

# Soil and Soul

*People versus Corporate Power*

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH

**Aurum**

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## 9. Voice of Complicity

Between Culloden's final showdown in 1746 and the dawn of the twentieth century, probably some half a million Scottish Highlanders were forced off their land.<sup>1</sup> The old clan leaders had valued land for the number of people it could support, but the new breed of owners – some indigenous, but Anglicised through James's educational measures; others with no cultural connection to the place whatsoever – were products of Enlightenment thought. To many of them, economy and its new breeds of sheep came before people. You had to 'be realistic' in the face of economic exigencies more and more determined by a frame of reference that Empire rendered not local, but global.

The circumstances of the population's dispatch in the consequent Highland Clearances were often brutal. In the Uists, which lie just to the south of Mount Roineabhail on Harris, the Clearances took place so recently as to have been captured in photographs.<sup>2</sup> Here is one first-hand account, collected from Catherine MacPhee in the late nineteenth century:

Many a thing have I seen in my own day and generation. Many a thing, O Mary Mother of the black sorrow! I have seen the townships swept, and the big holdings being made of them, the people being driven out of the countryside to the streets of Glasgow and to the wilds of Canada, such of them as did not die of hunger and plague and smallpox while going across the ocean. I have seen the women putting the children in the carts which were being sent from Benbecula and the Iochdar to Loch Boisdale, while their husbands lay bound in the pen and were weeping beside them, without power to give them a helping hand, though the women themselves were crying aloud and their little children wailing like to break their hearts. I have seen the big strong men, the champions of the countryside, the stalwarts of the world, being bound on Loch Boisdale quay and cast into the ship as would be done to a batch of horses or cattle in the boat, the bailiffs and the ground-officers and the constables and the policemen gathered behind them in pursuit of them. The God of life and He only knows all the loathsome work of men on that day.<sup>3</sup>

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‘I had heard some rumours of these intentions but did not realise that they were in process of being carried into effect,’ wrote Sir Archibald Geikie, the great British geologist, of the Borerraig and Suishnish clearances in autumn 1853.

As I drew nearer I could see that the minister with his wife and daughters had come out to meet the people and bid them all farewell. It was a miscellaneous gathering of at least three generations of crofters. There were old men and women, too feeble to walk, who were placed in carts; the younger members of the community on foot were carrying their bundles of clothes and household effects, while the children, with looks of alarm, walked alongside . . . Everyone was in tears . . . When they set forth once more, a cry of grief went up to Heaven, the long plaintive wail, like a funeral coronach, was resumed, and . . . the sound seemed to re-echo through the whole wide valley of Strath in one prolonged note of desolation.<sup>4</sup>

The introduction of intensive sheep ranching had consequences that were ecological as well as social. A number of contemporary accounts refer to the loss of biodiversity, especially woodland. As Daniel Corkery said of the Irish bards’ perspective, ‘the downfall of the Gaelic [culture and] the downfall of the woods – these two went together in their verses’.<sup>5</sup> To ignore such poetic evidence would be unscholarly, uncultured and unacceptable. It is, of course, a coincidence, but an interesting one, that Scotland’s last wolf was shot in 1743 – a significant local species extinction just three years before Culloden signified the full force of cultural genocide.<sup>6</sup> Writing about the introduction of sheep ranching to the area around Loch Maree, the Scots herbal physician Dr John Mackenzie had this to say about ecocide in his memoirs:

It was in as lovely a spot in a wild Highland glen as any lover of country scenery could desire to see. I mean then, for then no sheep vermin had got hoof in it, as ere long they did. Then only cattle ever bit a blade of grass there, and the consequence was that the braes and wooded hillocks were a perfect jungle of every kind of loveable shrubs and wild flowers, especially orchids – some, of the *Epipactis* tribe, being everywhere a lovely drug that I often got many thanks for sending to botanic gardens in the South. The milk cows never troubled their heads to force through this flowery jungle, laced up with heaps of honeysuckle and crowds of seedling hazel and other native trees and shrubs. Till my Father’s death in 1826, no sheep’s hoof defiled the glen unless passing through it to the larder. But very soon after, an offer of a trifling rent for sheep pasturing let these horrid brutes into the glen, and every wild flower, and every young seedling bush or tree was eaten into the ground, so that an offer of a thousand pounds would not find one of my loved wild flowers or a young shrub from seed – nothing but a bare lot of poles, whose very

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leaves were all eaten up the instant one of them appeared. Those who remembered the wooded glen of 1826, and now looked at it, would never believe it was the same place – unless seen from a distance, for the sheep could not eat up the beautiful wild hills.<sup>7</sup>

The options open to the vanquished human population were dismal. They could emigrate to the colonies, especially North America and Australia: there the oppressed too easily became the oppressors of other native peoples. They could join the loyal Highland regiments of the British state and advance the Empire: this, at least superficially, allowed some warrior-like semblance of ‘manliness’ to be maintained in a one-time warrior culture.<sup>8</sup> Or they could turn to waged labour in the Industrial Revolution. Many of the Highlanders’ descendants live in poverty in British cities to this day; only the memory of more dignified origins remains. The poet Duncan MacLaren writes of such ‘intergenerational poverty’ in his hometown near Glasgow, where unemployment in the 1980s reached 30 per cent after the shipyards closed:

*Bruach Chluaidh. Bidh bruadar air uair agam 's tu nad eilean air bhog eadar Ceann Bharraidh agus Nèimh . . . Clydebank . . . I sometimes dream that you are an island afloat between Barra Head and the end of Heaven and that the only speech on the tongues of your people is the language of the Hebrides and the mists would put a poultice on your stinking houses and it wouldn't be vomit on the street but bog-cotton and your rusty river would be a dark-green sea. And, in the faces of your people, the wrinkles of their misery would only be the lash of wind and waves and your grinding poverty would somehow be diminished . . . agus thigeadh lughdachadh air do bhoichdainn chràidh.<sup>9</sup>*

Events like the Clearances had, of course, taken place over much of Europe, but usually further back in time. In the Roman world vast farms called *latifundia* were carved out for colonists – often slaves who had won their freedom by fighting in the legions. A *colonia* or colony was a detachment of soldiers who were rewarded with land to keep order among the vanquished, and remit taxes back to the metropolitan hub and conscripts to the frontier. Ironically, Roman *latifundia* tenants may, at times, have been better off than under British rule. For example, Article XI of the Statutes of Emperor Fredrick threatened ‘imperial punishment’ for any citizen ‘found so bold as to dare to interfere with, swize, or carry away’ either the peasants themselves or anything belonging to them.<sup>10</sup>

The only reason why the Scottish Highlands and Islands offer such a vivid window into the process of cultural genocide is that events there took place so recently in history. By contrast, enclosure (privatisation of common

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land) in England started with the Statute of Merton way back in 1235. This spoke of the need to ‘approve’ or improve land to extract a greater rent. Things really got moving under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and by 1592, Bishop Latimer was testifying that ‘The rich . . . say their land is their own and they turn [the poor] out of their shrouds like mice. Thousands in England beg now from door to door which have kept honest houses.’<sup>11</sup> The 1601 Elizabethan Statute of Charitable Uses, which still sets the framework of British and Commonwealth charitable law, was originally intended mainly to alleviate social problems caused by landless itinerants. The older poor laws had been rendered inadequate. The final land grab of the early eighteenth century saw the passing of some 4000 Private Acts of Enclosure, culminating in the General Enclosure Act of 1845. By 1876, the process of depriving the ‘commoners’ of England was so complete that the New Domesday Book calculated just 0.6 of 1 per cent of the English population owned 98.5 per cent of the land.<sup>12</sup> Three-quarters of this larceny had taken place as early as 1700.<sup>13</sup>

If it is the case that many English people today take landed power for granted and even admire ‘their’ aristocracy, some explanation might lie in the fact that, as folk singer Dick Gaughan reminds us, ‘It is easy to forget that England is the most colonised nation in history’. High land prices (which we all pay for in rents and mortgages) are really no more than a tax by the rich on the poor. And whereas most people will pay income tax, national insurance and VAT on their leisure activities, the rich employ armies of chartered accountants to show that their estates are ‘businesses’ and therefore tax-deductible. You can bet that the Land Rover from which the pheasant shoot takes place has usually been put through the books. Said a nineteenth-century wag:

Men of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay ye low?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear?<sup>14</sup>

After giving talks about the Highland Clearances, I am often approached by English people who feel confused about their national identity and ask what they can do. I simply suggest that they dig where they stand, and recover their own suppressed but very wonderful traditions. People like William Morris, William Blake, and the seventeenth-century radical movements – the Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, early Quakers, *et al.* – represent a rich taproot of indigenous English social and ecological alternative values. As Christopher Hill demonstrates in books like *The World Turned Upside Down*, English radicals urged a breaking-up of the class system by ‘levelling’ formalised

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distinctions of rank. They fought the 'wage slavery' of landed power on grounds of being 'no man's Lord and no man's servant'. Gerard Winstanley, who would have loved the modern-day direct activist's motto 'Break the laws like bread', had his own, which was: 'Work together; eat bread together.' He told the squires of England:

The power of enclosing land and owning property was brought into the creation by your ancestors by the sword; which first did murder their fellow creatures, men, and after plunder or steal away their land, and left this land successively to you, their children. And therefore, though you did not kill or thieve, yet you hold that cursed thing in your hand by the power of the sword; and so you justify the wicked deeds of your fathers, and that sin of your fathers shall be visited upon the head of you and your children to the third and fourth generation, and longer too, till your bloody and thieving power be rooted out of the land . . . . True freedom lies in the free enjoyment of the Earth.<sup>15</sup>

Just as England can salvage wonderful material like this from a chequered past, so can any country – Scotland and Ireland have got it down to a fine art! Perhaps this is the big challenge of our times: to both heal nationhood and build a healing nationhood. And remember: no place is more sacred, and no peoples more worthy of honour, than those that have made beauty blossom anew out of desecration.

When the radical English historian John Prebble first popularised the history of the Highland Clearances in 1969, he met with derision from the academic establishment.<sup>16</sup> The Historiographer Royal for Scotland, Professor Gordon Donaldson of Edinburgh University, objected in the strongest possible terms. 'I am sixty-eight now,' he promulgated, 'and until recently had hardly heard of the Highland Clearances. The thing has been blown out of proportion.'<sup>17</sup> Other apologists had long been making out that the landlords had acted out of kindness.<sup>18</sup> The Clearances were made inevitable by overcrowding: the result, according to George Rainy, laird of the Isle of Raasay, 'of reckless, improvident and early marriages entered into without the slightest forethought of future consequences'.<sup>19</sup>

What went unsaid was that while the population was certainly rising, as it was all over Europe during the modern era, the people were simultaneously being pushed on to marginal land in the name of a calculated economic rationale. In 1815 Patrick Sellar, legal agent or 'factor' for the Sutherland Estates, articulated this policy as follows:

Lord and Lady Stafford were pleased *humanely*, to order a new arrangement of this Country. That the interior should be possessed by Cheviot [sheep] Shepherds and

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the people brought down to the coast and placed there in lotts under the size of three arable acres, sufficient for the maintenance of an industrious family, but pinched enough to cause them turn their attention to the fishing [i.e. waged labour]. I presume to say that the proprietors *humanely* ordered this arrangement, because, it surely was a most benevolent action, to put these barbarous hordes into a position where they could better Associate together, apply to industry, educate their children, and advance in civilisation.<sup>20</sup>

Within a century, Lord Delamere was applying identical justification on his 150,000 acres of Kenya. The peasantry, he said, needed to be deprived of their tribal lands to stimulate economic development. 'If . . . every native is to be a landholder of a sufficient area on which to establish himself,' Delamere told the Native Labour Commission of 1912–13, 'then the question of obtaining a satisfactory labour supply will never be settled.'<sup>21</sup>

As late as 1960, J. L. Sadie put it very clearly in the *Economic Journal*:

Economic development of an underdeveloped people by themselves is not compatible with the maintenance of their traditional customs and mores. A break with the latter is prerequisite to economic progress. What is needed is a revolution in the totality of social, cultural and religious institutions and habits, and thus in their psychological attitude, their philosophy and way of life. What is, therefore, required amounts in reality to social disorganization. Unhappiness and discontentment in the sense of wanting more than is obtainable at any moment is to be generated. The suffering and dislocation that may be caused in the process may be objectionable, but it appears to be the price that has to be paid for economic development: the condition of economic progress.<sup>22</sup>

Such a mindset, writ large across the world as the touchstone of modernism, was to carve deep wounds into the psyche of indigenous peoples. Hehaka Sapa or Black Elk of the Oglala Sioux said that the 'Wasichus', or white oppressors, 'have made little islands for us . . . and always these islands are becoming smaller, for around them surges the gnawing flood of the Wasichu; and it is dirty with lies and greed . . .'.<sup>23</sup> 'Alas,' wrote a Maya prophet of the conquistador colonisers: 'They came to make our flowers wither so that only their flower might live.' And of the 22 million Aztecs alive in 1519 when Hernán Cortez entered Mexico, only a million remained by 1600.<sup>24</sup> The Wasichu, suggests Native North American poet Leslie Marmon Silko, sees no life; he sees only objects. Yet he fears an objectified world, and so seeks to destroy it. He steals the people's rivers and mountains, jerking their mouths from their Mother. And so the people starve.<sup>25</sup>

Analysing French colonial power in twentieth-century Algeria, the Caribbean psychiatrist and liberation fighter Frantz Fanon described the



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colonial psychodynamic of cultural undermining as 'inferiorisation'.<sup>26</sup> Edward Said saw the same phenomenon in his native Palestine,<sup>27</sup> as did Daniel Corkery in Ireland under the British yoke.<sup>28</sup> And writing from modern Brazil, Paulo Freire wrote powerfully of 'cultural invasion'. 'In this phenomenon,' he said,

the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, and ignoring the potential of the latter, they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression . . . . Cultural invasion is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality . . . . [It] leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards, and the goals of the invaders . . . . It is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes . . . . It is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority.<sup>29</sup>

So there we have it. History gets pushed aside as 'just something from the old days'. A culture of silence takes hold, and that silence is, of course, the voice of complicity; the voice of all of us who are afraid to stir from the spell of what Professor Donald Meek calls 'heavy doses of cultural anaesthesia . . . to blot out the hardships of the past'.<sup>30</sup>

It is as if memory itself has fallen into a deep pool of forgetfulness, and somebody has put up a sign that says 'NO FISHING'. And I'm feeling puzzled and angry, and I'm wondering how the hell that order was enforced.

**I**t finally came to a head on the Ullapool ferry to Stornoway. I had sat myself down beside Calum Macleod, a retired teacher. He lived just over the road from Finlay Montgomery's place.

At school we had called him 'Cicero' because he taught Classics. Greek and Roman culture were, of course, part of the educational package in this far-flung outpost of the Empire. Unlike Celtic studies, Classics was deemed to 'improve the mind'. It would help us to 'get on'.

A teacher more gentle, warm and wise than Cicero would be hard to imagine. It so happened that I had a copy of Hunter's book with me, and I turned on the inquisition.

'But why didn't you people teach us this stuff too?' I demanded, waving the book and speaking in an almost accusatory tone. But I didn't need to worry. Cicero knew exactly what I meant and was sympathetic.

'Ah, well . . .' he replied, signalling a conversational deepening of psychological depth. 'You see, it was not in the curriculum. And in any case, *we were ashamed of it.*'

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Shortly afterwards I met Jock Mackenzie, an old schoolfriend from Keose, where we used to go scallop diving in the *Pegasus*. I'd done shift work with him in the seaweed-processing factory when not out on the loch or hill.

'Jock,' I said. 'Did you know about this stuff? Cicero says they were *ashamed* of it! Am I the only one who missed it all?'

In the back of my mind I was wondering if it was because I had an English mother. Maybe people had just been too polite?

'No – me too,' Jock replied. 'I only found out recently. And I've been asking the boys about it too. Some knew. Most didn't know much. It was just never spoken about.'

My old schoolmate from Leurbost days, John 'Rusty' Macdonald – the village blacksmith – had the same story. Writing in the parish's historical journal, *Dusgadh*, he said: 'When I was in school, history was usually about the antics of Attila the Hun and Henry the Eighth or the sanctified version of the British Empire. Where was our own history?'<sup>31</sup>

Where indeed? And, of course, by now we all knew the answer. But as Runrig, the folk-rock group from Skye, put it, we'd had to wait twenty years.

### *Fichead Bliadhna* (Twenty Years)

Freedom of the moor  
Freedom of the hill  
And then to school  
At the end of a summer  
Children, five years of age  
Without many words of English

Here is your book  
Here is your pen  
Study hard  
That's what they told me  
And you will rise up in the world  
You will achieve

I learnt many things  
The English language  
The poetry of England  
The music of Germany  
The history of Spain  
And even that was a misleading history

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Then on to further education  
Following education, more education  
Like puppets  
On the end of a string  
Our heads filled with a sort of learning  
And I did rise in the world  
I found my suit  
I found my shirt  
I found a place in the eyes of men  
Well away from the freedom of the moor

But why did they keep  
Our history from us?  
I'll tell you – they are frightened  
In case the children of Gaeldom awaken  
With searching  
And penetrating questions  
Twenty years for the truth  
I had to wait  
I had to search  
Twenty years of deceit  
They denied me knowledge of myself<sup>32</sup>

## 10. Echoes Down the Glen of Landed Power

Looking back, the guests on our Hebridean sporting estates demonstrated it all so very well. Ordinary, otherwise nice people get carried along in mindsets that are bigger than they are. On a one-to-one basis, a profound humanity was very often evident. But set in the wider social frameworks of military, corporate, political and even religious power, it was equally evident that underneath the ermine, chequebook and charm lay a basic willingness, if necessary, to use the most awesome violence to maintain privilege and keep control. Self-defence is one thing, but a 'better dead than red' ferocious readiness to take out everybody else with you is quite another. The gunboats might no longer have been visible on the horizon, but they continued to lurk beneath the surface, and patrolled the globe with massively magnified menace. 'There is no doubt that when you went to sea [on routine duty], you went to war,' says Commander Jeffrey Tall, captain from 1989 to 1991 of the nuclear submarine, HMS *Repulse*.<sup>1</sup> And this is not just Britain. Mutually Assured Destruction – MAD – equally underpins the nuclear defence strategies of, among others, France, America, Russia and China.

Probably the most psychologically perceptive work on the Scottish land question is *As An Fhearann: From the Land*.<sup>2</sup> It was published in 1986 to celebrate the centenary of Parliament's passing of the first Crofting Act. Embarrassed by criticism in the London press and pressured by crofters who had recently acquired the right to vote, the Government in 1883 set up a commission of inquiry under Lord Napier.<sup>3</sup> This found that conditions were, indeed, outrageous. The consequent legislation granted heritable security of tenure and controlled rents to those fortunate enough to live in designated crofting zones. As a result, a way of life was preserved. An ecological island of remnant human culture was secured, albeit on a reservation basis.

In among the *As An Fhearann* essays is a picture by Murdo MacLeod of Shawbost, Lewis – the same photographer whose work appears on the jacket and in the plate section of this book. It is called 'Archie watching television' and it shows a boy glued vacuously to the box, receiving impressions from . . . where? In the photomontage 'Reagan at Callanish', also by Murdo, former US

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president Ronald Reagan peers from a TV screen among the 5000-year-old Calanais Stones. It brings to mind Alice Walker's words:

No one can watch the Wasichu anymore  
 He is always penetrating a people whose country is too small for him . . .  
 Regardless  
 He has filled our every face with his window  
 Our every window with his face.<sup>4</sup>

Another page shows a formation of bombers on an exercise at Stornoway's NATO airbase. And elsewhere, General Curtis le May is pictured shooting deer in the Scottish Highlands in 1967. The icy caption reads: 'General le May was Commander in Chief of the USAF when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.'

And so it is that my mind drifts back to 1977. It is my seventh and last summer at Eisken. I am in the boat on the high loch, fishing with the Admiral's wife, a year after the famous birthday-suit incident.

We're talking about war. I'm no longer angling for the gory stories. In fact I'm questioning them – the whole damnable thing.

She's a little unclear as to where I'm coming from. I never used to trouble her peace. But I think I do now. She casts out a line for rhetorical reassurance.

'There isn't very much violence in our society these days, is there, Alastair?' It's a statement, not a question.

High up above us on the mountain, her husband, the Admiral of the Senior Service who once controlled the sea lanes of the North Atlantic during the Cold War, is stalking deer.

I simply look this good woman through the eyes and into the heart. I raise a finger, and I point it gently, but precisely, upwards, past where the eagles nest.

Some time later, the Admiral's shot blasts through our lengthening silence. It echoes down the glen and over the haunting ruins at Loch Shell. It reverberates through our minds and far out beyond that lovely spot.

**I**t all goes back to Culloden,' people will often say about the dysfunctions of modern Scotland – the apathy, the disempowerment, the sectarianism, the bigotry, the funny handshakes, the drugs and booze and smokes, the highest West European incidence of heart disease, the broken-heartedness, the blaming of the English, the not blaming of the English enough, the propensity to shoot ourselves in the foot. Aye, people from Highlands and Lowlands alike will these days often say, 'It all goes back to Culloden.'

Robert Burns, Scotland's national bard, wrote his two-verse 'Strathallan's Lament' in 1767, just twenty-one years after the battle. In this poem he stands

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in the shoes of the 5th Viscount Strathallan, whose father had been slain by Cumberland's vanquishing troops. Burns portrays an emotionally vacant new world order; one in which neither the savage beauty of nature nor the soft conviviality of human community (the 'busy haunts of base mankind') can any longer bring solace. Even the young Strathallan's capacity for perception is altered: no more can he see the world as it was before.

Thickest night, surround my dwelling!  
 Howling tempests, o'er me rave!  
 Turbid torrents wintry-swellung,  
 Roaring by my lonely cave!  
 Crystal streamlets gently flowing,  
 Busy haunts of base mankind,  
 Western breezes softly blowing,  
 Suit not my distracted mind.

In the cause of Right engaged,  
 Wrongs injurious to redress,  
 Honour's war we strongly waged,  
 But the heavens deny'd success.  
 Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us;  
 Not a hope that dare attend,  
 The wide world is all before us,  
 But a world without a friend.<sup>5</sup>

And Burns, as we know from his other work, was all too aware of what he meant by the 'wide world' before Strathallan: it was the emerging colonial marketplace; a mindset in which return on capital replaces conviviality in community.

Burns knew that the old vernacular ways had finally been crushed. As a Gaelic Jeremiah writing around 1770 about Culloden would cry out, 'My mind will not aspire to music/My heart is full of sadness . . ./Godliness has been conquered/And justice will not return again to our land.'<sup>6</sup> As the prophet Joel observed of the vanquished Hebrews: 'Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your ancestors? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children . . . joy withers away among the people.'<sup>7</sup> And as the land-reform campaigner John Murdoch wrote in the *Highlander* newspaper in 1875, after the Clearances had hammered the last nails into Culloden's coffin:

We have to record a terrible fact that . . . a craven, cowed, snivelling population has taken the place of the men of former days. In Lewis, in the Uists, in Barra, in Islay, in Applecross and so forth, the great body of the people seem to be penetrated by

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fear. There is one great, dark cloud hanging over them in which there seem to be terrible forms of devouring landlords, tormenting factors and ubiquitous ground-officers. People complain; but it is under their breaths and under such a feeling of depression that the complaint is never meant to reach the ear of landlord or factor. We ask for particulars, we take out a notebook to record the facts; but this strikes a deeper terror. 'For any sake do not mention what I say to you,' says the complainer. 'Why?' We naturally ask. 'Because the factor might blame me for it.'<sup>8</sup>

**A**nd mark that this is not just Scotland, dear reader. This is the world, planet Earth, dug from where you agreed to stand with me. It seemed a little parochial at first, did it not? I worried that I might lose you! Well, now you can see the wider relevance.

But please, let us persist a little longer. We have not yet passed unharmed through Nebuchadnezzar's furnace.<sup>9</sup> We cannot yet quite see the path that leads beyond, and touch the joy, and laugh, as we most certainly will do before the covers of this book are closed.

**W**hen Conrad's Marlow eventually arrived at the heart of 'darkest' Africa in search of Mr Kurtz, he found a tyrant brutally ruling over a personal fiefdom. Kurtz had become a man who 'lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts' because there was 'something wanting in him'. Was he capable of seeing his own degeneration? 'I think the knowledge came to him at last,' Marlow recounted,

— only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude — and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because *he was hollow at the core*.<sup>10</sup>

'We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness,' wrote Conrad, menacingly, as it slowly dawned on Marlow that the 'darkness' of Africa was none other than the projected shadow of imperialism itself; a system constructed primarily, 'to tear treasure out of the bowels of the land . . . with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe'. In the end, Kurtz's corruption was so great that he destroyed himself and 'ruined the district' for other ivory traders. The colony itself suffered meltdown.

Kurtz is an extreme example, certainly. That is the novelist's prerogative. But perhaps there is a little of him in us all, and there lies the fascination that he holds. 'Do you know where wars come from?' asks Anthony de Mello, the

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Indian Jesuit. 'They come from projecting outside of us the conflict that is inside. Show me an individual in whom there is no inner self-conflict and I'll show you an individual in whom there is no violence.'<sup>11</sup>

In *To Have or to Be?* Erich Fromm suggests that when we substitute outward power for inner presence of being, we act out of the delusion that it is possible to 'have' in order to 'be'.<sup>12</sup> The human self that is not centred inevitably collapses into being self-centred. The ghillie's day on a sporting estate is filled with snippets of discourse that demonstrate such substitution of money for love in human relationships.

'Who is he?' 'Is he *anybody*?' one guest might ask another, as they head off to the loch.

'Oh, he's *quite somebody*,' comes the reply. 'He's . . .' such and such a company, title, spouse, connection or landed property. And of course, if 'he' happens to drop down a rung or two in life, then he's 'ruined'. It's as if a person's possessions are their being.

Disproportionate and unaccountable power, then, is not healthy. It merely bolsters an artificial sense of *being somebody*. It carries its price to pay. The more a man or woman builds themselves up in a community, the more others feel put down. The trouble is that the person in power rarely sees that in marshalling their assets and *expecting* honour, they're only playing out their own inadequacies. In a world of real need, outward riches thereby betray inner poverty. The flashy car, boat or aeroplane amplifies the impression of power, of solidity, of reality. But the soul ossifies, and the environment pays, and a culture of envy, fear and dissatisfaction develops based on acquisitive addiction to the all-consuming thrill of speed or the chase or the boardroom takeover. In the lotus-eating economy that results for the few, the majority, with a deficit of outward power, slog daily in factories making toys for the rich, instead of building homesteads for the poor. Their labour is degraded by the unacceptability of lives rendered futile.

This is why economic power to which justice is not germane is always a form of violence and why such an economic system is, in theological language, idolatrous. 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' asked Jesus when the Pharisees enquired about paying imperial taxes.<sup>13</sup> They had showed him a coin, a silver denarius. The head was the Emperor's; his title, 'TIBERIUS CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS, AUGUSTUS'.<sup>14</sup> Before famously replying 'Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's', Jesus sidestepped the small question and threw back the big one. He asked them, in effect, 'In whose economy do you place your confidence? Is it that of Caesar, who sets himself up as an imperial god, or that of God, whose passion is for the widow, the orphan and the poor?'

And that's the problem with both old-style imperialism and modern corporate globalisation: both serve money before love. The real ethical question



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of our times, then, is not which of biotechnology, organic agriculture, the motor car, heart transplants, fair trade or computers are, in themselves, 'a good thing'. That is a meaningless question. The real question is, rather, how and why and who and what do these things *serve*? Do they free the spirit and feed the hungry? Do they honour the diversity of life on Earth? Or do they, somewhere or for somebody or something, mean enslavement?

Quaint though it may seem, we must push further this question of idolatry – the question of what happens if we worship any god other than love.

## II. World Without a Friend

In the Highland bardic tradition Mammon, the personification of wealth, is an evil master who, Jesus suggested, could not be served alongside God.<sup>1</sup> He sits enthroned by the sea, a golden scallop shell overflowing with jewels on his knee.

‘Will you, darling, please pass me back that beautiful ruby that’s just fallen out,’ he says to Donald, who has come from the village seeking a bit of retail therapy with which to salve a crack in his heart – his broken-heartedness. Donald obliges.

‘Yes, thank you; that one was the heart of Callum the Grasper, my previous visitor. You see, darling, I will make you rich, very rich – but first you must leave me your heart.’

Well, Donald finds his shirt and his suit and goes to America and becomes very rich, rich as a powerful laird. But his life is blighted by emptiness, depression and insomnia.

Three physicians are consulted. The first prescribes medicine. The second, travel. And the third, hunting and feasting. None of these works. At length, he goes again in desperation to see Mammon and ask for his heart back.

As the Rev. Donald MacCallum, bard of the Pairc Deer Raid, puts it in an epic poem about Donald’s return to simple fishing life in the village: his heart is salvaged (that is to say, he finds ‘salvation’) only when ‘all his riches have melted in his generosity like snow’.<sup>2</sup> God repairs the crack in his heart and thereafter keeps it next to God’s own.

There was nothing unusually ‘bad’ about Donald, who, after all, in the eyes of the world had ‘made good’. He just got swept away in a mindset bigger than he’d bargained for. He met with unanticipated emergent properties – things that appear only as their scale and context becomes bigger. The point is that we’re all sleepwalkers, says Charles T. Tart, one of the world’s leading researchers into human consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Powerful forces construct social reality – parenting, schooling, television, advertising, dress code, corporate ethos, military drill. They’re all, Tart suggests, variations on hypnosis. Mostly we walk around in a semi-trance. We want what we’re conditioned to want. We’re like the

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hypnotised subject who happily eats an onion thinking it to be an apple. We only believe the onion's an apple, Tart says, because we've built a mutually reinforcing sense of reality with one another. This is known as *consensual reality*, or consensus trance reality. It's what makes a football result seem important, what drives fashion, and causes the day to be spoiled by make-believe tragedy in a soap opera. The implication is that we're all living a dream, a myth, and that if we don't persist and insist on what C. G. Jung called 'individuation' – if we don't start living our *own* dream and being authentic to our *own* deepest calling – then life itself will be sucked away by the energy vampires of consciousness. Jung surmises: 'The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world.'<sup>4</sup>

Consensus trance reality seduces us with something that falls short of the fullest possible spiritual presence. It offers only a half-baked reality, and that's what's perilous, because when you bite deep into the apple, you find that the worm's been there. As Miriam Layton of Papua New Guinea told me, it's like 'those who hand out sweeties to stop us crying while they strip away everything that's precious'. Put another way, Ronald E. Shor, writing in the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, defines hypnosis as

*... a contraction of the usual frame of reference.* When this occurs there is a consequent forgetting of the situation as a whole, and a loss of the internal alertness to the whole universe of other considerations which usually fills our waking minds . . . . A good hypnotic subject may be defined as a person who has the ability to give up voluntarily his usual reality-orientation to a considerable extent, and who can concurrently build up a new special orientation to reality which temporarily becomes the only possible reality for him . . .<sup>5</sup>

Developing that idea further, I think it could be said that hypnosis is the ability of one person to focus the attention of another; to shape the reality of another by drawing their sense of presence into a particular constellation of reality. This may represent a 'contraction of the usual frame of reference', but it can also, as with therapeutic hypnosis, represent an expansion or transformation of a person's previously constrictive or even pathological self-image and worldview.

When we become engrossed in a book, captivated by a film or entranced in dance, or even when we daydream while looking out of a window, we are, in this broad sense, 'hypnotised'. In their study of the bardic tradition, Bloomfield and Dunn speak of 'verbal magic and the hypnotically fascinating manipulations of word'.<sup>6</sup> What seems to be happening is that the loudness of wider reality gets turned down, and that to which we give our attention is correspondingly turned up. This is the focusing function of consciousness, but psychologically it also entails a realignment or retuning of reality. Indeed, the essence of story, poetry and music is to achieve just this, ideally leaving a willing and delighted

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audience 'spellbound'. Such can be the dynamics of complete presence in going with the flow: sheer enjoyment, even ecstasy. But it is one thing for this to happen in a context in which the participant chooses it, or requests it, and does so for their own pleasure; quite another when it is used, covertly, to exploit.

My point is one that would not surprise a Papua New Guinean sorcerer or a medicine man or woman. It is that hypnosis, or whatever we like to call it, may be far more prevalent in the modern world than many would think. One researcher remarks that most consultants in today's business world 'would deny using hypnosis, not knowing *that all techniques involving imagination are hypnosis*'.<sup>7</sup> The relevance to our discussion of the bardic tradition will be obvious. These are things that perhaps we need to understand if we are to be honest, and therefore accountable, responsible and most deeply effective as poets, writers, artists or whatever, and maybe even as creative scientists and managers. This is why, as we have seen, truth must be kept at such a premium when working at a psychodynamic level; indeed, it ought to be nothing short of the work of healing based on love.

But when powerful emotions such as fear, guilt, hate, love and sex are engaged, as in advertising or political demagoguery, the potential to sculpt the imagination carves out whole new worlds replete with artificial meaning. Celtic storytellers knew this: they referred to 'the glamour', a spell cast upon the eyes by witches or bad faeries that made the worthless seem attractive.<sup>8</sup> The most powerful genre of modern advertising aims to cast a similar spell, having drawn on the psychological insights of figures like Jung, Freud and Adler – insights originally meant for healing, not marketing.

'*L'âme. Au coeur de tout ce que nous créons aujourd'hui* [Soul – at the heart of all that we create today],' says one French advert for Mercedes-Benz sports cars. 'Stir your soul,' says a similar British ad in 2001 for Alfa Romeo cars. '*Telle est la vie. Tel est vivre. Commencez à vivre* [Such is life. Such is it to be alive. Start living],' continues the Mercedes brochure.<sup>9</sup> The 1950s 'depth boys' school developed psychological marketing techniques to keep American corporations busy after the end of the Second World War threatened to rob them of an ever-expanding market. One of the depth boys said: 'Basically, what you are trying to do is create an illogical situation. You want the customer to *fall in love* with your product and have a profound brand loyalty when actually content may be very similar to hundreds of competing brands.'<sup>10</sup>

Here we see the core dynamic of consumerism – the notion that it is necessary 'to have' in order 'to be'. And that dynamic is, like all violence, like all sublimated expressions of domination or war, an *erotic* dysfunction. Love is displaced from things that are living on to a mere branded product. Eros is hijacked and perverted; it is a rape rather than love-making. The erotic, as Audre Lorde brilliantly points out, is about much more than sexuality alone.<sup>11</sup> It is 'the personification of love in all its aspects . . . the passions of love, in

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its deepest meanings.’ It is the bridge connecting our inner, psychological and spiritual nature with the outer, social and political expressions of life in this world. Eros, says Lorde, is nothing other than the full extension of *feeling*: it is how we feel with our hearts what it’s like truly to be alive, and start living.

It follows from Lorde’s definition that the opposite of the erotic is pornography. Pornography, she accordingly says, ‘emphasises sensation without feeling’. It is the ‘world without a friend’ of a heart violated and cauterised, violating and cauterising. Thus, at the root of domination is an inability to feel; erotic dysfunction. Like ‘galloping consumption’ (as tuberculosis used to be called), consumerism ultimately makes you cough and spit. It mainlines you to the drip-feed credit line of usury addiction. Its cup can never be full, not even when overflowing. Mercedes’ next model will always leave you dissatisfied, wanting more and willing to get that next job to ‘work your ass off’ for it.

It may be, then, that mainstream Western culture has fallen victim to ‘voodoo economics’ to an extent much more wide-ranging than has been acknowledged. Indeed, I have discussed parts of this analysis with Haiti’s leading sociologist and indigenous expert on voodoo, Laënnec Hurbon of the Université Quisqueya, Port-au-Prince.<sup>12</sup> We concluded that while the West has distorted and caricatured real contemporary voodoo – that post-slavery Caribbean synthesis of African animistic religions – it may have fallen victim to its own brand of voodoo in consumerism’s culmination of the Baconian project – the idolatry of rationalistic conquest and control. How ironic it would be if the reforms of King James, the man in whose name ‘witches’ were burned alive at the stake,<sup>13</sup> had played a not insignificant role in setting loose a global system of emergent properties that, for many of the exploited indigenous peoples of this world, has been experienced, very frankly, as the white man’s ‘black magic’.

Mammon is the symbolic name of these properties – emergent from the veneration, or worship, of money. In a biography of John Maynard Keynes, interestingly subtitled ‘The Economist as Saviour’, Lord Skidelsky makes telling reference to ‘Keynes’s sense that, at some level too deep to be captured by mathematics, “love of money” as an end, not a means, is the root of the world’s economic problems’.<sup>14</sup> There we have it: these are things that go ‘too deep to be captured’ by the accepted tools of the Western mind. That is why we need cross-cultural and transdisciplinary analysis, and perhaps we need to use afresh some of the ancients’ ways of knowing.

It was ‘Mammon’, then, that conducted the Clearances, and what led up to them, and what follows in residual structures of landed power today. And because a false god has no reality, because he is just a mirage, he must ‘keep up appearances’. That means persuasive glossy brochures, yes, but ultimately what these all seek to construct is *control*. Mammon is a control freak. He must get richer, exponentially, compound interest, sustained growth, or else collapse into a crater-like bankruptcy of the soul. If he’s not puffing and steaming and

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growing; if he's not always getting bigger and better, newly revamped, then he's dying, he's losing market share – and so he must keep eating up life. He must keep sucking all attention in to himself because he requires total spiritual presence – worship. '*Vous. Le composant le plus essentiel de tous nos véhicules* [You. The most essential component of all our vehicles],’ concludes the Mercedes ad, revealing it all.

That's Mammon, ruler of the world. He merely asks us 'to be realistic', to appreciate all that he does for us. He merely asks that the collection plate be passed round to feed his Great Economy. He merely asks that we sing from a common hymn sheet. And as Marlow said of that song, or the realisation that it gives rise to: 'It echoed loudly within him because *he was hollow at the core.*'

**E**mergent properties are characteristics not evident at a small scale. However, as the scale at which a system works increases, characteristics evolve that may be qualitatively different and greater than the apparent sum of all the tiny parts. For example, the enormous biodiversity of a coral reef is partly an emergent property of billions of microscopic polyps. Similarly, at the human level, hamlets emerge out of families, and cities out of hamlets. As such a change of scale comes about, little seeds of good or evil barely visible at an earlier stage can unfold in quite unforeseen ways. In the absence of consciousness, awareness, mindfulness, it is possible for an expression of evil to emerge where there may have been no original intent to implant it. This danger is inherent in social systems, but, if we understand the degree of unintentionality that can be involved, it can also be a basis for hoping that forces seemingly beyond our power can be confronted and even transformed.

There is a passage in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* that is unsurpassed as an illustration of how emergent properties can lead to structural oppression.

The owners of the land came onto the land, or more often a spokesman for the owners came . . . . Some of the owners' men were kind because they hated what they had to do, and some of them were angry because they hated to be cruel, and some of them were cold because they had long ago found that one could not be an owner unless one were cold. And all of them were caught in something larger than themselves . . . . The owner men explained the workings and the thinkings of the monster that was stronger than they were . . . . You see, a bank or a company . . . those creatures don't breathe air, don't eat side-meat. They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. If they don't get it, they die the way you die without air, without side-meat. It is a sad thing, but it is so. It is just so . . . . When the monster stops growing, it dies. It can't stay one size . . . . We're sorry. It's not us. It's the monster. The bank isn't like a man.

Yes, but the bank is only made of men [said the tenants].

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No, you're wrong there – quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.<sup>15</sup>

What is sometimes called 'the system', or, more explicitly, 'the Domination System',<sup>16</sup> then, is an emergent property of ordinary human failings and commonplace darkness. The 'monster' is created bit by bit by individuals, but its emergent properties transcend us all. This, perhaps, is what our forebears meant by 'the Devil'. There need be no great mystery, superstition or even anything of the supernatural about it. The flaws in our nature that allow such emergence – that, indeed, make it inevitable – are so commonplace as to pass normally unremarked. Theologians of a more antiquated age called these human tendencies 'original sin'. Today we might see in it what Hannah Arendt, in her study of Nazi war crimes, called 'the banality of evil'<sup>17</sup> – the horror in which we are all unwittingly or only half-wittingly caught up as a matter of everyday experience. Indeed, it is awareness of this very banality that has caused vocabulary like 'evil' to lose much of its meaning in the modern age. The expression seems too extreme for something that is, when reduced to its component parts, so very ordinary.

In the aftermath of the Nazi Holocaust and while the Vietnam War was still taking place, a number of social psychologists undertook experiments that tried to shed greater light on human darkness. Two of these are of profound importance in understanding the analysis and methodology that I am unfolding in this book. In the first experiment Philip Zimbardo divided a group of ordinary American volunteers at random. He set them up to be either 'prisoners' or 'guards' in a make-believe 'jail' in the basement of Stanford University. The researchers were shocked at how quickly the volunteers fell into role and conformed to group stereotypes. The 'Stanford Prison experiment' got out of hand. It had to be terminated prematurely. Zimbardo summarised his observations as follows:

Within what was a surprisingly short period of time, we witnessed a sample of normal, healthy American college students fractionate into a group of prison guards who seemed to derive pleasure from insulting, threatening, humiliating and dehumanising . . . . The typical prisoner syndrome was one of passivity, dependency, depression, helplessness and self-depreciation. Prisoner participation in the social reality which the guards had structured for them lent increasing validity to it and, as the prisoners became resigned to their treatment over time, many acted in ways to justify their fate at the hands of the guards, adopting attitudes and behaviour which helped to sanction their victimisation. Most dramatic and distressing to us was the observation of the ease with which sadistic behaviour could be elicited in individuals who were

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not 'sadistic types' and the frequency with which acute emotional breakdowns could occur in men selected precisely for their emotional stability . . . . Our results . . . [demonstrate] that evil acts are not necessarily the deeds of evil men, but may be attributable to powerful social forces . . . . The inherently pathological characteristics of the prison situation itself . . . were a *sufficient* condition to produce aberrant, anti-social behaviour. The use of power was self-aggrandising and self-perpetuating.<sup>18</sup>

In an even more controversial experiment, now replicated cross-culturally in various parts of the world, Stanley Milgram of Yale University examined the role of blind obedience as the 'dispositional cement that binds men to systems of authority'. He was staggered to find that 65 per cent of volunteers could be persuaded to administer what they believed was a dangerous electric shock to punish a victim – who, unknown to them, was just an actor and was not really being shocked at all. Most people, the experiments suggest, can easily be broken down and persuaded to participate in dehumanising others. The 'banality of evil' is laid bare. When confronted with their actions, many participants in the 'obedience experiments' justified themselves by blaming the victim. They said things like: 'He was so stupid and stubborn, he deserved to get shocked.' Milgram surmised:

The essence of obedience consists in the fact that a person comes to view himself as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer regards himself as responsible for his actions . . . . [He] sees himself not as a person acting in a morally accountable way but as the agent of external authority . . . . Unable to defy the authority of the experimenter, they attribute all responsibility to him. It is the old story of 'just doing one's duty' that was heard time and time again at Nuremberg. But it would be wrong to think of this as a thin alibi concocted for the occasion. Rather, it is a fundamental mode of thinking for a great many people *once they are locked into a subordinate position* in a structure of authority. The disappearance of a sense of authority is the most far-reaching consequence of submission to authority. Although a person acting under authority performs actions that seem to violate standards of conscience, it would not be true to say that he loses his moral sense. Instead it acquires a radically different focus. He does not respond with a moral sentiment to the actions he performs. Rather, his moral concern now shifts to consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that the authority has of him. In wartime, a soldier does not ask whether it is good or bad to bomb a hamlet; he does not experience shame or guilt in the destruction of a village: rather he feels pride or shame depending on how well he has performed the mission assigned to him.<sup>19</sup>

Or, as a steely-eyed brigadier once told me in the officers' mess at a NATO establishment – a man who, when I pushed him, reluctantly admitted to



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having killed (he protested that I was not asking him a fair question, but I insisted) – the ethics of armed combat boil down ‘to doing a good job’.

The 1986 disaster at Union Carbide’s Bhopal plant in India released methyl isocyanate into the air, injuring some 200,000 people and killing 2000. The process by which full corporate liability was dodged is revealing. Immediately after the disaster, the chairman of the board, Warren M. Anderson, was so upset that he told the media he would spend the rest of his life attempting to make amends. One year later, he was quoted in *Business Week* saying that he had ‘over-reacted’, and was now prepared to lead the company in its legal fight to minimise payment of damages.<sup>20</sup> Many of the injured remain uncompensated to this day.

What had gone on in this man’s mind? Zimbardo’s and Milgram’s studies perhaps shed some light on the process. For a moment, the shock of the tragedy had perhaps shifted Mr Anderson out of his usual role. He spoke from his heart. Quickly, however, the pressures he was subject to in his role re-established their hold over him. Obedience to peer and shareholder authority, which is the rudder of advanced capitalism, resumed its hypnotic paramountcy. This is socially possible because the structure of corporations means that the diffusion of responsibility is ingrained. Shareholders appoint people like Mr Anderson, but their only real interest and feedback mechanism is the share price and dividend yield. But of course, limited corporate liability allows for limited shareholder responsibility. If Mr Anderson doesn’t serve the monster with all his heart, the company’s stock value will slide. Investors will sell and the company will then have difficulty raising fresh capital, because investors don’t put up money to compensate poor Indians. If a spiral of decline in stock value sets in, the company becomes vulnerable to a predatory takeover by another corporation. Mr Anderson would then get fired, any residual scruples would be scuppered, and the remainder of the company might get asset-stripped or re-established under a new trading name. A glance through the business pages of any newspaper shows that this kind of corporate predatoriness goes on every day. It is the stuff of high finance and it marks the distinction between what I refer to in this book as ‘advanced capitalism’, and old-style ‘family’ or new-style ‘community’ entrepreneurship. The problem is not with entrepreneurship *per se*; it is with irresponsibility and emergent properties that militate against being able to act responsibly.

Studies of the ‘authoritarian personality’ suggest probable links between the need to dominate others and the ‘loss of soul’ in early childhood. If this is true, it is very important. It suggests that resolving the ills of the world must start in the nursery. In his remarkable song ‘Working Class Hero’, John Lennon sets out the case. He starts by recounting the effect of love denied at a tender age – the child made to feel small from birth onwards, receiving insufficient parental attention, and the pain that builds up and smothers the capacity to feel.

Lennon moves on to the double-bind of the ‘damned if you do; damned if

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you don't' Catch 22 situations that destroy self-confidence and implant inferiorisation – the hurt and the hitting, the being hated if clever and despised if a fool, and being driven crazy with having to jump through all their hoops. Then there are the 'bread and circuses' social narcotics of religion, sex and television that maintain apathy and sculpt the psyche of a pliant, consumer populace. We're no better, Lennon concludes, than 'fuckin' peasants' – but ones who, nonetheless, think ourselves clever, classless and free.

And finally, there's the comfortable complacency of those who, in order to get on, have gotten out; those whose mores have unquestioningly become part of society's structural violence. These are the people who find 'room at the top', a nice house on the hill, because they've learned how to smile as they kill. They're the social class to which the working class hero is supposed to aspire. Lennon's song closes by seeming to recommend himself as the role model to follow in order to become such a hero.

I'd always thought this was a rather cryptic ending. But on finishing this book, I phoned up the company that handles copyright permissions for Lennon's estate – I was hoping to be able to quote the lyric in full. It is, after all, readily accessible on the Internet. However, I was told that a 'non-negotiable' payment of £350 is always required for use! Evidently, the capacity to recognise issues of social justice does not necessarily correlate with living out the beliefs this capacity implies – or, at least, with the heirs to one's estate so doing.<sup>21</sup>

The danger to society of a dysfunctional childhood derives, of course, less from the poor than from the rich. There is an asymmetry here. The poor might take out their frustrations on others in a relatively confined family or neighbourhood context. The rich, however, can magnify their dysfunction through the lens of position, power and money. Political biographies yield many examples. One is Alan Clark, the late defence procurement minister.

Clark (a Highland laird, of course) says how his father, Lord Kenneth Clark of *Civilisation* fame, was 'better at conveying things without expressing them than anyone I've ever met. He made me feel inadequate intellectually.' He said that his days at Eton, England's most elite private school, were 'an early introduction to human cruelty, treachery, and extreme physical hardship . . . the equivalent of three years in jail'.<sup>22</sup> In 1992 Clark had to resign his cabinet post for having been, as he put it, 'economical with the *actualité*' over the Arms to Iraq scandal. In short, he was one of the men who had armed Saddam Hussein. And Saddam Hussein, incidentally, was himself reportedly beaten by a cruel uncle as a boy.

Prison psychiatrists Bob Johnson in England and James Gilligan in the United States maintain that it is precisely these types of background that they invariably discover in psychopathic criminals.<sup>23</sup> However, the flog-them-and-hang-them brigade mostly don't want to know. Probably it touches on too many unresolved home truths. Indeed, Johnson had to quit his post at Parkhurst Prison because his outstandingly successful work was made eventually

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impossible by Michael Howard, a discipline-obsessed Home Secretary spawned by the Thatcher regime.<sup>24</sup>

In her studies of why people do terrible things to each other, the Swiss child psychologist Alice Miller describes child rearing based on fear and emotional absence as a 'poisonous pedagogy' resulting in 'soul murder'. 'A child,' she says, 'responds to and learns both tenderness and cruelty from the very beginning.'<sup>25</sup> Where the child has been traumatised or emotionally abandoned, and not allowed to express her anger or grief, or not loved for herself (as distinct from being loved for her performance), then the patterning scores deeply. The capacity to relate to others with *empathy*, with feeling, through Eros, is impaired. Miller maintains that this syndrome is illustrated by every senior member of the Third Reich about whom a detailed childhood history is known. As writers like Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich have similarly shown, such syndromes typify the 'body of authority' that is fascism.<sup>26</sup>

'Violence,' says James Gillegan of Harvard University, writing from his experience of directing the psychiatric services of the Massachusetts prison system, 'is the ultimate means of communicating the absence of love by the person inflicting the violence . . . . The self cannot survive without love. The self starved of love dies. That is how violence can cause the death of the self even when it does not kill the body.'<sup>27</sup>

Like life, however, death cannot be compartmentalised. If the remains are swept down into the dungeon or the cellar, sooner or later an odour creeps back up the stairs. After a while it pervades the living room, and after a little time longer, neighbours start to notice that 'something doesn't smell right' about that family, or person, or situation. And that's the trouble with worshipping Mammon. He smells. It can be a very tangible smell – one that spawns a vast deodorant and perfume industry to mask what our bodies are actually trying to tell us. For at the core of domination – at the core of colonialism, landed power, and any abuse that causes others to suffer – is necrophilia: the love of morbidity, the honouring of and seeking honour through death.

Sigmund Freud saw this late and last in his work: 'I have lately developed a view,' he wrote in 1920, speaking of what later was called 'Thanatos' after the Greek god of death, 'according to [which] we have to distinguish two classes of instincts, one of which, the sexual instincts or Eros, is by far the more conspicuous and accessible to study . . . . The second class of instincts was not so easy to point to; in the end we came to recognize sadism as its representative.'<sup>28</sup> But it was Erich Fromm who really opened the can of worms. We are looking, he wrote, at a syndrome that

. . . can be described as the passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to

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destroy for the sake of destruction; the exclusive interest in all that is purely *mechanical*. It is the passion to tear apart living structures.

Fromm and the Frankfurt School of which he was a part<sup>29</sup> saw necrophilia as the bottom line of domination, the driving dynamic that destroys both community and environment. It converts, he said, the ‘world of life’ into

... a world of ‘no-life’; persons have become ‘nonpersons,’ a world of death. Death is no longer symbolically expressed by unpleasant-smelling faeces or corpses. Its symbols are now clean, shining machines; men are not attracted to smelly-toilets, but to structures of aluminium and glass. But the reality behind this antiseptic façade becomes increasingly visible. Man, in the name of progress, is transforming the world into a stinking and poisonous place (and this is not symbolic). He pollutes the air, the water, the soil, the animals – and himself. He is doing this to a degree that has made it doubtful whether the earth will still be liveable within a hundred years from now. He knows the facts, but in spite of many protesters, those in charge go on in the pursuit of technical ‘progress’ and are willing to sacrifice all life in the worship of their idol. In earlier times men also sacrificed their children or war prisoners, but never before in history has man been willing to sacrifice all life to the Moloch – his own and that of all his descendants.<sup>30</sup>

So now we can see the fire. It starts as a feeling of warmth in the hip pocket – just a little bit of Mammon. But then it starts to burn, and you realise that if you don’t take it out it may make a hole, and you’ll lose it. So you place it before you, and then you see that what you’ve got is actually a little stone statue. It’s hollow – ‘*hollow at the core*’. Hollow and hot, because a fire burns inside; and you peer in, and he leers, and grows, and it’s no longer this little statue before you, but you’re before it, and prostrate, and this is Moloch – that fire-filled Old Testament stone idol into whose burning arms the ancient Israelites sacrificed their children, yes, their little ones, hoping to be repaid in what? In economic prosperity!<sup>31</sup> You can have wealth if you honour Mammon, and you can keep Mammon only if you worship Moloch.

And Moloch, of course, can be invoked. Moloch can indeed be rendered visible. His Old Testament theology can actually be rendered postmodern, and that is part of the bardic function for our times.

Mary McCann composed ‘Working for Moloch’ after reading the work of Adrienne Rich.

the cleaners are scrubbing the Institute lavatories  
because women are supposed to do that

the girls are typing in the Institute offices  
because women are dedicated and careful

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the women are assembling printed circuits  
because women are good at delicate work  
and women's eyes are expendable

the young men are doing their PhDs  
because young men are obedient and ambitious  
and someone wants warheads  
laser rangefinders  
hunt and destroy capabilities  
multichannel night seeking radar  
and science is neutral

back home the wives of the PhD students are having babies  
because women are maternal and loving  
and who else can have children but women?

at the top of the tower the old men and the middle aged men  
and sometimes one woman professor  
meet to form plans, cadge funds and run the place  
because obedient young men turn into obedient old men  
and it's all for the good of the country  
and defence funds are good for science  
and science is neutral  
and no one notices Moloch

the women bring them  
clean toilets  
cups of coffee  
typescripts  
micro circuits oh so neatly assembled  
and children

and it's hard to see Moloch because he is both far away  
and everywhere  
and no one asks to whom they are all obedient

and they say, 'Who's Moloch? Never heard of him'  
as out in the dark Moloch belches  
and grows redder and redder  
and fatter and fatter  
as he eats the children<sup>32</sup>