusation that Byron seeks to level at the first generation Romantics. In his satirical poem, *The Vision of Judgment* (1822), a direct reply to Robert Southey’s *A Vision of Judgement* (1821), Byron explicitly accuses Southey of a weakness comparable to Adam and Eve’s. He suggests that Southey has relinquished his true beliefs in the face of a hostile political environment, just as Adam and Eve surrender to God:

He is—I will not say what—but I wish he was something else—I hate all intolerance—but most the intolerance of Apostasy—& the wretched vehemence with which a miserable creature who has contradicted himself—lies to his own heart—& endeavours to establish his sincerity by proving himself a rascal—not for changing his opinions—but for persecuting those who are of less malleable matter...<sup>50</sup>

The contradiction which Byron cites here refers to the publication of *Wat Tyler* (1817), a short play about the hero of a peasant revolt in the 1380s. The play, written by Southey in 1794, was belatedly discovered and published in 1817, causing Southey profound embarrassment. The play’s overtly radical, republican message clashed with Southey’s position as Poet Laureate, and his status as the ‘ultra-ministerial *Quarterly Review*’s [...] most splenetic,

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<sup>50</sup> Byron, *The Vision of Judgment*, ed. by Mary Redman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 4.

reactionary critic'.<sup>51</sup> The incident perfectly captures the severity of the first generation Romantics' political transformation and, for Byron, the extent of their betrayal of their true political instincts.

Extracts from *Wat Tyler* were read aloud in Parliament by William Smith MP, a member of the Whig opposition who wished to discredit the avowedly Tory Southey. In his response to Smith, in a letter of 1817, Southey gives his own justification for his apparently hypocritical stance. In it, he essentially puts forward the necessary Fall argument, that when he was young he was an idealist, but that hard experience had given him a deeper wisdom:

At that time and with those opinions, or rather feelings (for their root was in the heart and not in the understanding), I wrote *Wat Tyler* as one who was impatient of 'all the oppressions that are done under the sun.' The subject was injudiciously chosen, and it was treated as might be expected by a youth of twenty, in such times, who regarded only one side of the question.<sup>52</sup>

Southey's apparent dismissal of the heart in favour of the 'understanding' seems to bear out Byron's criticism that Southey 'lies to his own heart'. This is the key aspect of Byron's anger at the first generation Romantics. He is not merely concerned that they had committed an act of hypocrisy, but that, like Adam and Eve, they had done so in spite of their emotional instincts.

In *Cain*, Byron appears to imply that the reason for this political and emotional inconsistency stems from fear. The play seems to suggest that Adam and Eve, and by extension the first generation Romantics, abandon their principles out of fear of an authoritarian regime. In Adam and Eve's case, this authority is God himself. Indeed, Lucifer asserts that even the angels only praise God because they lack the bravery, or the moral conviction, to speak out against his autocratic 'tyranny':

They say what they must sing and say on pain  
Of being that which I am and thou art —  
[...] Souls who dare look the omnipotent tyrant in  
His everlasting face and tell him that

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Mahoney, *Romantics and Renegades: The Poetics of Political Reaction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 125.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Southey, 'Letter to William Smith MP, 1817' in *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. by Charles Cuthbert Southey (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855)  
<<http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/watt Tyler/contexts/letters.html#Response>> [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> February 2014]

His evil is not good! (C, I. 134-140)

Paul Cantor suggests that by identifying God with the principle of evil here, Byron is seeking to ‘justify revolution against established authority.’<sup>53</sup> While I agree with this interpretation, in my opinion Byron seeks to go further, and that by making the omnipotent God a cruel authoritarian, Byron is attempting to justify revolution against authority even when success is impossible — a twisted Kantian imperative to oppose tyranny, even when that tyrant is God himself. Indeed, Byron makes a similar suggestion in his ironic dedication to *Don Juan* (1819-24). In the poem, Byron accuses Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey of abandoning their republicanism after the failure of the French Revolution because of their fear of state reprisals. Byron gives a Miltonic twist to this accusation by comparing the steadfastness of Milton’s opposition to monarchy to the first generations Romantics’ betrayal of it:

He deigned not to belie his soul in songs,  
Nor turn his very talent to a crime,  
He did not loathe the sire, to laud the son,  
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.<sup>54</sup>

Byron is accusing the first generation of writing poetry purely to appease the establishment, just as the angels sing God’s praises out of fear of retribution. In this sense, he undermines the first generation’s characterisation of themselves as reformed characters. Whereas they would assert that the violence of the French Revolution had shown them the error of their political beliefs, Byron challenges them with the accusation that they are merely too weak to look their own ‘omnipotent tyrant’ in the face.

Of course, it could be suggested that Cain himself is not completely consistent in his defiance of God. Indeed, Wolf Hirst argues that Cain undergoes something of a necessary fall himself, suggesting that Cain, ‘Spiritually blinded by pride, [...] causes the death of a close relative, and then gains moral knowledge and self recognition’.<sup>55</sup> However, I would assert that Hirst misinterprets *Cain*’s ending. He implies that the murder of Abel leads Cain to give up his rebellious feelings, and to accept that God is not the tyrant that Cain had once believed. But Cain does no such thing. Certainly, Cain regrets the death of his brother, and repeatedly

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Cantor, ‘Byron’s *Cain*: A Romantic Version of the Fall’, *The Kenyon Review*, 2. 3 (1980) 50-71 (55)

<sup>54</sup> Byron, *Don Juan* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Wolf Z. Hirst, ‘Byron’s Lapse into Orthodoxy: An Unorthodox Reading of Cain’, in *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 254.

curses himself for it, but he never offers to renounce the principles which caused him to rebel in the first place. Indeed, when God's Angel comes to admonish Cain, Cain defends himself by saying: 'I did not seek/ For life nor did I make myself' (*C*, III. 509-510), echoing his complaint at the beginning of the play that he had no part in the Original Sin. His central grievance — that God is ultimately responsible for mankind's suffering — has not changed. In this sense, we may see the death of Abel as analogous with the violence of the French Revolution. Both are regrettable consequences of the rebellion against tyranny — falls in their own right — but they do not, to Byron at least, invalidate the principles upon which that rebellion was founded.

*Cain*, then, is a play that wholeheartedly rejects the idea of the necessary Fall. Byron repeatedly promotes ideological integrity as a virtue. It is the failure to adhere to their beliefs which prompts his resentment of the first generation Romantics — a resentment which we see reflected in Cain's relationship with his parents. For Byron, the idea that an external event, however powerful, should change one's most deeply held convictions is a form of moral and ideological cowardice. In *Cain*, Byron presents us with the ultimate story of a man who will not lay aside his beliefs, even in the face of a vengeful God, and who is prepared to accept the consequences of failure.

### 1.3.2. Keats: *The Necessary Transition to a New Poetic Order*

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Like *Cain*, Keats's *Hyperion: A Fragment* (1819), and *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream* (1820), are poems which concern the idea of poetic identity, as well as the more immediate political and poetic contexts of the time. After Keats's death, Byron himself acknowledged the redolence of *Hyperion* with his own work and ideas, singling it out for praise: 'I did not approve of Keats's poetry, or principles of poetry', yet adding that '*Hyperion* is a fine monument, and will keep his name'.<sup>56</sup> Nicholas Roe suggests that Byron's begrudging praise of Keats arises from an 'uneasy sense of self-recognition in Keats's poetic manner'.<sup>57</sup> What I will suggest here is that what Byron saw in the *Hyperion* poems was the same manoeuvring against the position of the first generation Romantics that we find in *Cain*.

The nature of Keats's opposition to the first generation Romantics is not exactly the same as Byron's. Whereas Byron deplores the inconsistency, or even duplicity of the first generation Romantics, Keats is far more open to ideas of change and duality. Indeed, what I

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<sup>56</sup> George Gordon Byron, 'Letter to John Murray, July 30<sup>th</sup> 1821' in *Byron A Self-Portrait Letters and Diaries, Vol II*, ed. by Peter Quennell (London: John Murray, 1950, p. 661.

<sup>57</sup> Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 18.

shall argue here is that the *Hyperion* poems are explicitly about change, or perhaps more accurately transition. The poems are about a fall — the fall of the Titans — but they are also about the rise of something new: the Olympian gods. I believe that this is Keats's way of addressing his role as part of the new wave of poets that we now recognise as the second generation Romantics. The rise of the Olympians mirrors Keats's own ideas about the shifting political and poetic landscape of post-Waterloo England. In the same way that the youthful Apollo arises to challenge Hyperion, Keats perceives himself as being among the natural successors to figures such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. What I shall argue here, therefore, is that the *Hyperion* poems present a generational version of the necessary Fall, and that the rise of a new generation of poets requires the decline of the old one — a necessary transition.

When one begins to look for this sense of necessary transition in the *Hyperion* poems, one thing is striking. The very fact that there are two versions of the poem — *Hyperion: A Fragment* and *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream* — immediately implies a sense of poetic transition and development. In a letter to his friend and fellow writer, John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats claimed that he had abandoned the first version of the poem because it was too 'Miltonic':

I have given up on *Hyperion* — there were too many Miltonic inversions in it — Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations<sup>58</sup>

Keats's aversion here to being too 'artful' seems to tie in to his desire to differentiate himself from what has gone before — in this case Milton. In the same letter to Reynolds, Keats expresses a desire to move away from the 'false beauty proceeding from art, and [...] to the true voice of feeling'.<sup>59</sup> For Keats, the aborted first attempt at *Hyperion* seems to resemble too closely the work of others, when what he wished to do was to produce something truly original, stemming from within his own mind and feelings.

It is certainly the case that the first *Hyperion* poem is less 'original' than *The Fall*. In terms of structure and theme, *Hyperion* overtly mirrors much of *Paradise Lost*. The poem begins with the Titans after their own fall, in much the same way that Milton's poem begins with Satan and the rebellious angels in Hell. In addition, the birth of Apollo in Delos, a natural paradise, invites a direct comparison to the creation of Adam and Eve. Although

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<sup>58</sup>John Keats, Letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1819, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. by Maurice Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 384.

<sup>59</sup>Keats, Letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1819, *Letters*, p. 384.



*Hyperion* operates on a much deeper level than mere parody — as I shall go on to demonstrate — when one compares it to *The Fall*, it is understandable that Keats should characterise his first attempt as being too superficial to meet his ambitions. In this sense, Keats's failure to complete *Hyperion* is a necessary transition of its own — a failure which leads him to reassess his poetic identity, and to articulate these reflections in *The Fall*.

*The Fall* is not so directly Miltonic as its precursor, and shifts the poem's emphasis onto the theme of poetry, and the role of the poet, making this the overt driving force of the narrative. *The Fall* begins with a first person narrator/poet figure who, having fallen into a dream state, is confronted by the last of the Titans, Moneta. In this meeting the poet is challenged to ascend a dais, where he is confronted about the nature of poets and poetry, as well as being shown visions of Hyperion in his palace, and the fallen Titans below. Through this use of a human poet figure, Keats is better able to create the sense of personal originality that he felt was lacking in *Hyperion*. However, it is worth observing that, like *Hyperion*, *The Fall* is also never completed. In that respect, the necessary transition to a newer and more original order of poetry is never truly fulfilled.

And yet, despite all of the differences between the two versions of *Hyperion*, and the fact that they remained unfinished, the underlying message which I believe Keats sought to convey remains largely the same in each poem. Keats's principal aim in the *Hyperion* poems is to distinguish between two different ways of approaching poetry, and between the two poetic generations of his era. This comparison is most acutely drawn in the contrast between Hyperion and Apollo, a comparison which translates across both versions of the poem.

Before delving into the function of these two characters in the *Hyperion* poems themselves, though, it is important to observe that Keats had a longstanding fascination with the figure of Apollo. Throughout his work, Keats often associates Apollo with the purest essence of poetry. In 1817, for instance, the year before Keats began composing *Hyperion*, he wrote 'Ode to Apollo' (1817). In the 'Ode', Keats gives a condensed account of the greatest poets in history, where he suggests that all of their achievements stem from the poetic influence of this 'God of Bards'.<sup>60</sup> When we turn to the *Hyperion* poems, therefore, we must be cognisant of the full significance of Hyperion's position as Apollo's rival. In effect, by opposing Apollo, Hyperion opposes the true spirit of poetry.

This division between Hyperion and Apollo is especially significant, because Keats seeks to present the relationship as directly analogous with the relationship between the first and second generation Romantics. Indeed, Richard Cronin suggests that the parallel may be

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<sup>60</sup> Keats, 'Ode to Apollo', in *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Jeffrey Cox (London: Norton, 2009), 1. 47.

even more intimate than this, and that Keats is seeking to identify himself personally with the figure of Apollo:

The plot of *Hyperion*, in which Saturn and the Titans are ousted, and Hyperion is forced to recognise the nobler music of Apollo, seems designed to express Keats's heady sense of his own irresistible genius<sup>61</sup>

Cronin's suggestion here is compelling, especially when one considers the way in which Keats uses images of wealth to differentiate between Apollo and Hyperion. As a 'Cockney poet', Keats was famously ridiculed by the elite literary establishment for his relatively modest background. Christopher Rovee usefully provides a list of some of the various terms of abuse levelled at Keats in his short career: 'trash, unclean, secondhand, vulgar, polluter, disgusting, wasteful' — a raft of terms which are deliberately used to associate Keats with the 'grime of London', and mock his supposed lack of a classical education.<sup>62</sup> It is interesting, therefore, to note the disparities between the description of Hyperion's home in *The Fall*, and Delos, the birthplace of Apollo, as described in *Hyperion*. Hyperion's palace is outwardly a glorious 'palace bright,/ Bastioned with pyramids of glowing gold', and yet 'Instead of sweets, his [Hyperion's] ample palate takes/ Savour of poisonous brass and metal stick.'<sup>63</sup> In comparison, Delos is described in terms of natural beauty, without the implied sense of an underlying malaise: 'Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,/ and poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech.'<sup>64</sup>

The implication here, that Apollo's island represents a more authentic kind of beauty, is reinforced by Apollo's named status as the 'Father of all verse' (*H*, III. 13). Not only does this identify Apollo and his environs with the genuine essence of poetry, but also implies a sense that wealth or high position can undermine poetic sensibilities. In my opinion, this is a direct expression of Keats's view of his own position in relation to his poetic predecessors. Although the likes of Southey and Wordsworth could not necessarily be described as wealthy, their acceptance of grandiose titles and institutional roles and payouts, such as Southey's Poet

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<sup>61</sup> Cronin, 192.

<sup>62</sup> Christopher Rovee, 'Trashing Keats', *EHL*, 75. 4 (2008) 993-1022 (993).

<sup>63</sup> John Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, in *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, II. 24-33. All subsequent line references are from the same edition, abbreviated as 'TF', and are given in parenthesis after quotations in the text.

<sup>64</sup> John Keats, *Hyperion: A Fragment*, in *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Jeffrey Cox (London: Norton, 2009), III. 2-25. All subsequent line references are from the same edition, abbreviated as 'H', and are given in parenthesis after quotations in the text.

Laureateship, stand in stark contrast to Keats's conferred epithet of 'Mr John' the apothecary.<sup>65</sup>

It is possible, however, to extend the thematic significance of wealth in the *Hyperion* poems even further than mere poetic rivalry. Marilyn Butler points out that the overthrow of the wealthy, powerful Titans, appears to be as much an allegory about the French Revolution as it is about poetry:

*Hyperion* does after all describe a revolution, the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympian gods. Its main literary source, *Paradise Lost*, is about the father of all rebellions, Satan's. There is evidence in the letters that Keats [...] had become interested in the French Revolution<sup>66</sup>

It is certainly the case that Keats empathised with the struggle against entitlement. Many critics, notably Nicholas Roe, have done much to historicise and politicise Keats's poetry. In Roe's view, the 'successive acts of usurpation' in *Hyperion* — the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympian Gods — reflects Keats's view of political history as a series of peaks and troughs or, as I would call them, necessary transitions.<sup>67</sup> However, that the *Hyperion* poems are explicitly about the French Revolution is a difficult interpretation to accept. The sincere pathos with which Keats treats the fallen Titans seems too heartfelt, too empathetic to suggest a link with the overthrown aristocrats of France. The description of Thea as an admixture of extreme loveliness and grief, 'How beautiful, if sorrow had not made/ Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self' (*H*, I. 34-35), does nothing to evoke the vehemence of Keats's opposition to monarchs and aristocracy. In an annotation to his copy of *Paradise Lost*, Keats wrote of Satan's ire towards God's apparent tyranny, 'How noble and collected an indignation against Kings'.<sup>68</sup> It does not seem credible, then, that Keats would invest any sympathy onto the deposed despots of France — not if he was unwilling to lend any to God himself.

And yet, it would be unwise to discount the obvious revolutionary themes of the *Hyperion* poems. As I have already intimated, the revolution Keats is really seeking to grapple with is a poetic one. The Titans may not resemble the fallen nobility of France, but in a set of poems so overtly about poets, and the role and value of poetry, it seems entirely plausible that they should represent the politically 'fallen' poets of the previous generation.

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<sup>65</sup> J. G. Lockhart, 'Review of *Endymion: The Cockney School of Poetry IV*', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (1818), in *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, p. 273.

<sup>66</sup> Butler, p. 151.

<sup>67</sup> Roe, p. 57.

<sup>68</sup> John Keats, cited in Forsyth, p. 338.

Certainly that would fit the pattern of poetic usurpation set by Apollo, and would explain Keats's empathetic style. After all, Keats had admired the first generation Romantics enormously, openly acclaiming Wordsworth, for example, as a 'genius'.<sup>69</sup> His disappointment in their turn away from radicalism would be, therefore, like his description of Thea, tinged with poignant sadness. Writing about Wordsworth in a letter to his brother, Keats decried the older poet's 'egotism, Vanity, and bigotry', but qualified his insult by adding, 'he is a great poet if not a philosopher'.<sup>70</sup> Keats, it seems, was characteristically torn between admiration and his own feelings of moral and poetic superiority. In this sense, the French revolution did not only occasion a disruption in the political hierarchies of Europe, but also, in the eyes of Keats, the poetic hierarchies as well. The fact that the *Hyperion* poems remain unfinished may represent Keats's difficulty in establishing his proper place in this new order — his difficulty in completing the necessary transition to his own place among the great poets, and his usurpation of the previous generation.

In this sense, the fact that the *Hyperion* poems remain incomplete could make my central argument problematic, perhaps suggesting an unwillingness on Keats's part to dethrone his former idols. However, Keats's idea of Negative Capability helps us to reconcile Keats's ambition with his apparent reluctance to ascend the dais of the poetic canon. Keats only ever explains Negative Capability once, in a letter to his brothers in 1817 — the year before he began *Hyperion* — but it has had a profound impact on the way in which critics have read Keats:

Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason — Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.<sup>71</sup>

Keats's insistence here that beauty in itself should be the primary concern of poets and poetry is vital, and helps us to interpret Keats's understanding of his own role in a new generation of poets. His specific criticism of Coleridge, one of the foremost first generation Romantics, is

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<sup>69</sup> John Keats, Letter to John Reynolds May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1818, in *Keats Poetry and Prose*, p. 243.

<sup>70</sup> Keats, Letter to George and Thomas Keats, February 27<sup>th</sup> 1818, *Letters*, p. 106.

<sup>71</sup> Keats, 'Letter to George and Thomas Keats', 21<sup>st</sup> December 1817, *Letters*, p. 71.

that he is incapable of being ‘content’ with beauty on its own, and always requires a complete and rationalised meaning to his philosophy, and perhaps his poetry also. That Keats did not finish either version of *Hyperion*, therefore, is a powerful statement in itself. Their incompleteness defies Coleridge’s ‘irritable reaching after fact and reason’, and thus becomes another way in which *Hyperion* challenges the first generation Romantics, and perpetuates the necessary transition to a new poetic order founded on the principles of freedom of thought and expression.

As I suggested at the beginning of this section, it is indeed intergenerational conflict which drives the narrative of the *Hyperion* poems. What I have sought to demonstrate here is the way in which Keats seeks to undermine his poetic predecessors’ poetic credentials, whilst promoting his own. His deliberate effort to align himself with the figure of Apollo signals his desire to emerge from his comparatively humble origins, and to challenge the established pecking order. Like Byron’s *Cain*, the *Hyperion* poems are overtly Miltonic, borrowing elements of both plot and theme from *Paradise Lost*, but just as *Cain* does, *Hyperion* reinvents its genesis. Whereas *Paradise Lost* is a story about a misguided, though ultimately necessary rebellion, Keats’s poems assert a positive case for change: a necessary transition.

The focus on inter-generational conflict/transition that we find in *Cain* and *Hyperion* is a recurrent theme throughout the work of what we now call the second generation Romantics. This is perhaps reflective of the premature deaths of this grouping’s most famous members: Byron, Keats, and Percy Shelley. Because they never fully matured as poets, their writing is necessarily bound up with a sense of their youth — a sense of philosophical exuberance and emerging ideological perspectives that provokes a contrast with the increasing conservatism of their older contemporaries.

In addition, the social and historical context of the late 1810s and early 1820s seems to invite the narrative of change that we find in the work of these young poets. The defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, accompanied by an increasingly turbulent atmosphere in domestic politics — demonstrated most disturbingly by the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 — all contribute to creating a transitory atmosphere in this period. William Hazlitt, for instance, writing in 1824 in *The Spirit of the Age*, expressed his sense of witnessing the end of a political and cultural era. In the book, which Paul Schlicke describes as a ‘largely melancholy and entirely retrospective’ piece, Hazlitt bemoans the ‘ineffectual chattering of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’, as well as the ‘egoism of Wordsworth’, citing them as evidence of the ultimate

failure of the idealistic spirit that had inspired the French Revolution, and which, for Hazlitt, had characterised the era between the 1790s and the 1820s.<sup>72</sup>

For younger writers, like Byron and Percy Shelley, however, this seemingly pivotal shift in the nature of society was not necessarily perceived with quite the same cynicism as Hazlitt. Indeed, one might suggest that it presented to their imagination a feeling of opportunity — a chance to revive, rather than say farewell to, a spirit of adventurous radicalism. If one looks, for example, at Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1820) — his response to the increasingly repressive measures of the government — it exudes a defiant and radical spirit. The treatise includes a list of bold propositions, including the disbandment of the standing army, the equality of all religions under the law, the abolition of corrupt offices and sinecures, as well as asserting the 'necessity of a material change' in the institutions and power structures of the country more generally.<sup>73</sup> There is certainly little sense of cynicism or lack of ambition.

And yet, ultimately, these grand proposals would not come to pass, or at least not in the manner or pace that Shelley might have envisaged — a failure that neither he, Byron or Keats would live to witness. Indeed, their deaths may well have contributed to Hazlitt's feelings of pessimism for the future. In the next chapter I will explore how the literature of this new, post-Romantic era developed, beginning with a survivor of that generation of writers — Mary Shelley. I will focus particularly on her prescient scepticism about the future of Percy Shelley's optimistic vision for the future, and the trajectory of radical politics as he and his circle imagined it. I will then move on to examine more widely how the literature of the late 1810s and early 1820s reflects a growing feeling of destabilisation, and a concern about the disruption of established patterns of cultural and political identity. As in the previous chapter, I shall seek to explore all this through the prism of Miltonic ideas of the Fall.

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Schlicke, 'Hazlitt, Horne and the Spirit of the Age', *Studies in English Literature*, 45. 4 (2005) 829-851 (829).

<sup>73</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, ed. by T.W. Rolleston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 1.

## Chapter 2. Writing from the Literary ‘Lacuna’: Divided Voices and Divided Sympathies

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In *Romantic Victorians* (2002), Richard Cronin suggests that the years between 1824 and 1840 ‘do not constitute a literary period at all, but something more in the way of a lacuna, a dash, or some other kind of punctuation mark.’<sup>74</sup> Certainly, with the premature deaths of some of its most significant figureheads, such as Byron in 1824, there is a sense that the Romantic period ended before its time, and with the coronation of Queen Victoria not taking place until 1837, one cannot comfortably label literature composed in the years which preceded it as Victorian. This ambiguous period is also one of political and social transition, in which firm groupings and labels are difficult to maintain. In 1832, a reviewer for *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* attempted to express this sense of upheaval:

A change has come over the spirit of the Time; mighty questions have been stirred; deep interests have been created; vast masses of men, formerly inert and impassive, have begun to heave to and fro with the force of a newly inspired animation; old things are passing away — all things are becoming new.<sup>75</sup>

This period, then, should not be mistaken for a mere historical blip, but rather, as Cronin suggests, an under-explored moment of historical change. Cronin’s description of the period as a ‘lacuna’, although capturing this sense of transition, belies the intense confusion, pain, and excitement that those living in this time experienced. Major events such as the Reform Act of 1832, which fundamentally restructured the electoral system, or the ongoing acceleration of industrialisation and urbanisation, which dramatically changed the way in which people lived and worked, all took place in this ‘punctuation mark’ of literary history.

In this chapter I will give particular attention to the way in which the literature of this ‘lacuna’ period makes use of divided narrative voices, and divided characters, to reflect the sense of strife and conflict in this transitory historical moment. Referring principally to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), and moving forward to Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), I seek to explore how the writers of this period interpret the decline of a set of particular cultural and political ideas, which we may today refer to as Romantic, or indeed radical. I shall describe how the divisions

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Tait’s Edinburgh Review* (April, 1832), quoted by Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 301.

within these novels express an awareness that one coherent era has drawn to a close, and that a new one has yet to establish itself. I shall also argue that Cronin's defined boundaries of 1824 and 1840 can, and should, be extended to accommodate texts like the ones I have chosen here — texts which fall either side of his proposed lacuna, but do not comfortably conform to either a Romantic or Victorian template.

These specific texts not only provide a chronological pathway between Romanticism and Victorianism, but also share particular qualities with each other. Most significantly for this project, the Miltonic ideas of the Fall which frame the first chapter have a strong and peculiar relevance to each of these novels. Also, the use of divided, conflicting voices which we find in *Paradise Lost*, seen vividly in the contrast between Satan and the poem's epic narrator, are a major characteristic of the novels I will be discussing here.

## 2.1. *Frankenstein* and Mary Shelley's Radical Scepticism

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*Frankenstein* owes much to *Paradise Lost*: the novel's characters, plot and themes all have some connection with the poem. Indeed, the epigraph to the novel itself is taken from the work: 'Did I request thee, Maker, from/ My clay to mould me Man?/ Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me'.<sup>76</sup> Like *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein* is a story about the fall of individuals and their ideals, and is populated by divided voices and divided characters. In *Paradise Lost*, these features reflect Milton's own moral anxieties, his uneasiness with justifying the ways of God to his readers. In this section I will argue that, in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley uses these same kinds of falls and divisions to express a different kind of anxiety. Specifically, her uneasy sense that the radical politics of the Romantic period, a politics she was intensely drawn to, were not completely equipped to deal with the problems of the post-revolutionary, post-Napoleonic period in which she found herself. I will suggest that, in *Frankenstein*, Shelley raises questions and expresses anxiety about the direction of radical politics in this new era.

To understand the political implications of *Frankenstein*, it is worth considering the circumstances of its composition. The story is a well known one, and is recounted in the preface to the novel. In the summer of 1816, Byron, Percy Shelley, John Polidori, and Mary Shelley — then Mary Godwin — were telling ghost stories at Lake Geneva. Before the game was complete, however, her companions left her to go for an expedition in the nearby Alps.

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<sup>76</sup> Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. by Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering Women's Classics, 1993), Title page. All subsequent page references are from this edition, abbreviated as 'F', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.



Afterwards, she continued her work alone, until it became the novel we now recognise. This story is significant, not only because it provides the geographical backdrop for *Frankenstein*, but because it also hints at a subtle, but important and growing division between Mary and her companions — a personal and political division which, once recognised, can be said to define the novel.

At just nineteen years of age in 1816, Mary was the junior member of a radical movement of thinkers and writers of which her father, William Godwin, and her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, could be considered pioneers — with Percy Shelley and Lord Byron as its most high profile contemporary figureheads. And yet, despite being the youngster of this group, Mary Shelley was not afraid to interrogate, and engage with, the principles upon which this radical circle was based. For instance, the ‘Godwinian’ idea that knowledge, and the pursuit of knowledge, are an absolute good for society, comes under severe scrutiny in *Frankenstein*. The novel’s two central narratives — those of Captain Walton and Victor Frankenstein — both concern the danger of placing the quest for knowledge above more direct responsibilities to one’s friends and family. Walton, in his efforts to reach the North Pole, almost kills his entire crew, while Frankenstein’s experiments lead to the deaths of almost everyone he loves. Of course, one must state that this in itself is a very Godwinian idea. The moral virtue of focusing on others is always stressed by Godwin, who deems it every person’s responsibility to ‘contribute, so far as it lies in their power, to the pleasure and benefit of each other’.<sup>77</sup>

The examples of Walton and Frankenstein are best interpreted as a vision of what can go wrong when one becomes obsessed with any kind of ideology, but especially when that ideology’s stated purpose is the betterment of mankind. Frankenstein’s speech to Walton at the end of the novel provides a perfect summation of this point, as he recalls how his lofty intention of creating an ideal human, free of sin and corruption, proved to be beyond what he had believed himself capable of:

When younger [...] I felt as if I were destined for some great enterprise. My feelings are profound; but I possessed a coolness of judgement that fitted me for illustrious achievements. This sentiment of the worth of my nature supported me, when others would have been oppressed; for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those talents that might be useful to my fellow creatures [...] But this feeling, which

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<sup>77</sup> William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, 1793, p. 100.

<<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/g/godwin/william/enquiry/index.html>> [accessed 25th June 2014]

supported me in the commencement of my career, now only serves to plunge me lower in the dust. (*F*, p. 186)

What Shelley seems to be questioning here is how far one should go for the attainment of any ambition, even when the ambition is an admirable one. In so doing, she also offers an oblique criticism of both her father's and her lover's commitment to their radical philosophy.

Jane Blumberg puts the point well, describing *Frankenstein* as a novel which, although 'undeniably constructed out of the currency of the radical movement', is also a 'critique of that system and of the personalities of the men who were its proponents'.<sup>78</sup> One only has to consider Mary Shelley's personal history to find examples of ambitious, radical, and well-intentioned men bringing disaster down on their loved ones. Percy Shelley's failure to support her financially during her first pregnancy, a situation aggravated by her father's demands for money from Shelley, all point to a character weakness in the men for whom Mary Shelley cared — a heedlessness of consequences which is at the very core of *Frankenstein*. The story of the novel's conception — Byron and Percy Shelley walking off into the mountains while leaving Mary behind — takes on a new dimension when examined from this perspective. She was not always prepared to follow them.

In this respect, the divided narratives of Walton and Frankenstein give us an insight into Shelley's views on the limits and dangers of obsessive ambition and idealism. The most illustrative example of this can be found when Walton's ship is trapped by ice, and his crew urge him to return south if they are freed rather than continue with his expedition to the North Pole. At this point, the voices of the two narrators — Walton and Frankenstein — overlap, as the latter gives an impassioned rebuke to the crew:

Are you then so easily turned from your design? [...] You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species; your name adored, as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind [...] Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. (*F*, p. 190)

This passage occurs in one of the last of Walton's letters home to his sister. In the next two letters, although he curses the 'cowardice' and 'indecision' (*F*, p. 191) of himself and his crew, Walton reveals that he has consented to turn south if they should be freed from the ice. On hearing the news, Frankenstein reasserts his intention to continue with his quest, despite Walton's capitulation: 'You may give up on your purpose; but mine is assigned to me by

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<sup>78</sup> Jane Blumberg, *Mary Shelley's Early Novels* (London: MacMillan, 1993), p. 30.

heaven' (*F*, p. 191). Shortly after making this pronouncement, Frankenstein becomes mortally ill, and although he does not relent from his own purpose, he says to Walton, 'Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition [...] Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another might succeed' (*F*, p. 193). Frankenstein's vacillation here could be seen as reflecting Shelley's own uncertainty. She, like Frankenstein, is intensely drawn to an ideology, but is wary of the potential dangers.

Shelley's scepticism about certain elements of radical politics is something which she revisits throughout her career, particularly in the midst of what Cronin calls the 'lacuna' of literary history. In her novel, *The Last Man* (1826), Shelley presents a vision of 21<sup>st</sup>-century England in which the characters of Adrian and Lord Raymond — thinly-veiled portraits of Percy Shelley and Lord Byron — are members of a ruling elite in a republican state. They strive to rescue humanity from a devastating plague, but ultimately fail, leaving only one survivor. The novel can be read as a strong critique of the Godwinian model of politics, or even of Percy Shelley's projected utopias in poems such as *Queen Mab* (1813). Kari Lokke argues that 'its refusal to place humanity at the centre of the universe, its questioning of our privileged position in relation to nature [...] constitutes a profound and prophetic challenge to Western humanism', adding that the novel 'attacks Enlightenment faith in the inevitability of progress through collective efforts'.<sup>79</sup> In essence, *The Last Man* projects the failure of radical Romantic politics in the 1820s into a distant future setting. In a journal entry of 1824, Shelley more or less confirms this reading of the novel by comparing her own experience, following the death of Percy Shelley in 1822, with that of the last living man on Earth: 'The last man! Yes, I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself the last relic of a beloved race, my companions extinct before me'.<sup>80</sup>

*Frankenstein*, however, begun ten years before *The Last Man* was published, is never so direct in its criticism. If one reads Mary Shelley's letters during her time in Geneva in 1816, it is clear that she was indeed passionately committed to many of her father's and lover's political principles. In a letter she wrote to her half-sister, Fanny Imlay, she scoffed at the narrow elitism of England, whilst admiring the more egalitarian conditions of Switzerland:

There is more equality of classes here than in England. This occasions a greater freedom and refinement of manners among the lower orders than we meet with in our

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<sup>79</sup> Kari Lokke, 'The Last Man', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. by Esther Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 116-129.

<sup>80</sup> Mary Shelley, 'Journal Entry May 1824', in *Mary Shelley: Journal*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), p. 193.

own country. I fancy the haughty English ladies are greatly disgusted with this consequence of republican institutions.<sup>81</sup>

And yet, *Frankenstein* remains implicitly critical of certain aspects of William Godwin's, and indeed Percy Shelley's, philosophy, and the manner in which they pursued it. In this sense, the novel is caught between two contrary impulses.

The notion that *Frankenstein* presents a narrative of confused, potentially contradictory ideas is not a new one. Chris Baldick, for example, suggests that the text has an 'abundant excess of meanings which the novel cannot stably accommodate'.<sup>82</sup> Baldick's analysis, however, implies that this is an accident of execution on Shelley's part — that she is trying to say too many things in a restricted space, or that she simply does not know what she is doing. If we turn to the novel's preface, however, Shelley provides a pre-emptive rebuttal to this accusation:

The opinions which naturally spring from the character and situation of the hero are by no means to be conceived as existing always in my own conviction; nor is any inference justly to be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of any kind. (*F*, p. 2)

To put it another way, if *Frankenstein* appears to have no dominant message, or 'philosophical doctrine', it is not because Shelley fails to articulate one, but rather because she has no intention of providing one. She avoids associating herself with the 'hero' — whom she takes care not to explicitly identify as Victor Frankenstein — because she is not concerned with promoting her own convictions over others. From the outset, Shelley frames *Frankenstein* as an ambivalent space, a text which deliberately resists conclusive judgements.

Nowhere is this sense of ambivalence more prominent than in the character of Frankenstein's creation. Of all the characters in the novel, the Creature is the most fundamentally divided, and indeed the most Miltonic. When he confronts Frankenstein in the mountains, and recounts his experiences following his departure from Ingolstadt, he recalls reading a copy of *Paradise Lost*, and how he related to the characters in the poem:

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<sup>81</sup> Mary Shelley, Letter to Fanny Imlay, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1816, in *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett (London: The John Hopkins Press, 1980), p. 21.

<sup>82</sup> Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 33.

Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from, beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. (*F*, p. 108)

Throughout the novel, the Creature continually oscillates between these divided self-images. As he recalls the early days of his life, wandering through the forest outside Ingolstadt, he switches between parallels of Satan and Adam in the beginning of *Paradise Lost*. He suggests that while one forest hut seemed as ‘divine a retreat as Pandemonium appeared to the daemons of hell’, another resembled a ‘paradise’ (*F*, pp. 108-109). This vacillation between identities gives the Creature a sense of uncertain potential — a feeling that he has an equal capacity for good or evil which is dependent on how the world treats him. As he himself puts it: ‘I was once benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous’ (*F*, p. 124).

In this respect, *Frankenstein* engages with a central idea of William Godwin’s philosophy: the perfectibility of mankind, and the pursuit of intellectual and moral self-development. In his great political and philosophical tract, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (1793), Godwin posits that ‘the characters of men originate in their external circumstances’.<sup>83</sup> On the basis of this, he argues that if people were free from the oppressive power structures which seek to regulate people and society, such as governments and monarchies, and were properly educated, they would naturally move to an ethical and intellectual position that was mutually beneficial for all citizens:

The supreme power in a state ought not, in the strictest sense, to require anything of its members, that an understanding sufficiently enlightened would not prescribe without such interference.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Godwin, p. 38.

<sup>84</sup> Godwin, p. 109.

The creature's insistence that he can be made happy and virtuous by the external actions of Victor Frankenstein would, at first, appear to support this Godwinian notion of moral and intellectual development.

However, if one examines the particular details of the Creature's early development, Shelley appears to disrupt, or at least question, the logic of her father's assertions. It is significant to note that the Creature's first exposures to history and literature are all works which are in some way aligned with politically radical, republican, or Romantic ideas. He eavesdrops on Felix — one of the cottagers whose shed he hides in during his early life — reading Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, a French polemic on the governments of ancient civilisations published in 1791, a text which was highly influential amongst both English and French radicals. The three books which the creature possesses himself are *Paradise Lost*, Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter*, and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. All of these texts engage with the nature of individuals and their relation to morality and society. Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter* has a narrative focused on solitude and unrequited love, whereas Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* has a particular emphasis on the personal virtue of individuals. In effect, he is 'reared on radical idealism'.<sup>85</sup> And yet, despite these powerful cultural influences — the kind of external influences which Godwin believed shape a person's nature — the Creature ultimately develops into an 'evil' character.

Of course, one could argue that the Creature has a great deal of other influences, not least his barbaric treatment by the first humans he encounters, who chase him with violence, as does Felix the cottager when he eventually discovers him. And yet, the Creature's responses, which range from burning down the cottage to the eventual pursuit and murder of all of Victor Frankenstein's loved ones, are such a dramatic reaction that it calls into question how equal the Creature's capacities for good and evil truly are. Frankenstein himself avers that the Creature has a natural, or rather unnatural, propensity for wickedness. He states that the Creature's 'soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice' (*F*, p. 184).

This fear that destructiveness could be as innate in human nature as the desire for social cohesion is especially significant when viewed in its historical context. Shelley began composing *Frankenstein* in 1816, just a year after Waterloo. Europe had emerged from a period of incredible violence and tyranny that could trace its beginnings to the radical idealism of the 1790s. Some critics, such as Ronald Paulson, have even suggested that *Frankenstein* is itself a literary reimagining of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars:

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<sup>85</sup> Blumberg, p. 21.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* [...] was to some extent a retrospect on the whole process through Waterloo, with the Enlightenment-created monster leaving behind its wake of terror and destruction across France and Europe, partly because it had been disowned and misunderstood and partly because it was created unnaturally by reason rather than love.<sup>86</sup>

Whether or not one wishes to go that far, it is certainly true that the violence of the French Revolution carries an implicit threat throughout *Frankenstein*, and perhaps offers the clearest understanding of the divisions contained within the novel. Shelley deliberately avoids revealing dates, but there are small hints that the novel is set during the revolutionary years of the 1790s. In one of the more revealing passages of the novel, the threat of a French invasion in Switzerland is obliquely referred to:

[...] we saw the mighty Jura opposing its dark side to the ambition that would quit its native country, and an almost insurmountable barrier to the invader who should wish to enslave it. (*F*, p. 169)

The violence of revolution, and of the Napoleonic Wars, represents the ultimate consequence of misguided and overreaching radicalism. The divided narrative voices of Walton and Frankenstein demonstrate the fine margins of where an obsessive desire to become the 'benefactors' of mankind can lead. Frankenstein has opportunities to turn away from his obsessive quest for human perfection, but by the time he does it is too late. It is implicit, though not guaranteed, that if Walton had continued his voyage to the North Pole both he and his crew would have died. The fundamentally divided Creature, torn between his contrary self-images of Adam and Satan, is likewise defined by his uncertain potential. Even at the end of the novel, where the Creature vows to commit suicide, the event itself is unconfirmed, leaving open the possibility that he could continue his campaign of terror.

*Frankenstein*, then, is a novel riddled by uncertainty. And yet, despite this, it is a novel that is unafraid to confront its own apparent lack of a conclusive message. Written in 1816, *Frankenstein* lies less than a decade from the border of Cronin's lacuna of literary history. Shelley could not, of course, have known that with the deaths of Byron, Keats and Percy Shelley only a few years away, 'the spirit of the age' as she knew it — and Hazlitt immortalised it — was drawing swiftly towards its close. And yet it was obvious that the world was changing. Napoleon had been defeated, Europe was finally in a relative state of

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<sup>86</sup> Ronald Paulson, 'Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution', *ELH*, 48. 3 (1981) 532-554 (545)

peace, and on a personal level Mary Shelley was emerging as a fully formed writer. The future of the political and cultural landscape of the country was unknowable. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley offers us a vision of disaster, but it is located in the past. The future, like Frankenstein's Creature, has an unknown capacity for good or ill.

## 2.2. 'Neither Whig, Tory, Radical, nor Destructionist': *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and the 'Polydoxy' of James Hogg

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*The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) is a novel which is, like *Frankenstein*, positioned on the cusp of what Cronin calls the 'lacuna' of literary history. Indeed, Hogg's novel resembles *Frankenstein* in a number of interesting ways. The two novels share the same Miltonic divisions in their narrative and characters, as well as a thematic focus on ambition, temptation, and fallenness. Both novels are also deeply political. In *Frankenstein*, there is a preoccupation with the nature of the radical ideology of Mary Shelley's immediate circle of friends, family, and fellow writers. This manifests itself, in part, through a deliberate ambiguity and resistance to conclusion, forcing readers to interrogate their own ideologies as well as those offered up by the novel's characters and plot. *Confessions* also responds to its political environment, but in a way that differs sharply from *Frankenstein*. Whereas Shelley's novel expresses an anxiety about the failure of a single coherent political philosophy to encompass all of her beliefs, Hogg's novel revels in the idea of plurality and ambiguity as a defence against the dangers of fundamentalism.

In this section, I shall argue that Hogg's novel is a response to the increasingly fractious and polarised political and literary landscape of 1820s Britain, with a particular onus on his own Tory circle. *Confessions*, by portraying the ruinous consequences of one man's stubborn, ideological narrowness, acts as a cautionary tale to those on either end of the Whig/Tory spectrum. Robert Wringhim's memoirs demonstrate the potentially catastrophic outcome of excluding differences of opinion and belief from one's ideological reasoning.

James Hogg is usually positioned by critics and historians, and indeed positions himself, as a Tory, or at the very least Tory-leaning. And yet, giving a truly precise label to Hogg's own personal and political loyalties is a notoriously awkward thing to do. Karl Miller gives an impression of the difficulty of the task, remarking that Hogg was a man of many apparently conflicting sympathies:

Hogg was a poet and a peasant, a poor man who was also a personality, a star. A devotee both of war and peace, of animals and of their destruction, of truth and of lies,



openness and disguise, of reason and imagination, simplicity and sophistication, chastity and license. Both a Tory and a Whig, a Cavalier and a Covenanter, a Jacobite and a Hanoverian.<sup>87</sup>

Hogg himself, in a diatribe entitled 'A Screeed on Politics' (1835), appears to enunciate his political identity as one that is more nuanced than party politics can allow: 'I am neither Whig, Tory, Radical, nor Destructionist, but merely a sincere lover of his country.'<sup>88</sup> The majority of Hogg's contradictions seem to stem from his background. As a youth in Ettrick, he was forced by his father's bankruptcy into working as a farm labourer, herding sheep and cattle. Unlike many of his Romantic contemporaries he received limited conventional schooling, having attended formal education in short spells amounting to perhaps six months in total.<sup>89</sup> Despite this relatively humble upbringing, Hogg did in fact seem to tend in favour of the conservative Tories, rather than the more liberal Whigs. Indeed, as a regular contributor to one of the flagship publications of Tory principles, *Blackwood's Magazine*, Hogg often became a figure of ridicule among his more privileged fellows for his background. Known as the 'Ettrick Shepherd' by his peers at the magazine, a soubriquet he cultivated for himself, the relationships he formed were often affectionate but also tinged with an element of condescension. Ian Duncan identifies one particular article by John Wilson, ostensibly a review of one of Hogg's novels, *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823), but in reality an 'attack on Hogg's literary character'. Duncan describes this moment as the 'culminating offence in a pattern of mockery and rejection by Hogg's peers at *Blackwood's*'.<sup>90</sup>

Indeed, class divisions of the kind Hogg experienced were inextricably tied to the fraught political atmosphere of the time. The 'immense public drama' of Hogg's literary lifetime was the attempt to secure an improved Parliament, with the eventual consequence of the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, bringing 43,000 working or middle class people into the electorate.<sup>91</sup> Hogg's own position in this is interesting. As he was an avowed Tory, one might assume his natural stance towards this kind of constitutional reform would have been one of conservatism and caution, but his own background and character made him an egalitarian, on an emotional level at least. William Chambers, the publisher and bookseller,

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<sup>87</sup> Karl Miller, *Electric Shepherd: A Likeness of James Hogg* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), p. 224.

<sup>88</sup> James Hogg, 'A Screeed on Politics', 1835, in *Contributions to Blackwoods Magazine Volume 2: 1829-1835*, ed. by Thomas C. Richardson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 329.

<sup>89</sup> Miller, p. 4.

<sup>90</sup> Duncan, p. 172.

<sup>91</sup> Miller, p. 8.

remarked that ‘It did not seem as if he had the slightest veneration for any one more than another whom he addressed, no matter what was their rank or position.’<sup>92</sup>

Given this resistance to cohesion between his character and his politics, it can be difficult to argue that any of Hogg’s works are categorically in favour of, or opposed to, any particular group or ideology. Indeed, it is especially difficult regarding *Confessions*, a novel which is predicated upon multiplicity and uncertainty, and is filled by a cacophony of divergent and opposing voices, genres contained within genres, and a range of narrators and sub-narrators united only by their unreliability. Even described in its simplest terms, the novel is defined by contradiction and deception. George and Robert are two brothers, uncertain of whether they share the same father — one is raised as a not-very-devout Catholic Tory, the other a fanatical Calvinist Whig. Robert meets a stranger who can adopt exact likenesses of anyone, but most often the guise of Robert himself, and together they murder George, though the exact version of how this transpires is likewise uncertain, and the subject of differing accounts. Finally, Robert is driven insane by his new friend, Gil-Martin, and commits suicide at his behest. All of these events are framed by the ‘Editor’s Narrative’, in fact written by Hogg himself, which explains the fictional provenance of the Memoirs, and casts further uncertainty as to the ‘true’ nature of the events described.

John Plotz recognises this apparent lack of clarity in Hogg’s work as a deliberate act on the author’s part — a demonstration that one piece of fiction can stably contain the clash of apparently contradictory philosophies:

Hogg produced texts with central mysteries that lend themselves to various sorts of explanation — Satanic possession, individual madness, collective delusion, or simply distorting the lens of history — but which finally resist the triumph of any one explanatory schema over its alternatives. Hogg practiced what could be called (on the model of Bakhtin’s polyglossia) polydoxy, which stages the intersection of profoundly disjunctive belief systems within a single piece of fiction.<sup>93</sup>

*Confessions* expresses Hogg’s own personal ‘polydoxy’ — he is himself an intersection of contradictions. Crucially, though, the novel also demonstrates how this is, in fact, a healthier, and more sustainable mode of being than to be wedded to one entirely unshakable philosophy.

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<sup>92</sup> William Chambers, *Memoir of William and Robert Chambers*, 13<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1884) p. 254.

<sup>93</sup> John Plotz, ‘Hogg and the Short Story’, in the *Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, ed. by Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) pp. 113-121 (p. 115).

The most obvious way in which Hogg does this is through his engagement with Calvinism. Hogg's criticism of the Calvinist notion of predestination provides an allegorical vehicle for more wide ranging concerns. His treatment of the Calvinist principle of an Elect group, predestined for Paradise, reflects his dissatisfaction with the exclusionary narrowness and elitism of both the political and literary establishment. A good example of this is found in the relationship between Robert Wringhim and George Colwan. In these two characters we see a potential for a mutually constructive meeting of two world views — two brothers, raised with totally different beliefs, but united by common heritage. Unfortunately, this possibility is never allowed to be explored, as Robert has been indoctrinated into a philosophy of elitism and division. According to the Calvinist principle of predestination, Robert is told that he is one of 'the just made perfect [...] adopted among the number of God's children', and therefore superior to his brother.<sup>94</sup> His elitist, narrow outlook stands in stark contrast with Hogg's own sense of personal and political identity — the idea that growth and understanding is achieved by moving beyond the predetermined boundaries of one's upbringing.

If we turn to another of Hogg's works, we can see how this has direct parallels with Hogg's view of the country's literary elite. In his collection of poems, *The Poetic Mirror* (1816), Hogg parodied a number of other Romantic poets. In 'The Stranger', Hogg assumes the voice of William Wordsworth, once considered a radical free-thinker, but by 1816 very much a conservative, elitist voice. In this Wordsworthian guise, Hogg discusses the failings of an unidentified 'Border Minstrel' with some other poets, including one referred to as 'The Shepherd':

“You must acknowledge this your favourite  
Hath more outraged the purity of speech,  
The innate beauties of our English tongue,  
For amplitude and nervous structure famed,  
Than all the land beside, and therefore he  
Deserves the high neglect which he has met  
From all the studious and the thinking — those  
Unsway'd by low caprices of age,  
The scorn of reason, and the world's revile.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. by Karl Miller (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), pp. 95-96. All subsequent page references are from this edition, abbreviated as 'C', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>95</sup> Hogg, 'The Stranger', *The Poetic Mirror*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: Longman, 1817), p. 146.  
<<https://archive.org/details/cu31924104103779>> [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014]

The Wordsworth character's reluctance to accommodate difference here is telling. The Border Minstrel is a thinly-veiled guise for Walter Scott, a writer widely known for his use of Scots dialect in his work, and the influence of a more working class oral tradition, something Hogg himself makes use of in *Confessions*. The Wordsworth character's 'comically pretentious' attack on this 'impurity' corresponds with Robert Wringhim's own obsession with perfection and status.<sup>96</sup> Both of these cases reinforce Hogg's message that elitist groups which exclude difference and variety only conspire to deprive themselves of a richness and diversity of experience, making them appear aloof and somewhat ridiculous.

If we compare this parody of Wordsworth with the image Hogg seeks to cultivate for himself in *Confessions*, we see the extent to which he feels, or perhaps wishes to appear, an outsider from this elite group. In what amounts to a self portrait — appearing as a character in his own faux Editor's Narrative — Hogg gives himself a broad Scots dialect, and a haughty disdain for anything unrelated to the trade of livestock. On being questioned about the events chronicled in *Confessions*, he remarks that any interest in the exploits of a long dead suicide 'was a queer fancy for a woo-stapler to tak' (*C*, p. 204). The conflict with that statement, of course, is that Hogg is in fact the author of the novel. As I shall elucidate later, the whole of *Confessions* is freckled with cameo appearances of people Hogg knew, and with other similarly autobiographical touches. And yet, when these moments are added together, they give anything but a coherent sense of Hogg's identity, leaving one with a conflicting image of the man and his world views. Both he, and the novel, certainly lack the 'purity' and coherence which his faux-Wordsworth demands.

If *Confessions* is, then, a novel which denigrates the pursuit of purity and perfection, it is one which elevates pragmatism and moderation to high virtues. One proponent of this in the novel is the preacher, Rev. Blanchard. Speaking with Robert about religion, he asserts that 'there is nothing so dangerous to man as the wresting of its principles, or forcing them beyond their due bounds: this is of all others the readiest way to destruction' (*C*, p. 109). Blanchard's message is one of moderation, caution, and a certain amount of humility. Shortly after this intervention, Blanchard is murdered by Robert and Gil-Martin, when the latter convinces his companion that Blanchard is a 'Wretched contravertist' (*C*, p. 112). The incident is illustrative of the irrationality of a debate where one side is determinedly wedded to their perspective.

It is equally significant to note that underlying Blanchard's moderate attitude is a natural and unasked for kindness. Blanchard did not have to offer Robert advice, but felt compelled to do so nonetheless. *Confessions* is a novel mostly remembered for the instances

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<sup>96</sup> Meiko O'Halloran, *James Hogg and British Romanticism: A Kaleidoscopic Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p. 1.

of extreme wickedness it contains, but it also accommodates its fair share of generosity. In particular, these acts tend to come from the lower-class, more ‘rustic’ characters in the novel, like the ‘poor hind’ who allows Robert to sleep on a bed of rushes in his cottage. This man’s virtue is highlighted by his unique ability to repel the demons which plague the protagonist: ‘a power protected that house superior to those that contended for, or had the mastery over me’ (C, p. 194). Interestingly, this is yet another autobiographic interjection by Hogg who, by some accounts, slept on a bed of rushes in his shepherding bothy in the Scottish borders.<sup>97</sup> This romanticising of the poor gives us a further insight into why Hogg chose to cultivate his Ettrick Shepherd persona, as he seeks to claim a positive cultural heritage to counter the perception of him as too vulgar and common to be poet.

Indeed, Douglas Mack makes the point that much of the tension between Hogg’s political loyalties and his background stem from a perception of him as belonging to a superstitious, un-sophisticated culture:

[The] intellectual elite of Hogg’s era had a tendency to make a simple binary distinction between the world of the Enlightenment (seen as straightforwardly true and valid), and pre-Enlightenment culture (seen as backward and deluded). In this context, there was a tendency for Hogg himself to be viewed as someone not to be taken entirely seriously: an interesting and exotic specimen, no doubt, but decidedly a backwoodsman, the product of a primitive stage of social evolution.<sup>98</sup>

The strange power of the old man and his cottage clearly speaks to a superstitious, pre-enlightenment sensibility. But in a typically contradictory way, it is Hogg himself, in his guise as the Editor, who brings incidents such as these under scrutiny. The closing passages of the Editor’s Epilogue question every aspect of the events described, asserting that it is ‘impossible that these scenes could ever have occurred’, attributing most of the events related in ‘The Memoir’ as either lies, fiction, ‘dreaming or madness’ (C, p. 209). And indeed, the Shepherd Hogg who appears as a character in the Editor’s Narrative possesses little in the way of rustic mystique, concerned only for his ‘paulies’ (C, p. 204), and largely uninterested in the apparently magical preservation of the corpse he claims to have found.

In this sense, the narrative division of *Confessions* is as vital to unlocking the novel’s meaning as it is in *Paradise Lost* or *Frankenstein*. As with both of those texts, there is a

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<sup>97</sup> Miller, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Douglas S. Mack, ‘Hogg’s Politics and the Presbyterian Tradition’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, pp. 64-72 (p. 65).

juxtaposition of voices which invites readers to question their feelings and assumptions on every point. The sceptical, rational voice of the Editor's Narrative surrounds the far more outlandish Sinner's Narrative, with its seductive, exciting, and improbable content. What *Confessions* achieves in this is a disruption of the binary assumptions that Mack identifies. It would have been simple for Hogg to create his novel on purely oppositional lines, with the well-educated, well-off, though spiritually twisted Robert counterbalanced by the ignorant but noble mysticism of the poor. To do this, however, would only serve to reinterpret the perception of pre and post-enlightenment binaries: it would not dismiss them altogether.

What *Confessions* offers us instead is a kind of 'polydoxy' — one that rejects the idea that groups in society share single bloc identities into which they can be pigeonholed. In terms of the novel's narrators, Robert is the voice of education and orthodoxy, as well as the voice of superstition and wonder. The Editor is at once the sceptical voice of the establishment, and yet we know that he is merely a guise for the lowly Ettrick Shepherd. Neither party quite fits into the box to which one might feel they belong, rejecting the idea that narratives and characters ought to cohere and conform to single identities.

In Robert's case, unfortunately, it is his unwillingness and/or inability to recognise the value of his contradictions which ultimately damns him. His relationship with Gil-Martin is the ultimate symbol of this destructive narrow-mindedness. When they first meet, Gil-Martin assumes the physical appearance of Robert, but also avers that he has the same spirit and beliefs:

"You think I am your brother", said he; "or that I am your second self. I am indeed your brother, not according to the flesh, but in my belief of the same truths, and my assurance in the same mode of redemption, than which, I hold nothing so great and glorious on earth." (*C*, p. 97)

Gil-Martin acts as a mirror to Robert's beliefs, but as the novel progresses we see how with each reflection he intensifies and restricts the scope of Robert's understanding. Before he meets Gil-Martin, although he is still an unpleasant and conceited character, Robert is capable of appreciating worth beyond himself and his beliefs. In his schooldays he envies his classmate M'Gill's skill at drawing, and though he decries it as 'profane' (*C*, p. 91), still seeks to imitate it himself. Similarly, he is prepared to acknowledge those outside of his Elect group as being of a 'moral cast' (*C*, p. 108), such as Blanchard, and the Wringhims' servant, John Barnet. But the more he continues to associate only with Gil-Martin, the more extreme and prejudicial he becomes, ultimately resulting in his series of murders.

In this way, Hogg describes the potentially dangerous consequences of ignoring or demeaning that which lies beyond one's own sphere, a model which might very easily be applied to politics as well as religion. The moment when Robert begins to appreciate his error, in a small way, is when he is told the story of Auchtermuchty by his servant. The story is told in Scots dialect, and is very much grounded in a superstitious folk tradition. As the Editor might observe, the events it describes could not possibly be true, but its content is totally applicable to Robert's predicament, as it describes how a disguised Satan seduces a town full of people into evil. Robert denies that he is affected by this 'fool's idle tale', but concedes that it gives him a 'view of his own state, at which I shuddered' (C, p.168). In other words, this exterior perspective gives him a new, albeit uncomfortable insight that he might not otherwise have gained. That Hogg chooses to formulate this exchange as one between an uneducated, working-class character and a highly-educated, middle-class character emphasises the social and political relevance of this idea.

Mack provides a useful parallel for understanding Hogg's attempts in *Confessions* to mix political influences and social backgrounds together, by comparing Hogg to another author, Charles Dickens:

Hogg was a Tory who believed that it is foolish to throw 'the experience of ages aside as useless and unprofitable lumber'. Nevertheless, he shared Dickens's 'revolutionary' tendencies. Like Dickens, Hogg sympathised instinctively with 'the suffering and the humble side'; and, like Dickens, he believed that 'if men would behave decently the world would be decent'.<sup>99</sup>

The lines from Dickens perfectly capture the essence of *Confessions*. It is Robert Wringhim's decision to ignore the wisdom and experience of characters like Blanchard, or the local people and their 'old wives tales', which cause his demise. Those characters who practice decency — identified by Dickens as the prime virtue — such as the 'old hind' who shelters Robert, demonstrate the value of non-partisan generosity. Just as with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Hogg's novel does not seek to inflict an ideological perspective on its readers, but rather encourages them to question their own perceptions and prejudices. In this sense, both *Confessions* and *Frankenstein* appear to reflect that wider notion of a destabilisation of unified group identities — both cultural and political — which frames Richard Cronin's concept of the lacuna period of literary history.

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<sup>99</sup> Mack, p. 72.

In the next section of this chapter, I will look ahead to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a text which lies beyond the coronation of Queen Victoria, and therefore beyond the defined limits of Cronin's lacuna. And yet, it is a novel preoccupied with exactly those same concerns about divided and unstable cultural identities that we find in *Frankenstein* and *Confessions*, once again demonstrating the need for a more elastic understanding of this transitional literary period. *Wuthering Heights* is, however, different from *Confessions* and *Frankenstein* in one important respect. Whereas those two novels' simply seek to expose and to question the divisions which define the lacuna, *Wuthering Heights* attempts to understand and to reconcile them.

### **2.3. *Wuthering Heights*: 'As Different as a Moonbeam From Lightning' — Reconciling Romanticism and Victorianism**

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In examining *Frankenstein* and *Confessions*, this chapter has so far concentrated on texts which, according to Cronin's choice of dates, preface the lacuna of literary history — the period lying between the Romantic and Victorian periods of literature. This final part of the chapter shall look to the other side of this historical gap, to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Published a decade after the coronation of Queen Victoria, *Wuthering Heights* is firmly situated in the Victorian period. However, in my view this is a novel which seeks to address its position in literary history, and provides a bridge between the Romantics and the Victorians. The novel achieves this by articulating the transition from Romanticism to Victorianism as being a conflict between unregulated passion and superstition, and cold rationality and seriousness. In this sense, *Wuthering Heights* does not seek to promote Victorianism over Romanticism, or vice versa, but to pursue a further avenue — a reconciliation of two literary eras with apparently contrary ideological underpinnings, a feature which I suggest ought to bring it within the scope of Cronin's lacuna.

Before explaining exactly how *Wuthering Heights* achieves this reconciliation of its Romantic and Victorian aspects, however, it is important to recognise that Emily Brontë and her peers were not, indeed could not, be fully cognisant of these two literary periods as distinct and defined eras. Donald Stone makes the pertinent observation that many of the great Victorian authors grew up 'during the period in which Romantic poetry and Scott's transformation of romance were being created', and so their own formations as writers were inevitably informed by Romantic sensibilities.<sup>100</sup> With this in mind, it should not be entirely

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<sup>100</sup> Donald Stone, *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 2.



surprising that *Wuthering Heights* contains elements which might be considered Romantic. Indeed, in many respects it was the Victorians who first began the process of Romanticism's 'institutionalisation as a given of literary history'.<sup>101</sup> Brontë's novel should not, therefore, be understood as an attempt to resurrect Romanticism, but as an attempt to make sense of her own moment in literary history. It must be remembered that Brontë's novel sits only just beyond the uncertain period of Cronin's lacuna, and so the collision of Romantic and Victorian 'philosophies' that *Wuthering Heights* presents helps to reinforce the sense that this period of transition is finally ending, and that a new age has been embarked upon.

The principle way in which the conflict between Romantic passion and Victorian rationality is articulated in *Wuthering Heights* is through the positioning of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, and their inhabitants, as opposing binaries. This is particularly true of Heathcliff and Edgar Linton who, in many ways, represent those qualities which we might regard as being representative of Romantic and Victorian ideologies. Heathcliff is in some respects an archetypal Romantic 'hero', taken from the mould of the Miltonic Satan. Indeed, from his first introduction to the Earnshaws, Heathcliff is swiftly associated with the diabolical, described as an 'imp of Satan' by Mrs Earnshaw.<sup>102</sup> The Romantic quality of this satanic connection is reflected in the contemporary critical response to *Wuthering Heights*. One reviewer even draws a direct parallel between Byron's Corsair and Heathcliff: 'Like the Corsair, and other such [...] heroes, he is "Linked to one virtue and a thousand crimes"'.<sup>103</sup> The one virtue referred to here is his consuming love for Catherine, a point to which I shall return later.

If Heathcliff is characterised as a devil, then one might imagine that his antipode, Edgar Linton, be cast as an angel. In merely physical terms this is true; Heathcliff, the 'dirty, ragged, dark-haired' (*WH*, p. 29) child, is initially envious of Edgar's appearance: 'I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved well' (*WH*, p. 45). In an effort to achieve this, and to impress Catherine, Heathcliff asks Nelly to 'make me decent', declaring, 'I'm going to be good' (*WH*, p. 44). After some washing, combing and encouragement, Nelly Dean manages to persuade him that a 'good heart' will help him to a 'bonny face', and he consequently loses 'his frown' and begins to look 'quite pleasant' (*WH*, p. 45). However, immediately upon meeting each other, Edgar Linton makes a throwaway remark about the

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<sup>101</sup> Joel Faflak and Julia M. Wright, *Nervous Reactions: Victorian Recollections of Romanticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights: 1847 Text*, ed. by Richard Dunn (London: Norton, 2003), p. 32. All subsequent page references are from this edition, abbreviated as '*WH*', and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>103</sup> 'Unsigned Review of *Wuthering Heights*', *Examiner*, January 1848, in *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Miriam Allot (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 220.

length of Heathcliff's hair, causing Heathcliff to abandon his new desire for goodness and attack Edgar. In the aftermath, Heathcliff is flogged by Hindley and swears to be revenged upon him: '[...] I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last. I hope he will not die before I do!' (*WH*, p. 48). He scorns Nelly's suggestion that 'it is for God to punish', suggesting that God would not get the same 'satisfaction' that he would (*WH*, p. 48). In this rejection of his original desire to be 'good', and his stated quest for vengeance, Heathcliff once again conjures images of Milton's Satan. Like Heathcliff, Satan is forced to realise that he cannot match the 'transcendent brightness' (*PL*, I. 86) of angels, and so comforts himself with thoughts of vengeance:

All is not lost – the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield (*PL*, I. 106-108)

In this way, the link between Heathcliff and those Romantic 'heroes' with whom he shares his Miltonic genealogy, is cemented. Like Victor Frankenstein's Creature, Heathcliff is driven by self-loathing, and like Byron's Cain he is naturally impelled to struggle against authority. This Romantic commonality is noted by Chris Baldick who, drawing on the work of Lowry Nelson, suggests that *Wuthering Heights* fits into a group of 'diabolical' works from across the nineteenth century with a 'distinctive Romantic or mythic cast'.<sup>104</sup>

If the Romantic quality of Heathcliff is clear though, the significance of Edgar Linton is less so. I suggested earlier that Edgar provides a binary rival for Heathcliff, but in the early parts of the novel it is Hindley who is the chief target of Heathcliff's malice, with Edgar dismissed as a frail and 'petted' creature (*WH*, p. 38). The rivalry between the two characters only fully emerges when Cathy becomes romantically involved with Edgar, culminating in their marriage. It is Cathy's deliberation on whether or not to marry Edgar that directly frames the rivalry of the two men as one between rationality and passion. Cathy's reasons for marrying Edgar are practical and coldly logical: Edgar is 'handsome', 'rich', and 'he loves me' (*WH*, p. 61). In contrast, she concludes that by any reasonable assessment a marriage to the poor and undistinguished Heathcliff would 'degrade' her (*WH*, p.63). And yet, her most passionate and intense comments are reserved for Heathcliff: 'Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire' — a vivid description which reinforces the notion of Heathcliff and Edgar as elemental contraries (*WH*, p.63).

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<sup>104</sup> Baldick, p. 43.

Through a modern prism we might automatically suggest that Cathy's decision to marry 'against' love, and to opt for pragmatism over passion, is somehow perverse. And yet, we must remember that such marital alliances were much more commonplace in Victorian Britain. If we turn again to the contemporary critical response to *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy's choice of Linton is one of the few points deemed positive and sensible. One reviewer remarks that once she is freed from the brutal passions of *Wuthering Heights*, a 'more gracious spirit comes over her, and she is gentle and more peaceful.'<sup>105</sup> And on a purely superficial level this reviewer is correct. Nelly Dean concedes that once Heathcliff has left, and Cathy is installed at Thrushcross Grange, that Cathy behaves 'infinitely better than I dared to expect', with little sign of her usually 'ill-natured and bad-tempered' demeanour (*WH*, p.72). But what the reviewer fails to acknowledge is that this apparent serenity is an illusion. Cathy is not suddenly divested of her wild and passionate nature; it is merely pacified by an environment which offers her no challenge or resistance. As Nelly puts it, it is not a case of the 'thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the thorn' (*WH*, p. 72). One cannot argue that Cathy's relationship with Heathcliff is a healthy one, but it is at least not as superficial as that which she shares with Linton.

That sense of superficiality is another key to understanding the conflict of ideologies which *Wuthering Heights* seeks to illustrate. The false domestic harmony of the Lintons subversively mimics the model of the conventional Victorian novel, where good manners and the 'virtues of home and duty' are often celebrated above all else.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, the novel plays upon this idea from the beginning. When the narrator, Mr Lockwood, first encounters the inhabitants of *Wuthering Heights* he is the very epitome of superficial expectations, making a series of assumptions based on his idea of what a family home should be like. At first, he confuses Heathcliff and the young Catherine for husband and wife, and then compounds his error by then mistaking Hareton for the husband. All of Lockwood's judgements are made on the basis of surface appearance. Lockwood initially rejects the idea of Hareton and Catherine as a couple because the former seems so obviously of an inferior social class: 'his dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable in Mr and Mrs Heathcliff' (*WH*, p. 9).

One could argue that this is merely Brontë's way of injecting some comedy into what is a very melancholy novel, but in my view Lockwood's shallowness raises a deeper point about social prejudice. Heathcliff is never warm to any character in the novel, save Cathy. But, when he does express any admiration, however slight, it is never based on rank, bearing,

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<sup>105</sup> 'Unsigned Review of *Wuthering Heights*', *Britannia*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1848, in *Critical Heritage*, p. 226.

<sup>106</sup> Stone, p. 113.

or appearance, but on character. In her introduction to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë identifies this as the one of Heathcliff's few redeeming qualities:

Heathcliff betrays one solitary human feeling, and that is *not* his love for Catherine, which is a sentiment fierce and inhuman [...] No; the single link that connects Heathcliff with humanity is his rudely confessed regard for Hareton Earnshaw — the young man whom he has ruined; and then his half-implicit esteem for Nelly Dean.<sup>107</sup>

In a twisted sense, then, Heathcliff is an egalitarian, or if this is a step too far, he is certainly not an elitist or an establishment figure. It is yet another way in which he diverges from Edgar, the gentleman son of a magistrate, who is meticulous in his distinctions between the classes. When Heathcliff returns from his travels to Thrushcross Grange, Edgar is made uncomfortable at the idea of entertaining a former 'ploughboy' in the parlour, suggesting the 'kitchen as a more suitable place for him' (*WH*, p. 75). This social and political contrast stirs the sense of a clash between a politically radical Romantic ideology and the more settled, domestic narratives associated with the Victorians.

Given that Heathcliff and Edgar are set up in this way, to be at odds on every issue, it might seem problematic to argue that *Wuthering Heights* offers a reconciliation of the conflict between Romanticism and Victorianism. If these two characters are the avatars of these respective cultural movements or eras, their implacable opposition to each other seems to preclude any resolution. The answer to this problem lies with Cathy — they both love her. On this one issue, if no other, Heathcliff and Edgar are united. They express their love in very different ways, and the nature of their love is different, but it is love nonetheless, and it provides a pathway to understanding how Romantic passion and Victorian restraint can be brought together.

The chief faults of Heathcliff and Edgar are emblematic of the worst tendencies in Romanticism and Victorianism. Heathcliff is emotionally raw and prone to violence, whereas Edgar is repressed and superficial. However, there are instances in *Wuthering Heights* where these qualities are mitigated, or even actively reversed by each man's love for Cathy. For instance, Edgar, having shown unshakable restraint throughout the novel never to rise to the goading of Heathcliff, and his open desire for intimacy with his wife, is only stirred to a show of true passion by an insult from Cathy. She accuses Edgar of having a 'weak nature', and of 'feigning more valour' than he possesses when he attempts to remove Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange by peaceable means (*WH*, p. 90). As a result, Edgar's composure is

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<sup>107</sup> Charlotte Brontë, 'Introduction to 1850 Edition of *Wuthering Heights*', in *Critical Heritage*, p. 287.

cracked, and he punches Heathcliff in the throat: a ‘blow that would have levelled a slighter man’ (*WH*, p. 91). One could never infer that Brontë’s novel condones violence, but there is nevertheless a sense of righteousness about Edgar’s reaction here. Indeed, the fact that Heathcliff is not really hurt by the assault underlines the point, because it is not the physical aspect of the punch that is significant, but the emotional propellant which launches it. It proves that Linton is capable of passion.

Conversely, Heathcliff’s worst qualities are undoubtedly his cruelty and his propensity for violence. As with Edgar, at various points in the novel we see these negative aspects of his character mitigated by his love for Cathy. This is perhaps most apparent in his reluctance to beat the younger Catherine because of her resemblance to her mother:

His black eyes flashed; he seemed ready to tear Catherine in pieces [...] when of a sudden, his fingers relaxed, he shifted his grasp from her head to her arm, and gazed intently at her face. Then he drew his hand over his eyes, stood a moment to collect himself apparently, and turning anew to Catherine, said with assured calmness — “You must learn to avoid putting me in a passion, or I really shall murder you sometime!” (*WH*, p. 245)

Catherine’s resemblance to her mother, the one outlet for Heathcliff’s passion that was in any way positive, brings out a moment of clarity in Heathcliff. He even uses the word ‘passion’ in its pejorative sense — almost an admission that his excess of passion is a failing in his character. This is a significant acknowledgment, especially given his constant lambasting of Edgar Linton as a ‘milk-blooded coward’ for his unwillingness to show passion through violent, extravagant acts (*WH*, p. 91).

However, it is not only Catherine’s similarity to Cathy which deflates Heathcliff’s violent temper, but also Hareton’s similarity to Heathcliff. Richard Dellamora describes the connection between Heathcliff and Hareton as one of ‘elective sonship’, and it is certainly true that Hareton experiences their relationship in this way, describing Heathcliff as his ‘father’ even directly after the aborted attack on Catherine (*WH*, p.245).<sup>108</sup> For Heathcliff, however, the relationship is not so domestic or familial. For Heathcliff, Hareton is the ‘personification of my youth, not a human being’ (*WH*, p. 247). In Hareton, Heathcliff sees the same qualities that he struggled with as a young man, his ‘wild endeavours to hold my right, my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish’ (*WH*, p. 247). This

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<sup>108</sup> Richard Dellamora, ‘Earnshaw’s Neighbour/ Catherine’s Friend: Ethical Contingencies in *Wuthering Heights*’, *EHL*, 74: 3 (2007) 535-555 (551).

recognition of himself is so painful to Heathcliff that he confesses to Nelly that the mere sight of Hareton drives him near to insanity. He never fully articulates why this is, other than by suggesting it is bound up with his longing to see Cathy once again, implying a wish to return to the state of happiness they experienced together as youths.

Indeed, in this regard, it is not Hareton alone who so exorcises Heathcliff, but Hareton and Catherine together. In their mutually content relationship, Heathcliff is forced to witness what his life with Cathy might have been like. This vision is most forcefully imposed on Heathcliff in the short vignette of Catherine teaching Hareton to read, a scene which inspires a kind of reverie in Nelly Dean:

[...] they were thick again, in their several occupations, of pupil and teacher. You know, they both appeared, in a measure, my children: I had long been proud of one, and now, I was sure, the other would be a source of equal satisfaction. His honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine's sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry. His brightening mind brightened his features, and added spirit and nobility to their aspect. [...] each had so much of novelty to feel and learn, that neither experienced nor evinced the sentiments of sober disenchanted maturity. (*WH*, p. 246)

I began this discussion by suggesting that *Wuthering Heights* seeks to reconcile Romanticism and Victorianism. This scene is the culmination of that reconciliation. The ideological struggle between Romantic and Victorian, most clearly played out in the conflict between Heathcliff and Edgar, is dissolved here, as the best values of each ideology are combined. We see both the ambitious, egalitarian impulse of Romanticism, as Hareton is elevated from his position of servitude and ignorance, as well as the domestic harmony and gentility so central to the Victorian ideal. There is no feeling of conflict or tension here — no sense that Hareton will feel condescended to, and erupt in a violent temper, nor that Catherine will be unsettled by the passion of a mere 'ploughboy' and seek to restrain his impulse for betterment.

What *Wuthering Heights* achieves, then, is the completion of a transition. On a basic level, this is the culmination of the joining together of two families: the Earnshaws — including Heathcliff — and the Lintons. This joining is begun by Cathy and Edgar, and concluded by the bonding of Hareton and Catherine — a generational handover. As I have sought to demonstrate, however, what this rather simple dynastic transition represents is in fact the resolution of an epic period of uncertainty, bridging two great eras of literary history. At the end of the novel we are left with an image of three tombstones: Edgar's, Cathy's, and

Heathcliff's, with either man on the opposing flank of the woman they loved. One could interpret this as a reification of Edgar and Heathcliff's implacable opposition to one another, even in death. Lockwood, however, can only infer a sense of peace from their mutual resting place, and cannot comprehend 'how anyone could imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth' (*WH*, p. 258). Brontë's novel requires us to think about Romanticism and Victorianism in the same way, as two literary ideologies which can, in the end, lie comfortably with one another.

At the beginning of this chapter I set out to demonstrate that the literature of Richard Cronin's proposed lacuna period of literary history, through its use of divided voices and narratives, reflects a broader concern about the destabilisation of established cultural and political identities. However, the three novels which I have focused on all lay outside, or just on the periphery of, the dates of 1824 and 1840 — the dates which Cronin offers as the boundaries of his proposed 'lacuna'. Cronin himself acknowledges the difficulty in successfully defining such limits, pointing out that literary history, like political history 'tends not to stop when it is told to'.<sup>109</sup> What I have sought to argue for is that a greater elasticity ought to be applied when thinking about this transitional period between the Romantic and Victorian eras.

By offering fixed dates, albeit rather tentatively, Cronin seemingly implies that there is a mutually-exclusive distinction between what lies within and without those dates. But this is a fallacy. *Frankenstein* and *Confessions* are both 'Romantic' novels, sitting outside the 1824 boundary which Cronin sets. And yet, as I have argued, both novels latch onto that sense of uncertainty about identity which the idea of the 'lacuna' is predicated upon. Similarly, *Wuthering Heights* is absolutely Victorian, and the Brontë name is synonymous with Victorian literature more broadly. But, as with the earlier novels, those same concerns which define Cronin's 'lacuna' still arise, seven years beyond its stated parameters.

What this demonstrates is that literary history is not a series of static monoliths, but a dynamic and complex bundle of overlapping influences and ideas. Cronin is absolutely right to recognise that the interval between the Romantic and Victorian eras is a significant and distinctive moment in the evolution of British cultural identity. But what makes this period so interesting is not that it constitutes a unique buffer which separates two established blocs of literary history, but that it is a bridge which overlaps and unites them.

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<sup>109</sup> Cronin, *Romantic Victorians*, p. 254.

### Chapter 3. Conclusion

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In writing this critical element of my thesis, my principal aim has been to determine how *Paradise Lost*, and the ‘Miltonic Ideas of the Fall’ which I have identified — the necessary Fall, the divided poet figure/divided voices — have been used as a template by Romantic poets and authors seeking to write about revolution and transition. Revolution in this sense is not defined merely as a physical act of rebellion, but as the dramatic re-consideration of strongly held ideals: literary, political, and philosophical.

My argument rests upon three main strands. Firstly, that the first generation of Romantic poets used Miltonic Ideas of the Fall to explain, or even to justify, their change in political sensibilities. This can be seen in Blake’s shift in focus from a ‘corporeal’ to a ‘mental’ war, or Coleridge and Wordsworth’s adoption of an increasingly conservative political and philosophical identity, in place of their former radicalism.

Secondly, that the so-called ‘second generation’ Romantics, primarily illustrated through Byron and Keats, also adopted Milton and *Paradise Lost* as a means of rejecting their predecessors. Or, perhaps more accurately, seeking to usurp their predecessors’ former position as the leading poetic voices of their time, using the idea of a necessary Fall to justify this idea.

Thirdly and finally, I turn to the ‘Romantic’ novelists who span Cronin’s literary lacuna, arguing that they use Miltonic Ideas of the Fall, particularly the idea of competing dualities expressed through divided narratives and characters, as way of capturing and understanding the generational, political, socio-economic, and artistic shifts of this period.

All three of these strands are, of course, very closely intertwined in a number of different ways. However, it is my contention the most important aspect that unites these three distinct arguments is that sense of competing forces, expressed in a style and form which is borrowed from Milton, but originates in feeling from the writers themselves. E.M.W Tillyard said of *Paradise Lost* that ‘Milton speaks most of reason contending with passion and of the necessity of imposing limits on the desire of knowledge. Control has become more important than energy.’<sup>110</sup> He was writing about the contrast between the earlier books of *Paradise Lost*, which focus on Satan, and the latter ones which turn more towards the angels. However, the sentiment that defines this contrast — that of a battle between uncontrolled passion and controlling reason — can be applied to each of the texts and writers I have discussed.

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<sup>110</sup> E.M.W Tillyard, *Milton* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 247.



The first generation Romantics' philosophical shift, following the French Revolution, can be seen as a move from radicalism to conservatism, but in their writing they prefer to frame this in terms of a move toward reason, away from the flights of fancy of 'crudest youth' (*TP*, IX. 212). The second generation also believe themselves to be 'reasonable', but they define their role as poets as being, first and foremost, champions of passion. Indeed, Keats's philosophy of Negative Capability is predicated on the superior poetic force of mysterious and emotional beauty, which 'obliterates all [other] consideration'. And finally, the Romantic novelists who span the so-called lacuna period can be seen as writers trying to find a means by which to understand, and bridge, the gap between the forces of reason and passion, which would later come to define what we now call the Romantic and Victorian periods. This is expressed most clearly, perhaps, in *Wuthering Heights*, in the physical and emotional contest between Edgar Linton and Heathcliff.

In short, though this piece of work has pursued an understanding of these texts through the prism of particular devices and techniques — Miltonic Ideas of the Fall — there is a more primal, elemental connection between Romantic literature and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Romantic writers may borrow from the model of the poem — its structure, its divisions, its narrative devices — but the thing which really binds them together is their central theme. But 'theme' is perhaps too dry a word: say rather that they share a soul. A soul that is defined not by a single strong message or conviction, but by a conflict of competing instincts. A battle between reason and passion for the soul of the writer.

## Chapter 4. Bridging Chapter: *The PIT* and Romantic Imagination

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My work on this thesis project began with my research for the creative component; my novel thus emerged from my critical work on Milton and the Romantics. In particular, I was interested in the way in which Romantic writers chose to use their writing as a means to describe and understand their identities as poets, writers, and creative artists more generally. In almost all cases, the identity they perceived was in some way split — divided between competing impulses and ideas of self. As I have shown in the critical portion of this thesis, this ‘split’ is most often characterised by a sense of having ‘fallen’, as well as a desire to rebel against, or transition away from, an established authority or philosophical consensus, and imagine new ways of thinking about the world.

In *The PIT*, I wanted to write a novel that played with the Romantic idea of the ‘fallen’ poet/writer figure, and apply it in a Young Adult context. It seemed to me that this Miltonic/Romantic idea of the fall from innocence, coupled with a sense of political and artistic rebelliousness, is a fundamentally adolescent dynamic, and one that had a natural resonance with YA literature. Indeed, in this bridging chapter I will posit that *The PIT* belongs within a wider tradition of young adult literature which draws upon specifically Romantic notions of growth and imagination as a means to discuss adolescent empowerment, and the capacity of young adults to imagine, and contribute towards, political and societal change.

To do this, I will first seek to define the idea of the ‘Romantic adolescent’. I will show how, within the Romantic period, young children are often depicted as innocent, close to nature, and imaginatively powerful. I will suggest that the fall from this childhood innocence — into a kind of imaginative adolescence — is, in the Romantic conception, the thing which empowers creative individuals to exert their imaginative power, and to envisage and enact change in the world around them. In doing so, I will return to the idea of the ‘necessary Fall’, described in the critical portion of this thesis, and explain how this idea maps on to own my novel, and on to YA literature more broadly. I will argue that it mirrors the adolescent journey from a passive, childish observer of the world, to one increasingly endowed with the capacity and desire to re-imagine existing structures of power and authority.

In the case of *The PIT*, this journey is mapped primarily through Jack’s use of art, his relationship with place, and the relationships he develops with the other characters in the novel. I will use the latter portion of this chapter to show how I have used craft to build upon the thematic inspiration of Milton and the Romantics in order to create a functioning young adult novel that responds to contemporary political and cultural questions. I will outline how I

used Jack's drawings to provide a manifestation of his growth as a character, and as an imaginative force, while framing this development in a dystopian environment designed to reflect and magnify the cultural atmosphere of our own historical moment. In my view, our historical moment emphasises a political focus on the value of economically 'productive' work, at the expense of more creative pursuits; this value system has created an environment that discourages imaginative and artistic freedom.

#### 4.1. The Romantic Child and the Romantic Adolescent

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The connection between childhood and imagination is deeply engrained in Romantic literature and criticism. Annemarie Ambühl writes that:

[...] the notion of the child as a natural poetic genius, or in reverse the image of the true poet as a childlike creature, is an essentially Romantic idea that presupposes the positive evaluation of the child's innocence.<sup>111</sup>

In this analysis, the child serves as a symbol of purity, capable of imagination which is unencumbered by experience. Examples of this appear frequently throughout Romantic literature, perhaps most explicitly in William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789), where in the books of the former we are introduced to figures such as 'The Chimney Sweeper', a child who, in his innocence, is able to overlook the poverty of his conditions and take comfort in imagining the rewards which he and his companions will eventually receive in heaven. Significantly, the rewards of the afterlife are framed in natural terms: 'Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,/ And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.'<sup>112</sup> The link between children and the natural world is key to the Romantic conception of the child, just as it is in many Romantic conceptions of the poet — there are, of course, many diverse models of the poet in Romantic literature, which are well elucidated in Maureen McLane's *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry*.<sup>113</sup> In general terms, however, a connection to nature implies a stronger connection to a pantheistic God — the ultimate source of all imaginative power. Hintz and Ostry describe this idea in the following way:

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<sup>111</sup> Annemarie Ambühl, 'Children as Poets: Poets as Children? Romantic Constructions of Childhood and Hellenistic Poetry', *Hesperia Supplements*, 41 (2007) 373-383 (378).

<sup>112</sup> William Blake, 'The Chimney-Sweeper', in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), ll. 15-16.

<sup>113</sup> Maureen M. McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

To the Romantics and their heirs, children were innocent and pure, closer to nature and [therefore] God, possessing greater imaginative powers than adults. They were emblems of hope and the future.<sup>114</sup>

They add, however, a significant caveat to this: ‘In reality, children are more complex and less...nice’.<sup>115</sup>

Indeed, in my opinion the Romantics are not quite as naive about this as Hintz and Ostry seem to suggest. Although there is undoubtedly an effort in much Romantic literature to frame the child as a figure of naturalistic, almost holy innocence, there is also an acknowledgment that this innocence is not incorruptible, and perhaps that a certain degree of corruption is in fact desirable — a ‘necessary Fall’ of the same kind that characterises the Miltonic and Romantic poet figure. In both instances, the fall is required in order to enable a *productive* use of imaginative power — the Chimney Sweeper’s innocence may grant him a more powerful imagination, but in the corresponding poem from the *Songs of Experience* we see him lying dead in the snow. Without experience, without a fall of any kind, the purity of the childhood imagination cannot be properly harnessed, and cannot achieve a wider moral outcome. For all the reader knows, the dead child may indeed have passed on to his imagined natural paradise, but this achieves little. It’s as if Milton’s Adam and Eve had not fallen from Eden — they would have remained innocent and perfect, but mankind could never have achieved Grace.

In Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, we find a different depiction of childhood from the one we see in ‘The Chimney Sweeper’. Although Wordsworth directs us to the failure of the French Revolution as the most significant marker of his own fall from innocence — the thing which most divides his ‘two consciousnesses’ (*TP*, I. 32) — we can see that his younger self, before the fall, is not entirely a figure of cherubic purity. The references to the child Wordsworth’s ‘Sly subterfuge’ (*TP*, II. 106) paints a more complex, mischievous picture of youth than the profound innocence we encounter elsewhere in Romantic literature, such as in Coleridge’s depiction of his sleeping son in *Frost at Midnight* (1798), where he describes the young Hartley Coleridge as a ‘babe so beautiful’, and envisages his future as one of total immersion in the world of nature.<sup>116</sup> By contrast, though Wordsworth asserts that he was largely ‘untaught by thinking or by books’ (*TP*, IX. 209), he still avers that his ‘child’ self was a

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<sup>114</sup> Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, ‘Introduction’, in *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*, ed. by Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-20 (p. 6).

<sup>115</sup> Hintz and Ostry, p. 6.

<sup>116</sup> Coleridge, ‘Frost at Midnight’, in *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*, l. 50.

committed ‘Republican’ (*TP*, IX. 230-248), suggesting a political sensibility, and experience of the world around him, which sits uncomfortably with the idea of the Romantic child as a creature totally enmeshed in the a-political world of nature.<sup>117</sup>

In my view, this somewhat ‘blurred’ Wordsworth — not quite an innocent child of nature like the sleeping Hartley Coleridge, nor the worldly adult who later goes on to admonish the follies of his ‘crudest youth’ (*TP*, IX. 212) — is a powerfully adolescent figure. Trites suggests that:

[...] adolescent literature is at its heart a Romantic literature because so many of us — authors, critics, teachers, teenagers — need to believe in the possibility of adolescent growth.<sup>118</sup>

I would argue that the reverse can also be argued — that Romantic literature is, in a sense, a naturally adolescent literature, particularly as it relates to the formation or growth of a creative, imaginative identity.

In the critical portion of this thesis, I have argued that Romantic literature is often defined by the tensions between the competing dualities of *Paradise Lost*: the fallen Satan on the one hand, and the admonishing, morally upright narrator on the other, supported by no less than God himself. This is a profoundly adolescent dynamic. Satan’s rebellion is against the ultimate Father figure, fighting back against what he perceives to be an overbearing intrusion on his freedom. This teenage-like rebelliousness, against an authority which is perceived to be illegitimate, is key to the understanding of the Miltonic and Romantic poet figure, but it is also vital in understanding the Romantic influence on children’s and YA fiction, including my own novel.

Trites pinpoints the idea of adolescent rebellion against parental or generational authority as one of the principal defining characteristic of the YA genre, particularly as it relates to framing the idea of an adolescent identity within society, one which is distinct from that of both child and adult:

The ways authority can be represented in adolescent literature are far too various for any one analysis of the genre to cover, but two manifestations of authority are representative of the ways literary texts model adolescents internalizing their place

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<sup>117</sup> See page 162 of this thesis for further discussion on this point.

<sup>118</sup> Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), p. 15.

within a culture's power structure. The first of these, the relationship between parents and adolescents, testifies to the significance of adolescents' construction of the power/repression dynamic: adolescent characters themselves often create repressive parental figures to dominate them. The adolescents, in turn, rebel against this perceived domination in order to engage their own power. This phenomenon is observable in Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912) and Hamilton's *Planet of Junior Brown* (1971). The power struggles they create and resolve are internal to the text. The conflict with parent-as-authority-figure seems to be one of the most pervasive patterns in adolescent literature. Unsurprisingly, these rebellions against repression frequently prove to be redemptive for adolescents<sup>119</sup>

This description neatly summarises the manner in which YA literature adopts a Romantic dynamic — a dynamic which uses intergenerational tension as means of exploring wider questions of the adolescent individual's place within society, and the extent to which they possess the imaginative agency required to envision an alternative future than the one laid out for them. Indeed, Thacker and Webb suggest that the 'development of a literature specifically for a child audience', and by extension an adolescent audience, is indivisible from 'Romantic [...] revolutionary politics', because the Romantics are so instrumental in establishing the idea of intergenerational conflict between child and parent, creator and creation, as a metaphorical vehicle for discussing wider political and cultural themes.<sup>120</sup>

If we return to the critical portion of this thesis, we see this 'adolescent' rebelliousness against the status quo, coupled with a desire to imagine alternative possibilities for society, over and over again. In *The Prelude*, it is the 'adolescent' Wordsworth's avowed republicanism — his sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, and his desire and ability to imagine a radical alternative — that separates him from the child he was and the adult he later became. We see the same thing in Byron's *Cain*, where I would argue that Cain himself can be read as an adolescent, raging against the mistakes of his parents and imagining alternate possibilities: 'And wherefore pluck 'd ye not the tree of life !/ Ye might have then defied him' (*C*, I. 44). Similarly, in *Frankenstein*, the Creature berates his 'father', Victor, for bringing him into a world to which he feels he does not belong — 'wretched, helpless, and alone' (*F*, p. 136) — and which he seeks to change in order to meet his own needs, most notably through

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<sup>119</sup> Trites, *Disturbing the Universe*, p. 54.

<sup>120</sup> Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb, *Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 14-15.

his distinctly adolescent desire to create a perfect female companion, but also in his imagined project to create an entirely new society predicated on a simple, naturalistic existence:

I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare (*F*, p. 124).

There are examples of this same dynamic in each of the texts discussed in the critical portion of the thesis — too numerous to elucidate in full here — with each one placing a common emphasis on the use of imagination as a tool for envisioning alternative futures to the one set down by the preceding generation. In all of these cases, however, the adolescent impulse to re-imagine, or rebel against, what has come before, is framed in such a way that it extends beyond mere intergenerational conflict, and expands to become a metaphor for wider political and societal tensions.

#### 4.2. *The PIT in Context*

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Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs argue that the ‘contemporary production of literature for the young and its critical analysis often implement the legacies of [...] Romanticism’, especially as it relates to the ‘analogy between the child and the artist / poet’.<sup>121</sup> Kieran Egan, meanwhile, points to a broader YA culture, including literature, films and comic books aimed at young adults, which seek to give ‘some taste of power or control or security or confidence’ to their audience by adopting the ‘prominent features of imaginative exploration in Romanticism’ to demonstrate the capacity of the adolescent ‘imagination both to acknowledge constraints of the real world and to associate with some means of transcending those constraints’.<sup>122</sup>

Described by Burton Hatlen as ‘a Blakean redaction of the Miltonic mythos’, Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* series shows how the influence of the Romantics can, and has

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<sup>121</sup> Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs, ‘Introduction’, in *Changing Concepts of Childhood and Children's Literature*, ed. by Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), pp. viii-xii (p. xi).

<sup>122</sup> Kieran Egan, ‘Relevance and the Romantic Imagination’, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 16:1 (1991), 58-71 (65-66).

been, used to explore issues of growth, creativity and imagination in YA literature.<sup>123</sup> The main protagonists, Lyra and Will, are two children who are caught up in a revolutionary war between the God-like ‘Authority’ and Lyra’s ‘Satanic’ father, Lord Asriel. One of the most prominent themes of the novels is the nature of adolescence, and the potential imaginative power that it carries, both for shaping the narrative of the text itself, but also in envisioning wider societal change.

In the multiple worlds of the novels, when children reach adolescence they undergo particular transformations. In one world their ‘daemons’ — essentially animal projections of their souls — become fixed where before they were constantly changing. In another, the change means that children can now see previously invisible spirits that appear to feed on this same ‘soul’. Within the third novel, *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), the approach of Lyra’s adolescence is directly related to the fall of Eve, with the head of the Magisterium — her own world’s ruling Church — remarking that she is in the “position of Eve, the wife of Adam, the mother of us all, and the cause of all sin.”<sup>124</sup>

In the end, however, Lyra’s ‘fall’ into adolescence brings about a positive outcome — a fortunate fall very much in the Miltonic and Romantic style. Will and Lyra’s fall is explicitly tied to their ‘sexual awakening’, signalled by their first kiss. From this moment on, they are subtly changed, becoming more mature and rational, something which ultimately leads to them making a decision which prevents a worldwide catastrophe:

The series ends with Lyra realizing she has to return to her world and separate from Will. She is heartbroken, but accepts that this is the only way she can fulfil her ultimate destiny, which is to help build the “Republic of Heaven.” She understands this to be a paradise on Earth where she can learn to be “kind and curious and patient,” and where she can rely on her own knowledge and wisdom<sup>125</sup>

Pullman is careful to place emphasis on the power of YA literature to show the positives of growing out of childhood into adolescence: the virtues of ‘kindness and curiosity’ are carried forward, but with an added sense of purpose. Lyra’s imagination may have been constrained — she is, for instance, no longer able to interpret intuitively the symbols of her magical

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<sup>123</sup> Burton, Hatlen, ‘*His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to Tolkien and Lewis’, in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman’s Trilogy*, ed. by Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), pp. 75-94 (p. 86).

<sup>124</sup> Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass* (Oxford: Scholastic Books, 2000), p. 68. All subsequent page references are from this edition, abbreviated as ‘*Amber*’, and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

<sup>125</sup> Hannah Rosin, ‘How Hollywood Saved God’, *The Atlantic* (2007)

<<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/12/how-hollywood-saved-god/306444/>> [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2017]



‘alethiometer’ — but it is also more focused, directed at envisioning a better world for humanity. Via this transformation, Lyra becomes ‘the novel’s major exemplar of the power of the creative imagination to shape [...] meaningful stories’ which can direct us to as ‘close to “heaven” as humanly possible’.<sup>126</sup>

In *The PIT*, I have tried to do something similar, adopting the ‘adolescent’ spirit of Romanticism, with its focus on personal growth and imagining potential societal change, and applying it to a speculative YA dystopia. To put the novel in the context of its historical moment, one of its original points of inspiration was a speech given in 2013 by the then UK Culture Secretary, Maria Miller. In the speech, she sought to turn the discussion about the value of art in society into a principally economic question, arguing that arts funding should be regarded in the same way ‘as seed funding, or venture capital’ — an economic, rather than cultural investment.<sup>127</sup>

At the same time, the government was also seeking to implement a programme of cuts to the welfare budget, something that was often couched in rhetoric that appeared to set ‘working people’ against those on welfare benefits. In my view, this rhetoric implicitly blamed the latter for the hardships of the former, and introduced a sense of moral conflict between those who ‘strive’ and the unemployed. At the Conservative Party Conference in 2012, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, gave a speech in which he articulated this idea of moral conflict in stark terms:

“Where is the fairness, we ask, for the shift-worker, leaving home in the dark hours of the early morning, who looks up at the closed blinds of their next door neighbour sleeping off a life on benefits?

When we say we're all in this together, we speak for that worker.

We speak for all those who want to work hard and get on.”<sup>128</sup>

My aim in *The PIT* was to imagine a world in which these ideas were taken to their logical extremes, where activities were only valued in terms of their economic benefits, and where unemployment was regarded as a moral failure to be corrected. In doing so, I wanted to

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<sup>126</sup> Millicent Lenz, ‘Awakening to the Twenty-First Century’, in *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, pp. 1-15 (pp. 7-9).

<sup>127</sup> Maria Miller, 2013. ‘Testing Times: Fighting Culture’s Corner in an Age of Austerity’. Speech given at The British Museum, London, April 2013.  
<<http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2013/04/24/culture-secretary-maria-miller-s-arts-speech-in-full>> [accessed 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2017]

<sup>128</sup> George Osborne, 2012, ‘Conference Speech’. Speech given at the Conservative Party Conference, International Convention Centre, Birmingham, October, 2012.  
<<http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/politics/2012/10/george-osbornes-speech-conservative-conference-full-text>> [accessed 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2017]

explore how a Romantic conception of adolescence, as I have defined it in this chapter, could fit in to such a world — one that actively seeks to diminish the value of art, creativity and imagination.

### 4.3. *The PIT*: Craft and the Romantic Adolescent

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In essence, *The PIT* is a coming of age story, but one that has a specific focus on imagination. As Jack develops as an individual, so too does his imagination and his art. At the beginning of the novel, the drawings that Jack creates are essentially photographic. Using his extraordinary powers of visual recall, we see him ‘peeling’ images from the back of his mind and replicating them on paper. Although he has a natural creative ability, and a particular interest in replicating images of nature, such as animals and landscapes, there is no truly *imaginative* element to his art, or at least not any imaginative quality that might contribute towards envisioning a coherent alternative to the world as it is already constituted. As the novel progresses, we see this change. As Jack experiences more of the world, and develops new relationships, he begins to imagine alternatives to the life he knows, most visibly expressed through his ‘imagination pictures’.

I have already stated that, at the beginning of the novel, Jack’s artwork is ‘photographic’. This shallowness is a direct reflection of the world that Jack lives in. Paradise is a society that designates art as a ‘Non-Profit-Activity’: a direct assertion of its perceived lack of economic or societal value, something which extends to all forms of imaginative or creative practice that are not in some way profitable. Indeed, the entire structure of Paradise and *The PIT* is designed to emphasise this notion — that value is only attributable to that which is economically productive. One way in which I sought to reinforce this idea is in the way that things are named and described. For example, the children of *The PIT* are not students, but ‘Claimants’, while the traditional symbols and icons of the Church have been re-constituted to place an explicit emphasis on work and economic status, such as the ‘Authorised Paradise Proverbs of Work and Prayer’, referring to Jesus as ‘Christ the Carpenter’, or having the crucifix replaced by a black steel hammer as the official symbol of Christianity.

I also designed the physical structures and spaces of *The PIT* in such a way that they reflect Paradise’s governing ethos. We see this in the way that the built environment of Paradise interacts with the natural world. ‘The Dome’, the only area of *The PIT* that could really be regarded as outdoor space, is essentially a cage, holding the natural world at bay with a canopy of metal and concrete. Similarly, The Greenhouse, where Mary grows her

garden, is an abandoned relic. If we think of the novel as being primarily about Jack's growth as an adolescent, and his parallel imaginative and artistic empowerment, then the significance of this in-built rejection of nature lies with the Romantic connection between the natural world and imagination — the former being regarded as the principle 'creative source' of the latter.<sup>129</sup> In this sense, place acts not only as a setting, but also as something of an antagonist. I have deliberately used place as a device to restrict and hinder Jack's imaginative development: an additional obstacle for him to overcome.

Indeed, Jeff Vandermeer emphasises the importance of setting and environment in 'alternative' worlds as a means of defining 'character agency', arguing that agency has to 'exist in the context of the worldview', as it is presented by the character's surroundings.<sup>130</sup> A choice that was made early on in the conception of the novel was that place should be described naturalistically. Part of the thinking behind this was that Jack's growing agency is the essential driving force of the narrative. By framing the restrictive environment of Paradise in naturalistic terms, with a heavy emphasis on Jack's point of view, slipping frequently into free indirect discourse, his acts of agency and rebellion become more powerful than they might otherwise seem. Because the reader partially inhabits Jack's perspective — and his intimate understanding of the world — they are better able to understand his wish to become an artist as subversive. We can compare this to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the innocuous act of writing a diary becomes a hugely significant event.<sup>131</sup> In both instances, because we experience the world principally through the world-view of the protagonist, we have a deeper, more empathetic understanding of the relative significance of actions that would otherwise seem incidental.

In my own novel, as in Orwell's, specific details of the setting are provided, but only in as much as they relate to the actions of the characters involved. Because of this, much of the material that might be 'spelled out' is withheld. For instance, it's not until a few chapters into *The PIT* that the reader is given a fuller understanding of what 'Favourites' are, or what the function of The PIT itself is, but we do know within the first few pages that Favourites wear red armbands, and that the motto of The PIT is 'Opportunity in Adversity'. By giving scant, yet specific, details about the setting, place is effectively used as a narrative 'hook', compelling the reader to go further in order to flesh out their understanding of the world.

This incremental revelation about the nature of the world is also reflective of the way that the novel is paced and structured. The narrative trigger for the novel comes in the form of

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<sup>129</sup> Ambühl, p. 378.

<sup>130</sup> Jeff Vandermeer, *Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction* (New York: Abrams Image, 2013), p. 189.

<sup>131</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Signet Classics, 1977).

Jack's apparent abandonment by his friend and protector, George Gordon. This event was intended to mirror the 'falls' of *Paradise Lost* and the Romantic texts discussed in this thesis. As with those texts, the fall takes place at the very beginning of the novel, and the plot is then structured around the 'fallout' from this event. Initially, this takes the form of Jack trying to regain his 'pre-fall' status, something which is continually frustrated, and with each frustration comes a new problem — an incremental escalation of jeopardy. This not only helps to provide a framework for the plotting of the novel, but also aids in character development, and creating empathy between the reader and the protagonist.

At the core of this character development is Jack's art. Although I have made use of traditional 'plot points' to give structure to the novel — moments of significant change that move events forward, such as Raffa telling Jack to kill Gordon, or Mole-face putting Jack in hospital — just as important to me are the moments when Jack draws. These moments are, in a sense, 'character points', providing an insight into Jack's state of mind, and how he is developing as an adolescent and as an artist. As the novel moves forward, we increasingly see Jack engaging more and more with his art, drawing from his imagination and envisioning alternatives to his restrictive existence within The PIT. The benefit of doing this in an active scene, with Jack physically manifesting his imagination through his art, is that it avoids having lengthy stretches of introspective internalisation, or abstract theorising, which might inhibit a young adult reader's interaction with the text.

Indeed, one of the largest challenges of writing this novel was finding ways to explore relatively complex ideas in a way that wouldn't be alienating to a young adult readership, whilst simultaneously avoiding condescension. This technique of writing primarily in scene, rather than more drawn out, contemplative interjections from the narrator, allows the young adult reader to keep their focus on the protagonist, and to understand the novel's wider themes via this more intimate connection. It also has the added benefit of maintaining a quick, fluid pace, avoiding moments that slow or disrupt the flow of the narrative. *Paradise* is a relatively complex world, however, and though the technique of providing small, concrete details functions well as a 'hook', it seemed important that, as the novel progressed, some more direct context was provided in order that the young adult reader didn't become confused or frustrated by the lack of a clearer framework.

In earlier drafts of the novel, I had sought to use dialogue to flesh out any difficult points of context, such as the nature of The Enemy and their history within *Paradise*. Unfortunately, this tended to read as inauthentic, contrived, or overly expositional. In the latter drafts of *The PIT*, therefore, in place of dialogue, or lengthy expositional speeches, I have sought to use either short narrative summary or reported speech as means to convey any

necessary context which could not naturally be delivered through active scenes. The benefit of this approach is that important information can be condensed into a relatively small space, providing the desired context without intruding too much upon the action.

This desire to avoid lengthy exposition posed a still greater challenge for communicating the novel's central theme of imaginative empowerment. I have already described how Jack's drawings function as a means of charting his imaginative development, but framing this development in a way that successfully communicates its significance to the reader was difficult to do without straying into overly philosophical narrative cul-de-sacs. The essence of what I wanted to communicate was that Jack's imaginative growth is specifically tied to his ability to imagine an alternative to his life within Paradise — a fundamentally rebellious act — whether this was as simple as being able to envision himself living in more natural surroundings, with healthier relationships, or as drastic as recasting Raffa, a personification of Paradise's governing ethos, as *The Enemy*.

In fact, this latter point — that Raffa acts as a personification of Paradise's value-system — reveals the manner in which I sought to resolve this problem. Throughout the novel, I have deliberately made an effort to align certain characters with particular ideological or thematic positions. The way that Jack interacts with these characters, therefore, acts a means of interrogating the ideas with which each character is associated, but on a more personal, accessible level than could be achieved through a more direct narrative interjection.

Raffa, for his part, offers Jack a form of personal growth that in many ways actually represents a regression. Raffa essentially positions himself to become Jack's new surrogate father, the role that Gordon had previously fulfilled. He does offer Jack a version of personal growth, but one that is predicated on very narrow, individualist goals that explicitly reinforce Paradise's governing ideology. If we consider *The PIT* to fit broadly into the category of YA literature that Trites describes as 'novels of social hope', we can see how Jack's personal growth, were it to proceed under Raffa's terms, would be problematic. Although one could argue that if the novel ended with Jack as Raffa's apprentice — a 'winner', to use Raffa's terminology — this would represent the culmination of a certain kind of 'growth', it would not satisfy the 'Romantic faith in the ability of youth to improve the future', which is central to the genre. Trites laments that many critics, by focusing on the growth of the individual [...] often miss the metaphorical use to which the individual's growth has been put'.<sup>132</sup> In the case of Jack, his personal growth carries a wider metaphorical significance than

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<sup>132</sup> Roberta Seelinger Trites, 'Hope, Despair, and Reform: Adolescent Novels of Social Hope', in *Changing Concepts of Childhood and Children's Literature* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), pp. 3-16 (p. 4).

simply being part of an adolescent ‘coming of age’ story. The choice he eventually makes to reject Raffa carries with it an implicit rejection of the societal model that Raffa is advocating.

Like Raffa, Mary also envisages change in personal terms, but unlike Raffa her desires are predicated on helping others. As Vandermeer says, agency can only ‘exist in the context of the worldview’, so although Mary’s growing of a garden, and her desire to be a nurse, may seem to be small acts, within the context of Paradise they are still significant pieces of agency and imagination. This positions Mary as Raffa’s opposite: an advocate for change, and for a value system that embraces imaginative freedom.

These contrasts between Raffa and Mary are what frame Jack’s choice in the novel’s penultimate chapter. On the one hand, Raffa offers him the chance of personal enrichment — the opportunity to become his apprentice and be ‘successful’ within the confines of Paradise’s existing structures. On the other, he can leave The PIT with Mary, having absolutely no certainty about what the future may hold. Jack chooses the latter without any hesitation, not only because he loves Mary and despises Raffa, but because he has embraced one’s worldview while rejecting the other. That this is the case is reinforced in the novel’s final scene, where we see Jack reach the culmination of his journey of adolescent growth and imaginative development:

Jack stood up, and using a snagged piece of rock, he hooked the poster to the foot of The Wall. It was an image of Raffa, standing over a dead child. Beneath it ran the words: The Enemy. The old woman had said she’d never heard of an Enemy. Jack would make sure that changed.

In this moment, Jack finally makes the transition from simply imagining the potential for a better society, to taking an active step towards achieving it. In doing so, he demonstrates his agency in imagining, and actively pursuing, a new direction for his society.

Returning to Trites, and the sub-genre of YA literature which she calls ‘novels of social hope’, we can see how her description of such novels’ common trajectories maps onto *The PIT*:

If the protagonist experiences growth — and s/he usually does — this process provides a commentary as to how the society itself might also "grow" (that is, improve). The character's growth is thus a sign that the society can, indeed, potentially change too. It is a means of communicating the hope for social change. [...] the growth

that the characters in the story experience leads to at least one person's ability to live in the world more justly.<sup>133</sup>

Jack's journey from passive, imaginatively superficial child to rebellious adolescent, actively using his imagination to envision an alternative future for his society, fits neatly into Trites's model, whilst also adhering to the Miltonic/Romantic idea of the 'necessary Fall'.

In both models, the emphasis is placed on how an individual's personal journey can carry a wider metaphorical significance. In Jack's case, his growth points towards a rethinking of the way that we value artistic and imaginative expression within our own society, and its capacity to shape the way we see the world. If we value imagination, and the creative arts that spring from them, only in terms of their potential economic value, or lack thereof, without recognising their ability to inspire, to direct us to new ways of thinking about the world, then we risk becoming like Paradise — a stagnant, isolated nation, predicated only on the worth of labour, but not of its fruits.

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<sup>133</sup> Trites, *Changing Concepts of Childhood and Children's Literature*, p. 6.

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